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Report to Parish Councils – June 2024

This report is written is for Parish Councils meeting in June.

Some of the items here are from information circulated by ESCC but which may not have been drawn to the attention of parish councillors and others.

Annual Parish Meetings

Over the last 6 weeks I have been attending these in most parishes, answering questions on several topics but of course including potholes and the general condition of highways. The format varies by parish but seem to be well attended.

Speed Limits

Parish councils and residents often raise speed limits with me. We have a series of policies on these, but I am also a member of a new sub-committee of Place Scrutiny reviewing these policies. I would be happy to give a brief explanation of the current key policies at any parish council meeting and to receive feedback on it.

Fire Authority

I have been a member of this body which oversees the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service for 3 years. One of our major challenges is funding – we are heading towards significant deficit and do not have reserves to cover this. For several years we've had a successful programme of cost saving but have significant financial pressures for several reasons including:

- We have one of the highest concentrations of high-rise buildings in the country, particularly in Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings. The Grenfell tragedy meant that we have had to do more risk assessments and put in place improved plans to address fires in these;
- Our geography which includes a long highly populated coastal strip means we need more fire stations and appliances to cover the local area;
- Salaries and pensions for firefighters and other staff have risen by more than the increase in funding;
- We are limited by government as to how much we can increase the fire service precept.

We are considering some rationalisations, possibly including consulting on the future of Mayfield fire station which has a number of challenges in terms of staffing and is in an area well served by neighbouring stations. Changes such as this require extensive consultations.

General Election

This does curtail a few activities, such as those limited by the rules of purdah, but by and large the business of ESCC continues as normal.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Residents are being invited to join two webinars to find out more about the new Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Sussex and about inspiring action for nature already taking place across the counties.

Sussex Nature Recovery is developing two strategies for the region - one covering West Sussex and another for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a nationwide initiative to help nature and address declining habitats and species across the UK, with strategies for each county across England being developed.

Each strategy will agree nature recovery priorities for the local area, which will be determined by residents and local organisations.

The webinars are an opportunity for residents to find out more about the proposals for Sussex and hear details of the ecological evidence being gathered.

Impressive examples of local people and organisations already talking action to help nature in Sussex will be showcased including Wilder Ouse, Wilding Waterhall, Weald to Waves, Lewes Swift Group, the Sussex Ornithological Society, Sussex Youth Rangers and more.

Feedback from the recent wildlife and nature survey, including residents' experiences and observations of nature and wildlife in Sussex, will also be shared.

The East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS webinar will be held on Monday, June 10 from 6pm to 7pm. Residents can sign up at <https://rb.gy/ugvj34>.

More information about the strategies and how local people can get involved can be found at www.sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk including details of future events, webinars, workshops, briefings, and more.

Long Term Transport Plan 4

I have mentioned this previously. LTP4 is required to be produced by local government on a regular basis. This one is for the period of 2024 to 2050 and covers all modes of transport including walking, cycling, rail, bus services, cars and trucks. I chair the cross-party member reference group reviewing and providing feedback on this.

The LTP4 team recently completed an extensive public consultation process involving online information and questionnaires, as well as meetings in libraries. This has been very well received with more than 1000 people providing feedback – unheard of. I hope to provide more feedback on this in future months. The emerging policy will go to cabinet then full council later this year.



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1st July 2024

Report to Parish Councils – July 2024

This report is written is for Parish Councils meeting in July.

Some of the items here are from information circulated by ESCC but which may not have been drawn to the attention of parish councillors and others.

Due to my heavy involvement in the general election, this report is short. I have however been keeping up with council work and associated cases.

Council Budgets

I have previously reported that in this financial year until April 2025 we have a balanced budget but using £14M of reserves. In the Cabinet meeting of 25th June, the papers for which are available here:

<https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=133>

under the agenda items Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources – State of the County you will see forecasts showing serious and unsustainable deficits in subsequent years.

We are a well-run county, confirmed in an independent peer review last year, but do not receive enough funds from central government nor can we raise more from our hard-pressed residents. We, along with other councils and across all parties, have lobbied the government for more central funding and will continue to do so after the election.

Almost all of our costs are for statutory 'core services' which we are required to provide. Some others, notably highways maintenance, are not core but our residents understandably want us

to spend a lot more on them. In the cabinet meeting £1M was allocated this year to help but this will only make a small difference.

Measles cases are on the rise

There are cases of measles in the South East and rates continue to rise all over Europe.

With summer fast approaching, people will be socialising and travelling more, meaning measles could spread quickly. It does spread fast amongst people who aren't vaccinated, and it can be very dangerous.

Measles symptoms to look out for:

- high temperature
- sore, red, watery eyes
- coughing
- sneezing
- a runny or blocked nose
- a rash, which usually appears after the initial symptoms.

The rash might be raised, and join to form patches, but is not normally itchy. The rash looks brown or red on white skin, but may be harder to see on brown or black skin.

Some people get small white spots in their mouth around the same time as the rash.

If you suspect measles, call your GP or NHS 111, do not attend the surgery or A&E without calling first.

Get vaccinated!

The best way to protect yourself is with two doses of the very safe and effective MMR vaccine. We encourage everyone to check that they and their family members have had both doses, usually given at 1 year and 3 years old. Lots of children missed these because of the Covid pandemic or for other reasons.

Luckily, it's never too late to catch up and you're never too old to get vaccinated!

Contact your GP to book a catch-up jab.