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Report to Parish Councils – November 2025

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

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.

My Activities

This section has bullet-point summaries of *some* of the meetings I have had, or actions carried out. This month was relatively light meeting wise due to party conferences, though I have had a lot of case work.

- As a member of the Fire Authority, I attended the annual awards ceremony held this year in Eastbourne, recognising the achievements of firefighters and others in East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. One notable award recipient had completed 50 years of service!
- I attended the scoping meeting for a subcommittee of Place Scrutiny looking at the way streetworks (road works etc) are planned and approved. I proposed this enquiry following recent concerns about the coordination of road works.
- I attended remotely a cabinet meeting. This meeting approved the signing of a document giving approval for the government to create a Statutory Instrument as part of the process of creating a mayoral authority in Sussex
- I attended a meeting of the Dungeness Site Stakeholder group which is the primary interface between the decommissioning teams and the local community
- I was invited to attend the Rother Association of Local Council meeting to discuss Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation
- I gave a talk and answered questions on Devolution and LGR at the Rother Forum
- I took part in a focus group linked to the Dungeness SSG to look at future plans for the site

Flags on lampposts, highways etc

I have had questions from residents about the policy on this. I sent the statement to all clerks earlier in October but thought I would repeat it here.

Katy Bourne, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex, has made the following statement which seems entirely sensible and well balanced

Millions of people in our islands are patriotic and deeply attached to the flags of their home nations and the United Kingdom.

In less fractious times, seeing your flag normally instils feelings of belonging and pride and I have no doubt that many of the people currently attaching flags to lamp posts and street furniture share our pride in being British.

It is clear, however, that in some places, the appearance of flags is making some communities feel deliberately targeted and intimidated. That may or may not be the intention of those putting the flags up but it is clearly creating anxiety and potential flashpoints.

I would look to politicians and community leaders to aim to lower the temperature and not fuel further polarisation by playing into the hands of those seeking to create division and unrest.

Local authorities have reported that their staff and contractors have been abused and threatened when removing flags from council property - mainly for safety reasons and to prevent potential breaches of the peace.

Whilst it is not the responsibility of Sussex Police to remove flags, I do expect officers to uphold the law. The Chief Constable has also reassured me that Sussex Police will not tolerate violent, abusive behaviour or attempts to provoke confrontation.

The **Assistant Director at ESCC responsible for Highways** has also made the following statement in response to enquiries from councillors:

You will recall I was awaiting guidance from Sussex Police. In the end the Police decided they didn't have the resources to support the removal of flags, particularly as material displayed on the public highway is a County Council responsibility under the Highways Act. We are therefore proceeding carefully and safely, removing flags and other material as we find them or as they are reported to us, but I hasten to add this isn't a priority for us as it diverts our limited resources from our key priorities, so it may take a little while to get round the county.

I am in complete agreement with these statements, but add the following:

Some people have commented that flags are inherently racist. I am reminded of this example of false logic: "Jersey cows are brown. All brown things are Jersey cows". Some of those putting up/painting flags are probably racist but I am sure that this is a minority. Thankfully in the 7 parishes for which I am the County Councillor, incidents of racism are extremely rare. Racism

is deplorable and not a British value and I would always strive to oppose it. Many people have valid concerns about high levels of immigration which has not been addressed by multiple governments, but this does not automatically make them racist, though a minority probably are.

I would add that those painting over road signs on the road or on signs are committing an offence. If prosecuted, you could get a criminal record. It also takes resources from Highways which could be spent on road maintenance. Yes I know highways are far from perfect given our budgetary constraints but removing flags costs money which could be better spent elsewhere.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The next step needed for Devolution (i.e. election of a Mayor as part of the Sussex and Brighton County Combined Authority) was completed with the cabinet in East Sussex approving asking the government to create a Statutory Instrument to make this happen. Similar approvals came from Brighton and West Sussex councils. Details of the scope of this can be seen at <https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/documents/s70961/Devo%20Cabinet%20report%2021%20Oct%2025%20v4.pdf>

We wait to hear from the government on their decision regarding Local Government Reorganisation and our preferred option for One East Sussex, which would mean that a single unitary authority would cover East Sussex.

Newenden Bridge/ Bodiam Bridge

Kent highways are now saying that the most likely period for this closure is in Spring 2026.

I have had discussions with highways and the police about the enforcement of the 18-tonne limit on Bodiam bridge. Apparently, police enforcement would require that they escort offending vehicles to the weighbridge at Johns Cross. I am pushing for camera enforcement which is apparently feasible.

I have made contact with the new Kent County Councillor for the division which includes Newenden. We have now spoken and he is chasing the officials responsible in KCC.

Grants for Parishes

This section will occur each month and is a list of possible sources of funding for parish level projects. I have had a number of enquiries as to whether any of these could help with areas such as allotments. Sadly the answer is no – these are all intended for community/parish council projects.

- Dungeness Power Stations. I sit on the Site Stakeholder Group which liaises between the massive project to decommission these and the local community. They often provide grants for local activities including some in East Sussex even though the power stations are in Kent. For example, this Christmas Rye food bank is their designated charity. **The criteria for this used to be with 15 miles of Dungeness but this has been increased to 20 miles. This seems to cover most parishes in Northern Rother with the exception of Salehurst/Robertsbridge**

Apparently the budget for this is underspent this year, so I encourage clerks to identify specific items they apply for a grant. Apparently values less than £2000 are readily approved. Contact me for details.

- Veolia Green and Food Waste Composting Facility. As a member of Place Scrutiny I

have visited this site near Lewes. Their 'output' is compost and they deliver 'one tonne bags' at no cost to local community gardens and similar. I put Peasmarsh parish council in contact with them and they have already received two bags for the community gardens.

- Southeast Water do make grants to local communities, for example to support playgrounds
- Gatwick Airport are keen on funding local projects, at least partly driven by their desire to open a second runway which would have some impact on East Sussex, though less in the Eastern part

If you have a project which might benefit, please let me know and I will put you in contact and try to help get it approved. It seems that the best will be for those seeking funds to send me an email which I will then forward.

Please let me know if you come across any new sources of funding and I will add them to the list.