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## Report to Parish Councils – October 2021

This report is written in late September and is for Parish Councils meeting in October. It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother. I may on occasion add parish-specific supplements.

### **Budgets and Spending**

As a result of some budget savings ESCC has about £8.8m to spend and is looking at a number of potential projects which are being discussed at Cabinet on the 30<sup>th</sup> September and will then be put to the full council in October. It is planned to make this available to 'programmes that meet the Council's priority outcomes' which include highways and addressing climate change.

This is good for this year but currently the medium-term finance plan is forecasting deficits in each of the next three financial years, gradually rising to about £10m a year in 2024/25. However, this is subject to government spending reviews which we hope will result in a better outcome.

### **Hedges**

This year has been particularly bad for vegetation due to the unusual weather conditions. This can lead to more issues with hedges overgrowing pavements and roads. Normally cutting hedges is the responsibility of the landowner but I have not so far found a standard protocol for dealing with this. My recommendation on which I would welcome feedback is:

- A. The parish council make informal contact with the landowner to ask them to cut the hedge
- B. If this fails, the Highways East Sussex web site is used to report an issue. The Highways Steward will then inspect it and if there is an issue contact the landowner. If there is no response, ESCC (in fact our contractor) can cut the hedges and bill the landowner
- C. For issues which have safety issues such as obscured road signs, anyone can go straight to B and identify it as a safety issue which will give a much faster response

In theory step A could be skipped but I believe that the above process will lead to a faster response and one which is less confrontational.

I would welcome feedback on this.

### **Footpaths**

Similar to hedges, issues can arise with footpaths, but the responsibility is with the Rights of Way Team at ESCC rather than Highways. To my surprise there appeared to be no summary document on this, so at my request the Team Manager for Rights of Way has written a one-page guide which, with slight modifications, is appended. This is draft at the moment.

Note in particular that it is recommended that Parish Council informally raise issues which concern landowners with them, similar to the process for hedges, then escalate to the Rights of Way team if this does not work.

Again, feedback is welcome.

### **Cases**

Each month I will give summaries/updates for a sample of current cases across the Division.

- **Northiam School Crossing Patrol.** The sponsor is identified, and the Parish Council agreed the steps to put this in place at a meeting earlier in September, enabling us to keep 'Lolly'. I had the honour to meet her recently at the pop-up pub in St Francis.
- **Flooding in Northbridge Street, Robertsbridge.** This continues to be a top issue with Huw Merriman's office dealing with National Highways (the new name for Highways England), me dealing with Highways East Sussex and Councillor Sue Prochak dealing with Rother district council. There is some small progress – for example Highways East Sussex have raised a drop kerb which was enabling relatively small amounts of rain to go into some back gardens, but the main response needs to come from National Highways. They have taken some interim measures, in particular raising a kerb in the layby and a drain but there is much more that needs to be done.
- **Laybys/Verge Parking.** I have three cases where improvements to parking outside schools or other facilities are needed. This may be for safety reasons, particularly where there have been accidents or other incidents, or where the verge is being churned up or the road blocked by parking. I am always pleased to hear of ways in which we can make improvements. Funding from ESCC is limited and priority correctly tends to be given to safety issues, but there is also the ability for parish councils or others to provide half of the funding and the other to be met by a 'matched

funding' application. I will be happy to support such applications.

## Appendix: Draft Summary on Rights of Way Maintenance

# Public Rights of Way in East Sussex

East Sussex has around 2,000 miles (3,218km) of footpaths, bridleways and byways. The County Council has a duty to manage these paths so that they give safe and easy access for the public. Public Rights of Way are managed by the Rights of Way & Countryside Team at East Sussex County Council (ESCC.)

**What are Public Rights of Way?** Public Rights of Way are legally recorded public highways across privately owned land. They are all documented on a legal record known as the Definitive Map and Statement, and can be viewed on East Sussex County Council's [online rights of way map](#).

### Types of Public Rights of Way:

- **Public footpath** – for use by walkers only. You can also use a pushchair or wheelchair on a footpath, but the nature of the path may mean this is not possible. Accompanied dogs are allowed but must be kept under close control.
- **Public bridleway** – for use by walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Cyclists should give way to walkers and horse riders.
- **Byway open to all traffic** – sometimes referred to as Byways, BOATs or Green Lanes. These can be used by motorised vehicles, horse-drawn carriages, cyclists, horse-riders and walkers.
- **Restricted byway** – for use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and horse-drawn carriages.

**What does the County Council maintain?** ESCC is responsible for maintaining path surfaces, surface vegetation, bridges, steps and signposts.

Stiles, gates and fences or vegetation next to a path (for example, hedges and trees) are the landowner's responsibility to maintain. If an issue with is noticed, you can report it to the Rights of Way Team who will contact the landowner and can take enforcement action if this is not fixed. However often an informal approach to the landowner from the parish council will get a faster and simpler resolution, with the reporting to county as a second step

**How do we maintain the Public Rights of Way network?** The County Council has an in-house team of maintenance rangers who cover the path network. Work is allocated to the ranger team on a prioritised basis, with issues which affect public safety being the highest priority for attention. Paths that are well-used or which provide important links are also considered to be a higher priority for attention.

Additionally, ESCC has a Rights of Way Officer Team, which provides advice and support to path users and landowners. The Definitive Map is also managed by a Team at the County Council. That Team mainly deals with applications to update and amend the Definitive Map – usually via path diversion proposals or Definitive Map Modification Orders, which consider the addition of new paths to the County's network.

**Reporting problems:** Please contact the Rights of Way Team via email at: [rightsofway@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:rightsofway@eastsussex.gov.uk) or telephone: 0345 6080193. Path problems can also

be reported via our [online map](#).

**Find out more at:** [eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/discover-east-sussex/rightsofway/](https://eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/discover-east-sussex/rightsofway/)