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Report to Parish Councils – November 2021

This report is written in late November and is for Parish Councils meeting in December. It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother

The major news from the County this month is the allocation of surplus funding of £8.85 million this year. This was agreed to be used in two areas: highways and climate change.

In highways £5.8M is being spent as a one-off extra investment. This is not enough to clear the backlog but will make a difference. This is being spent as follows:

Patching	£2.5M	This is where larger areas of road are resurfaced, typically covering groups of potholes and other problem areas but generally not the whole width. Potholes which meet the criteria for repairs would be fixed in any case, but patching covers more than this including potholes which would not normally be repaired. This amount will fund 75,000 m ² of patches
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Pavements	£1.8M	Particularly those deemed to be in 'red' conditions. Depending on the amount of work needed this will repair between 18,000 and 54,000 m ² of pavements.
Line and road marking	£0.5M	Poor markings have a significant impact on safety and are some of the most cost-effective ways of improving safety.
Road signs and signposts	£1.0M	Like road markings this has a significant impact on safety. Many signs in the county are old and have reached the end of their lives.

On climate change about £3M is being spent, particularly geared towards reducing the core carbon footprint of ESCC operations. Decarbonising refers to reducing carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases. For example, methane has about 40 times the impact of carbon dioxide, though it does tend to be removed over perhaps 10 years by natural processes. For this reason, the term CO₂e is used where e means equivalent. ESCC has set a target of reducing CO₂e by 13% a year since 2019. So far this target has been met each year, but mostly addressing the 'low hanging fruit' which has been relatively easy.

Emissions are classified into three scopes:

- Scope 1. Direct emissions, for example from heating buildings
- Scope 2. Emissions resulting from generation of electricity used by the council
- Scope 3. Emissions generated by the manufacture of goods purchased, for example supplies used in adult social care, or subcontracted services such as highways maintenance

The 13% target applies to scope 1 and 2, as measuring scope 3 is difficult, though it is estimated to be significantly more than scope 1 and 2. More work is being done to estimate scope 3.

As expected, continuing to reduce emissions by 13% a year is getting more challenging and £3M will be used to continue this split in summary as follows. Greater detail is available in on the ESCC web site, for example in the Cabinet papers for 9th November.

Category	Description	Amount in 2021/22	Amount in 2022/23
Modelling of net zero scenarios	Looking at different options to help balance different options and costs	£25k	£0

Category	Description	Amount in 2021/22	Amount in 2022/23
Reduce energy consumption in buildings	Recruiting an extra officer to address. Initiatives include solar panels, low energy lighting, heating decarbonisation, carbon literacy training for officers. The budget is dominated by changing to reduced carbon heating	£787k	£2,974k
Reduce scope 3 emissions	Provide resource to assess and propose action plan to reduce		£56k
Communications	Targeted campaigns to help reduce carbon emissions		£25k

I have a strong personal interest in addressing climate change so my apologies if I have given too much detail here!

Cases

Each month I will give summaries/updates for a sample of current cases across Northern Rother. I currently have about 15 which are being progressed.

- **Flooding in Northbridge Street, Robertsbridge.** This continues to be a top issue with Huw Merriman's office dealing with National Highways, 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. More interim measures have been taken – for example there are now sandbags down one side of the A21 to help prevent water from land coming across the carriageway, into the layby and then to Northbridge Street. Immense pressure is being put on National Highways by Huw's office. One challenge is assessing if measures are working given that flooding does not occur every year and seems to depend on a combination of factors.
- **Robertsbridge Youth Centre.** This was closed during the pandemic but is now open. One further delay was caused when Legionnaire's bacterium was discovered in the hot water, requiring disinfection and further tests. This building is in fact owned by a trust for which ESCC is the trustee. Currently the fees from usage of the building just about cover day-to-day running costs but not larger maintenance costs. This arrangement is being reviewed to help determine a viable longer-term future for the building.
- **Various Highways Issues.** I often get involved where issues with roads, pavements, hedges etc arise. My recommendation is always that:
 - If relevant for something such as hedge trimming which is the responsible of a homeowner/landowner, raising it informally by the Parish council is faster, simpler and less confrontational
 - If this is not relevant or unsuccessful then raising it on the East Sussex Highways web site will give you a case number. I encourage residents and parish councils to let me know the case number and details as I can then track it.
 - Sometimes I can help with more general issues. Current examples include the drainage in Ludpit Lane in Robertsbridge
 - Parishes can have 'Strengthening Local Relationships' meetings with ESCC officials and suppliers. Typically, this has been used to discuss highways issues, though it can cover other topics. The agenda is set by the Parish Council. I am attending my first with Salehurst and Robertsbridge on 2nd December. Ideally these are strategic meetings, rather than addressing specific issues.