

This is our monthly report for April 2025.

A full council meeting took place on the 19th of March to discuss the government's plan for a new unitary authority. Discussions took place and all parties had an input, a vote was taken, and the result was a majority decision in favour of supporting the proposed plan.

We have continued to support our parishioners with ongoing issues of enforcement and planning applications. We attended Beckley Farmers market where it was nice to talk to the Parishioners and to support our local PCSO's who were there to engage with members of the public. We have also attended a meeting of local business in the Bodiam area. The idea is for them to support each other in promoting tourism and their individual business.

We will give a verbal report regarding any issues in our Parishes once we have received a report from our PCSO's.

[Local Government Reorganisation on the agenda](#)

PLANS for Local Government Reorganisation in East Sussex will take a step forward next week, as six local councils come together at their Cabinet and Full Council meetings to discuss progress.

Rother District Council, Wealden District, Lewes District, Eastbourne Borough, Hastings Borough and East Sussex County Council will all hold meetings between March 18 and 20 to consider an Interim Plan to send to the government – ahead of a March 21 deadline.

In February, the government wrote to local authorities – including those in East Sussex - formally inviting them to submit proposals to create new structures of unitary authorities – which is a single tier of local government responsible for all local services in an area with a population of 500,000.

The aim is to create more efficient and effective local government, potentially leading to streamlined services and cost savings for residents.

Under the Interim Plan, in East Sussex, the five existing local authorities and East Sussex County Council would be abolished to create a new East Sussex authority.

Council leaders and chief executives are proposing one single unitary authority but state they remain open to alternative options if the government indicates flexibility, or if residents demonstrate a clear desire for an alternative configuration.

The six authorities have made it clear in the Interim Plan that funding the reorganisation of local government will have to be from government as it cannot be met from existing councils' budgets.

A consultation on the Interim Plan will be held for all residents across East Sussex.

Cllr Doug Oliver, Leader of Rother District Council, said: "In any new arrangement, our number one priority will be to get the best deal for the residents and businesses of Rother.

"Thankfully in East Sussex there is a strong track record of collaborative working between the district and borough councils, and the county council. All the partners want a local government model that is best for our residents and protects services."

In the Interim Plan, the six councils have proposed to develop a coherent new structure for local government across Sussex which:

- Improves outcomes for residents and communities
- Maximises and makes best use of resources now and for the future
- Is member led and developed in collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including public sector partners, business and VCSE
- Supports staff in all councils as they are crucial to delivery during transition and beyond
- Enhances local democracy, local identity, transparency, accessibility, local decision making and accountability
- Supports and drives decision making and public service reform at both Sussex and local level
- Provides a stronger and unified voice to help attract investment and tackle priorities

The government has given the six councils a deadline of September to submit final, much more detailed proposals.

If approved, a shadow new council would be elected in May 2027 and the date the new unitary council would formally take over - and East Sussex County, Eastbourne, Lewes, Hastings, Rother and Wealden councils would cease to exist – would be April 2028.

This week we and other councils across East Sussex are holding meetings to discuss an interim plan for the reorganisation of local government.



Devolution is one of the biggest changes, challenges and opportunities we have faced in recent years and it's important that we do everything we can to shape proposals to ensure they are in the best interests of our residents.

One thing the interim plan stresses is that the reorganisation has to be funded by central Government and not from existing councils' budgets, which would have a detrimental effect on their ability to deliver vital services to residents.

I think it's fair to say that all six councils involved want what's best for residents and businesses and all are committed to working together on a new model that achieves this.

Once agreed by all councils, the interim plan, under which the five existing district and borough councils and East Sussex County Council would be abolished to create a new East Sussex authority, will be shared during a public consultation and we will keep people updated as this process continues.

The reorganisation is separate from proposals to create a strategic authority with an elected mayor that will cover the whole of Sussex, east, west and Brighton & Hove. A Government consultation continues until Sunday, April 13 and residents can take part by visiting [Sussex and Brighton devolution consultation – GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sussex-and-brighton-devolution-consultation)

25 Mar 2025

[Work in parks and open spaces hit by funding pressures](#)

WORK in parks, gardens and open spaces across Rother is being changed and, in some cases, reduced as the district council continues to tackle a significant funding gap.

Residents will notice some changes including further reductions in ornamental planting and bedding, as well as continuing to maintain some sites as long grass to reduce costs and encourage biodiversity.

Other changes have been introduced for grass cutting and grounds maintenance at sports clubs.

The council will prioritise its resources on customer safety - ensuring that play areas across the district are safe, watercourses are clear, and litter is collected regularly. The authority will focus maintenance on popular, high-profile parks and open spaces and cemeteries will remain unaffected.

Councillor Hazel Timpe, portfolio holder for neighbourhood services, said: "Like many councils, we are facing significant financial challenges and are having to review our discretionary services to see if they can be managed more sustainably.

"We are having to introduce changes to the way we deliver some services - including in our parks and open spaces, and for example, how grounds maintenance is delivered by sports clubs on council-owned land. Even after making these savings, we still face a £2.5 million funding gap.

"We understand that some residents will have concerns over these changes and in an ideal world we wouldn't be making some of them. However, the stark reality is that we face an unprecedented financial situation that is forcing us to make decisions about non-statutory services to help protect critical services such as housing and the homeless, and waste collections."

More information about parks and green spaces across the district can be found on the council's website.

Kind Regards

Cllr. Tony Biggs & Cllr. Tony Ganly.