

ESCC report to Hurst Green Parish Council on 25th March 2025

Local Government Reorganisation

Following a Full Council debate on 20th March, the Cabinet approved an interim plan produced in collaboration with partners from borough and district councils which sets out progress on developing proposals for the creation of a unitary authority on the current boundaries of East Sussex.

The plan states that council leaders remain open to presenting alternatives if the government changes its criteria, and if evidence and strong public support suggest other options.

The six councils have agreed that any new structure for local government in East Sussex must:

- Improve outcomes for residents and communities
- Make best use of resources now and for the future
- Be member led and developed in collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including public sector partners, business and the voluntary sector
- Support staff in all councils as they are crucial to delivery during transition and beyond
- Enhance local democracy, local identity, transparency, accessibility, local decision making and accountability
- Support and drive decision making and public service reform at both Sussex and local level
- Provide a stronger and unified voice to help attract investment and tackle priorities

The interim plan stresses that reorganisation work is a shared endeavour but that extra resources from government will be needed to enable detailed development of options for unitary government as all local councils are already strained.

The plan is available to read on the ESCC [website\(opens new window\)](#).

Almost £580m to be spent on vital services as budget agreed

East Sussex County Council will spend £579.6 million on vital services after councillors agreed a budget and a Council Plan for 2025/26. At a meeting of the Full Council on 11 February, Councillors voted with a majority of four to approve the proposed budget and Council Plan.

To address the significant funding gap resulting from increased costs and demand for services, as well as long-term reductions in Government funding, the council agreed to use £11.4 million of its limited reserves as well as savings of £13.5 million to set a balanced budget.

Under the approved budget residents will be asked to pay an additional 4.99 per cent in the county council's share of Council Tax, which includes the additional two per cent for adult social care allowed by Government.

This would mean a Band D home would pay an additional £1.70 per week in Council Tax for services including roads, schools, social care and libraries.

Despite the financial pressures, the council continues to make necessary investments in services to meet the needs of local residents.

The council agreed an additional £55 million to its annual spending for East Sussex for 2025/26 to adapt to the growing demand for, and cost of, services, though it is not being funded to match the increased spending.

More information is available [here](#).

Cash boost for active travel

East Sussex is to receive £1.4 million to develop and deliver active travel schemes across the county. East Sussex County Council has secured £1.1 million from Active Travel England's (ATE) Consolidated Active Travel Fund 2025/26, alongside a further award of over £325,000 from ATE's Active Travel Fund 5.

The funding will help develop and deliver schemes which contribute to enabling people to walk, wheel, and cycle as the natural first choice for everyday short journeys or as part of longer journeys in the county. The aim is to improve local connectivity to key services and support people to get more active. This is alongside local active travel scheme development in neighbourhoods and the maintenance of active travel measures.

The funding will help the county council deliver a package of measures to support the key policies included in the recently approved East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 to ensure the council plans for people and the places where they live, work and do business.

This includes ensuring that designs for streets and places are inclusive, as well as developing healthy and sustainable places which reduce health inequalities and support healthy lifestyles.

More information is available [here](#).

SEND Local Area Partnership inspection report published

The findings of an inspection into services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in East Sussex have been welcomed by council and health leaders.

The report by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), gives the East Sussex Local Area Partnership the middle rating for the delivery, planning and commissioning of SEND services.

East Sussex County Council and NHS Sussex share responsibility for planning and commissioning services to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in the area.

The report highlighted several areas of good practice and positive examples of work across agencies to provide support for children and young people and their families. It also praised the SEND information, advice and support service and the important guidance that it provides to families. The report identifies areas of improvement for the partnership and partners in education, social care and health will work together to address these.

More information is available [here](#).

Childminding recruitment campaign launched

A new campaign encouraging people to consider becoming childminders has been launched by the county council.

The 'Do something big – work with small children' campaign aims to highlight the benefits of childminding as a career. The campaign is supporting the Government's 'Be part of something big' initiative to promote early years careers.

Childminding can mean anything from working flexible, part time hours to creating a business similar to a small nursery. Childminders can work at home, in a community hall, or partner with a local school and they can also employ assistants. No formal qualifications are needed and the county council can offer support with training, registering with Ofsted or a childminding agency, and grant applications.

The county council is also encouraging people to consider offering wraparound care, usually from 8am until school time or after school until 6pm, with a £600 Wraparound Care Grant available to help cover start-up costs. This grant is available to childminders who complete their registration with Ofsted or a childminder agency between September 1, 2024 and March 31, 2026.

More information is available [here](#).

Schools to pilot government breakfast club scheme

A number of schools in East Sussex are to become early adopters of the government's free school breakfast clubs. Schools in Seaford, Eastbourne and Hastings are among those chosen to pilot the new scheme, which is expected to run from April until June before being expanded.

The schools chosen for the trial are expected to offer a free breakfast to all pupils and at least 30 minutes of childcare before school. Clubs in the county will receive a share of £7m in funding to kick start the plan, which the government says will save families up to £450 a year. If the pilot is successful, plans for a national expansion could begin later this year.

More information is available [here](#).

Creative business support scheme extended

The Government recently announced it will be extending its support for the Create South East programme until March 2026. The initiative continues to be supported by East Sussex County Council, who helped secure the programme for the region in 2022.

The scheme's Investment Readiness programme helps companies develop the skills they need to secure investment and facilitate access to additional funding. Businesses are able to access six to nine months of intensive, tailored support and engage in workshops, programme mentoring and events.

Create South East is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Create Growth Programme and run through a partnership of 12 local and unitary authorities and organisations across the counties of Essex, Kent and Sussex.

More information is available [here](#).

