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Report to Parish Councils – March 2025

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

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.

Unitary Authority and Mayors

The government announced that only 6 areas (one of which is Sussex) have been given the go ahead to proceed to being unitary authorities and with a mayor.

I have previously sent round a document setting out the key aspects of devolution and will regularly update this as new information emerges. I summarise the key headlines here, all of course subject to change:

- From May 2027 Sussex local government will be made up of three unitary authorities, East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove, with an overall mayor responsible for a range of strategic issues including police, fire and rescue, strategic planning and strategic transport. The mayor will be elected in May 2026. It is expected that the mayor will be 'light touch', like Yorkshire, with most services provided by the unitary authorities.
- The mayor will have a cabinet made up of him/herself plus 2 councillors from each of the unitary councils, so 7 in all.
- The district and borough councils such as Rother and Hastings will cease to exist in May 2027, though it is possible that councillors will be asked to stay on for a year to help with the transition.
- The government has decided to delay the May 2025 County elections, initially to May 2026 (the limit allowed by legislation) but then by another year to May 2027 when elections for the unitary authority will be held. This is in line with other local government reorganisations.
- It is likely that the May 2027 unitary elections will be set to elect **two** councillors per division as the councillor workload will be higher given there will no longer be district councillors. After that the boundary commission will review boundaries, perhaps giving

smaller divisions each with one councillor. There is no time to do this before the May 2027 elections as boundary changes need major consultations.

- The government has launched public consultations for each area being devolved. The Sussex one can be seen at [Sussex and Brighton devolution consultation - GOV.UK](#), or the full URL at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sussex-and-brighton-devolution/sussex-and-brighton-devolution-consultation>. Responses can be submitted here. Note that this is only regarding the mayoral component of devolution.
- The three current top-level councils (East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton) are asked to submit more detailed proposals by 21st March of this year, then full detailed plans by about the end of September.
- Apparently, the government is issuing a paper (not sure if White or Green) later this year on the roles of Town/Parish councils, possibly with a view to them taking on more responsibility. This was not mentioned in the White Paper on Devolution.

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

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