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1<sup>st</sup> April 2026

## Report to Parish Councils – April 2026

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

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.

### **My Activities**

This section has bullet-point summaries of *some* of the meetings I have had, or actions carried out. I started writing this as sometimes residents think that we don't do much at county! Almost all meetings include briefing papers, sometimes with hundreds of pages, which need to be read in advance. I do not include in this list parish council meetings or meetings with residents, often to discuss potholes and other highways issues! The election means that we have fewer meetings than normal.

- I attended a volunteer reception hosted by the Chairman of the County Council to which volunteers who have contributed significantly to the local community are invited. Attendees are nominated by councillors such as myself.
- I attended (remotely) a cabinet meeting where the only significant topic was the performance of the council in the year to the end of December.
- I attended a meeting of Place Scrutiny committee with a busy agenda which included a presentation and questioning of Southern Water, covering both water supply and waste water treatment, as well as events such as the recent release of beads. At a previous meeting which also questioned South East Water. The meeting also included consideration of two reports produced by Reference Groups (effectively subcommittees) on Local Speed Limit Policy and Streetworks. I was a member of the latter reference group and in fact proposed its formation given my concerns about the coordination of Streetworks (road closures, temporary traffic lights etc).
- As the designated substitute from the Pension Committee, I attended a meeting of ACCESS in London. ACCESS is a pool which holds billions of points of pension funds for the pension schemes for 11 local authorities and many hundreds of employers. ACCESS is in fact being wound up and we are transferring our investments to a different pool, having been forced to do so by the government.

- I attended a first meeting of a cross-party group looking at the targets of ESCC to reduce carbon emissions. Although I am in favour of addressing climate change, given our budget challenges I am against the county council spending money other than that specifically awarded to us by government to reduce our carbon footprint.
- I attended and spoke at the last full council meeting before the election. I opposed a motion by the Green councillors to **force** the council to take highways maintenance back into direct control rather than contracted out, though we did consider this as an option 6 years ago as part of deciding on the current contract. We will also be reviewing our approach to this at the break point coming up on the contract. A revised and in my view more sensible motion amendment was proposed by Conservatives and LibDems and was passed.
- I attended a meeting of the Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel which considers appeals from parents or carers denied travel assistance to schools.
- I attended another meeting of a working group of the Rother Association of Local Councils to which I have been co-opted, which is tasked to look at Local Government Reorganisation and the interaction with parish and town councils. We are particularly looking at the way 'Neighbourhood Action Committees' might be formed, forming a bridge between parish councils and a new unitary council.

### **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation**

The government was due to announce their decision on the configuration of unitary councils in Sussex. In the event their decision was slightly vague with the final decision delayed.

The secretary of state said that he was essentially in favour of One East Sussex where there would be one unitary council with the same footprint as the county council which would clearly minimise disruption and reorganisation. However, he was considering allowing Brighton to grow into East Sussex, taking over some areas such as Peacehaven.

This option had previously been suggested by Brighton and a consultation with the affected areas showed 79% against, but nevertheless the government wants to consult on it, clearly due to political pressure from Brighton.

As I said last month, watch this space!

### **Newenden Bridge**

The recent parapet work has been completed, with three weekend closures.

Kent County Council also announced that the 4-month closure for major structural repairs would be from June to September in 2027. Although this has been raised previously and I am in regular contact with the KCC councillor, it is still a shock and will have major impacts on local residents and businesses.

The announcement from Kent described diversion routes as including Merriments Lane which is clearly unsuitable for this. I flagged this to East Sussex Highways Network Management who will be raising this with Kent.

I have also suggested that we might be able to seek government grants to build a new bridge alongside the current listed bridge. Similar to this, the single-way Exceat bridge near Seaford is being replaced with a two-way bridge using £20M of government grants. Traffic volumes on the A28 are about half that of the Exceat bridge but a case could perhaps be made. Sadly this

is something which would take many years to put in place, even if the government could come up with the money. Planning permission would be complex and the effect on the local residents and businesses could be significant.

Some councillors have suggested Bailey bridges. These are not trivial and expensive. They would also need extensive foundation work. I will explore this given the longer timeframe but I doubt very much that this is feasible

### **Bus Services**

The government has cut the amount of money given to East Sussex to subsidise bus services. As a result of that some changes to bus services in Northern Rother will be made. See the appendix for a table of these. My apologies for formatting and the length of this table but it is important for several villages.

There are also some changes to the popular Flexibus, including a new App but these are relatively minor. Again, these have been necessitated by cuts in government funding.

### **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. However I am asking this again as policies sometimes change.

- 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. The criteria for this used to be with 15 miles of Dungeness but this has been increased to 20 miles. Contact me for details.
- Veolia Green and Food Waste Composting Facility. As a member of Place Scrutiny I have 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. It seems that the best will be for those seeking funds to send me an email which I will then forward.

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

## Appendix: Bus Service Changes

Service number	Route	Changes to current service	Service provided by	Date of change
294 (Schooldays)	Peasmarsh-Beckley-Northiam-Tenterden (Homewood School)	No change	Run by Hams Travel and funded by Kent County Council.	
312	Rye-Playden-Iden-Wittersham-Tenterden	<p>The Sunday service, introduced in July 2023, is withdrawn. This is due to its relatively low level of use and the reduced bus support grant from UK Government to East Sussex County Council not being sufficient to support the continuation of all services.</p> <p>There is no change to the Monday to Saturday service, apart from the 13:00 departure from Rye Station will be 4 minutes later and the 13:30 departure from Tenterden will be 1 minute earlier.</p>	Provided by Stagecoach with funding from ESCC with the help of bus support grant from UK Government.	12 April 2026

Service number	Route	Changes to current service	Service provided by	Date of change
313,313A	Rye Harbour-Rye-Playden-Peasmarsch-Beckley-Northiam (some journeys, numbered 313A, between Rye and Northiam run via Udimore and Broad Oak)	<p>The later evening journeys and Sunday service, introduced in July 2023, is withdrawn. The evening journeys that will be withdrawn are the 19:40 from Northiam to Rye, 20:41 Rye to Rye Harbour, and 20:50 from Rye Harbour to Northiam via Rye.</p> <p>These changes are due to their relatively low level of use and the reduced bus support grant from UK Government to East Sussex County Council not being sufficient to support the continuation of all services.</p>	Provided by Stagecoach with funding from ESCC with the help of bus support grant from UK Government.	12 April 2026
329	Hastings-St Helens-Conquest Hospital-Westfield-Broad Oak-Northiam-Tenterden	The Sunday service and the journey from Northiam to Hastings at 21:25 on Mondays to Saturdays, introduced in July 2023, will be withdrawn. This is due to relatively low passenger numbers and the reduced bus support grant from UK Government to ESCC not being sufficient to support the continuation of all services.	Service run by Stagecoach with funding from ESCC and a contribution from Kent County Council, with the help of bus support grant from UK Government.	12 April 2026
342 (Schooldays)	Northiam-Playden-Rye-Udimore-Westfield	Change of operator to The Big Lemon.	Service to be run by The Big Lemon with funding from ESCC and the help of bus service support grant from UK Government.	12 April 2026
349	Hastings-Sedlescombe-Bodiam-Sandhurst-	<p>Minor timetable adjustments.</p> <p>From Hastings, the 17:05 and 19:05 Monday to Saturday will</p>	Run by Stagecoach with funding from ESCC and the help of bus service support	12 April 2026

Service number	Route	Changes to current service	Service provided by	Date of change
	Hawkhurst	<p>depart three minutes later at 17:08 and 19:08 respectively.</p> <p>From Hawkhurst, the first bus will depart three minutes earlier at 07:22. The 18:10 will depart four minutes later at 18:14.</p> <p>On Sundays, the first journey from Hastings will depart 10 minutes earlier at 08:42.</p>	grant from UK Government	

360 (College Days)	Etchingam- Robertsbridge- Sedlescombe-St Leonards-Bexhill College	<p>As stated in the last update, this service was to be reviewed due to the expense of providing it and the relatively low number of students who use the service. Due to reduced funding and increased costs, this service will cease in July 2026.</p> <p>Route 1066 (see below) on college days provides a morning journey to Bexhill College from Hawkhurst, Hurst Green, Robertsbridge, Whatlington, Battle and Hastings. In the afternoons, those wishing to travel to/from Whatlington, Robertsbridge, Hurst Green and Hawkhurst, will be able to use service 95 from Bexhill College to Battle and then transfer to service 1066.</p> <p>Customers using the 360 from Cripps Corner and Sedlescombe will have the option of using the 349 to Sedlescombe Road North, St Leonards (vicinity of Sainsbury's) and transferring to service 361. In the afternoons, a similar transfer is available between services.</p> <p>Rail services are also available for some of the communities served by the 360.</p>	Run by Rambler Coaches 11 July 2026 with funding from ESCC.	
361 (College Days)	Peasmarsh- Northiam - Westfield- Bexhill College	No change at present although operation will transfer to The Big Lemon in time for the 2026/27 academic year.	Run by Rambler Coaches (The Big Lemon from 26 July) with funding from ESCC with the help of bus support grant from UK Government.	26 July 2026

<b>381</b> <b>(Schooldays)</b>	Westfield-Broad Oak- Northiam-Staplecross- Robertsbridge Community College	No change	Run by Rambler Coaches with funding from ESCC and the help of bus service support grant from UK Government	
<b>382</b> <b>(Schooldays)</b>	Rye-Udimore-Broad Oak- Westfield-Robertsbridge Community College	Change of operator to The Big Lemon.	Service to be run by The Big Lemon with funding from ESCC and the help of bus service support grant from UK Government.	12 April 2026
<b>383</b> <b>(Schooldays)</b>	Peasmarsh-Sedlescombe- Robertsbridge Community College	No change	Run by Rambler Coaches with funding from ESCC and the help of bus service support grant from UK Government	
<b>384</b> <b>(Schooldays)</b>	Hastings-Battle- Robertsbridge Community College	No change	Commercial service provided by Stagecoach.	

1066	Hastings-Battle- Mountfield or Whatlington- Robertsbridge-Hurst Green-Hawkhurst- Flimwell-Ticehurst- Wadhurst-Frant- Tunbridge Wells	<p>There are changes to the Monday to Saturday timetable. This is due to the very high level of funding subsidy required to maintain this service (following competitive tendering) and the reduced level of bus support grant from UK Government. On Mondays to Saturdays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the main part of the day the frequency of the service will be reduced to around every 85 minutes.</li> <li>• There will no change to the first journey from Tunbridge Wells which on schooldays will continue to run via Bayhall Road and Hawkenbury and, on Monday to Friday, via Hawkhurst Moor to Hawkhurst. After that, departures from Tunbridge Wells, Royal Victoria Place, will be at 08:50, 10:10, 11:35, 13:00, 14:35, 16:10 and 17:15 (Mondays to Fridays) or 17:20 (Saturdays). The 16:10 journey will continue to run from Bennett Memorial School on schooldays.</li> <li>• The evening journeys at 19:03 and 20:43 will be retained and will run 2 minutes later on Mondays to Fridays and earlier on Saturdays at 18:50 and 20:20.</li> <li>• There will changes to the first bus from Hawkhurst to Hastings on Mondays to Saturdays. On Mondays to Fridays, this will depart at 06:53 and run 12 minutes earlier. It will continue to run beyond Hastings Station to Bexhill College on schooldays. On Saturdays, the journey will have an unchanged departure time of 07:05 but journey time will be reduced and it will serve points from Robertsbridge onward up to 4 minutes earlier and then earlier still through St Leonards and Hastings, to arrive at Hastings Station 9 minutes earlier at 08:03. The next journey from Hawkhurst on Mondays to Fridays will depart earlier (07:54 on schooldays and 08:14 on non-schooldays) and serve stops up to 7 minutes earlier.</li> </ul>	<p>Service run by Stagecoach with funding from ESCC with the help of bus support grant from UK Government and a contribution from Kent County Council.</p> <p>The Sunday service, introduced in July 2023, is also funded from Development Contributions.</p>	12 April 2026
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		<p>On schooldays it will still serve Claverham Community College (5 minutes earlier). On Saturdays, the journey will be unchanged, departing Hawkhurst at 08:27. Following on from those journeys, services will leave Hawkhurst for Hastings at 09:40, 11:00, 12:25, 13:50, 15:25, 17:10, 18:07. The 15:25 journey serves Claverham Community College at 15:58 on schooldays. Similarly to now, all southbound journeys from Hawkhurst from 09:40 on Mondays to Fridays and from 08:27 on Saturdays are through journeys from Tunbridge Wells.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The early morning journey from Battle to Hastings at 06:30 will run 5 minutes earlier on Mondays to Fridays but will be unchanged on Saturdays.</li><li>• From Hastings to Hawkhurst on Mondays to Fridays, the 06:58 and 07:40 (schooldays) departures will run 5 minutes earlier than before with the latter continuing to serve Claverham Community College and running between Hastings town centre and Silverhill via the seafront and London Road. The non-schooldays journey at 08:36 will run significantly earlier at 08:06. After that, journeys will depart at 09:35, 11:00, 12:20, 13:40, 15:05, 16:50, 18:20 and 19:05. All journeys except the revised 06:53 and 18:20 departures from Hastings continue beyond Hawkhurst to Tunbridge Wells.</li><li>• From Hastings to Hawkhurst on Saturdays there will be a new earlier journey at 06:55, then 08:10. From 09:35 at the same times as Mondays to Fridays. All journeys run beyond Hawkhurst to Tunbridge Wells.</li><li>• The journey that starts at Hurst Green at 06:30 for Hawkhurst and Tunbridge Wells is unchanged.</li></ul>		
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<b>B74 (Friday)</b>	Mountfield-Netherfield-Sedlescombe-Robertsbridge-Burwash-Battle	<p>1<sup>st</sup> journey - no change</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> journey - to additionally serve the Village Green and Village Hall at Sedlescombe (09:56 and 09:57 respectively)</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> journey -to additionally serve the Battle Library/Jempson’s stop on its way into Battle from Hurst Green, Etchingam, Burwash and Robertsbridge.</p> <p>4<sup>th</sup> journey - on the second part of the route (to/from Sedlescombe), bus to additionally serve Marley Gardens, Battle, and the Village Green and Village Hall at Sedlescombe.</p> <p>5<sup>th</sup> journey - revised to run earlier from Battle, starting at Jempson’s at 13:05 and serving the Abbey Green at 13:10. The section of route beyond Hackwood, Robertsbridge, (including Burwash, Etchingam and Hurst Green) will be for drop-offs and will only be served at the request of passengers already on board or who have previously booked through the BACT office.</p> <p>BACT reports that the earlier departure of the last journey from Battle is as a result of passenger requests.</p>	Run by Battle Area Community Transport (BACT) with funding from ESCC and the help of bus service support grant from UK Government	1 June 2026

