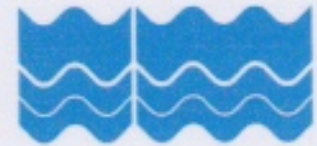


Summary of County Council achievements 2021/22

This summary sets out some of the key achievements of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) in 2021/22 (up to February 2022) under the four strategic priorities of the Council:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/about/keydocuments/councilplan/default.htm

The Council Plan for 2022/23 will be on our website from 1st April 2022.



Driving sustainable economic growth

The Council was successful in securing funding for East Sussex through two major national schemes – the **UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF)** and the **Levelling Up Fund**. ESCC will receive over £2.5m from the UK CRF to go towards five projects, including £730,000 for two projects in Hastings and a £700,000 grant to reboot tourism in Lewes district. Some of the target outcomes across East Sussex include the safeguarding of 300 full time jobs and 470 participants engaged in skills and employment support. Our Levelling Up Fund bid to replace the single lane crossing at Exceat with a new two-lane bridge was successful in securing nearly £8m. Overall, around £170m is being invested into East Sussex because of the **East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan**. Through our business support programmes over 170 jobs have been created or safeguarded in the first three-quarters of 2021/22, against a target of 140 jobs.

The **East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan**, which proposes an ambitious network of preferred cycling and walking routes across the county was agreed in September 2021. This first plan focuses on areas where there is the greatest opportunity to increase levels of cycling and walking and to attract external funding, such as the coastal strip and larger market towns. In July 2021, the new Newhaven Port Access Road opened to cyclists and pedestrians, providing access to Tide Mills and the beach, and linking with existing footpaths to create new circular walking and biking routes.

Over 60 **carriageway asset improvement schemes** were delivered in the first three-quarters of 2021/22, to maintain and improve the county's roads. Over 17,000 potholes were also repaired. In autumn 2021, the Council committed a further £5.8m for highways including funding for extra patching work, improving pavements, refreshing lines and road markings, and replacing and updating road signs. Three bidders have been shortlisted to provide highway maintenance and infrastructure services in East Sussex from May 2023 onwards and have been asked to submit detailed tenders.

In October, the Careers hub delivered a live virtual **careers** event 'What's Next Sussex' with over 1,100 students, parents and teachers attending. Over 3,400 pupils are expected to go on work experience placements in this academic year, including through our Virtual Work Experience package developed in response to Covid-19. At the end of 2020/21 ESCC were 9th nationally for yearly outturn figures and joint 7th for cumulative targets for the percentage of **apprentices** employed in the Council, with 1.2% of our workforce being apprentices. In summer 2021 funding of up to £615,000 was agreed for a Supported Apprenticeship programme to create opportunities for some of the county's most vulnerable residents, including those in supported and temporary accommodation and those at risk of homelessness. 94.8% of academic age 16 pupils were participating in **education, training, or employment with training** in December 2021, against a target of 93%. 83% of Looked After Children in the same age group were also participating in education, training, or employment with training, against a target of 80%.

Keeping vulnerable people safe

In November 2020, the Government announced funding to provide **holiday activities and food (HAF)** to young people eligible for free school meals over the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays in 2021. 34 providers ran provision during Easter with 1,378 young people attending. The summer programme included 71 providers in 85 locations across the county, with places arranged for 3,612 young people. In October 2021, the Government announced the household support fund providing support to **vulnerable households** with the cost of food, energy, and other bills. During the October half-term and Christmas holidays we allocated approximately 36,000 food vouchers.

Residents facing financial pressure because of Covid-19 restrictions were supported with funding of £500,000, announced in June 2021 with one off grants being provided to 11 voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations that offer **financial advice**, support, and practical help.

The Council has been delivering a package of support to all secondary and some special schools focusing on **gangs, peer influence and coercion**, including county lines. A number of workshops and assemblies have also been delivered by kNOwknives and by the Safer East Sussex Team on the risks of knife carrying. An East Sussex **Violence Reduction Action Plan** has also been developed, covering current and planned projects to identify local issues and address them through multi-agency action.

The East Sussex Local Offer website was launched in January 2022, providing a comprehensive range of information and resources aimed at supporting children and young people with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**. The site was designed in collaboration with parents, carers, and professionals. A new Flagship School in Hastings, a special school for children with autism opened in September 2021. The school, opened to meet a recognised gap in provision, initially opened for 24 pupils and will grow to 72 pupils in future years.

Keeping vulnerable people safe continued...

The Domestic Abuse Act came into force in 2021, setting out new obligations for the Council and a Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Partnership Board has been established. A new Community Development Officer is working across Sussex to set up a Lived Experience Board to ensure the voices of victims are amplified at a strategic level. Clarion Housing Association was awarded the contract for the provision of refuge services across East Sussex from November 2021 and are providing specialist support in 47 units of safe accommodation across the county for women experiencing **domestic abuse** and violence and their children. This will increase to 56 units over time.

ESCC were successful in securing funding from the national social care recovery grant enabling us to extend our Foundations Services, which works with couples/women who have had children removed and to establish Lifelong Links for **children in our care**, putting them back in touch with adults who have previously been close to them.

Trading Standards were involved in 133 interventions over the first three-quarters of 2021-22 to protect vulnerable people, including installing call blockers to try to prevent people from falling victim to telephone scams. The team also participated in the national Scams Awareness Fortnight in June 2021 highlighting the risks of financial scams.

Helping people help themselves

Reablement services are provided to help people to regain mobility and daily living skills, especially after a hospital stay. Between April and September 2021 91.5% of older people discharged from hospital to reablement or rehabilitation services were at home 91 days after discharge. Frail adults across East Sussex can also receive Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS), to help manage risks and maintain **independence at home**. TECS includes Telecare, which offers a range of products, such as wearable alert buttons, fall detectors or medication dispensers. At the end of 2021, 8,274 people were receiving TECS. In July 2021, the Council's three year Being Digital strategy was launched setting out how 30 **digital solutions** projects will be used to improve and deliver care and support to adults, making it easier for clients and carers to find support and to manage their care online.

Work continued on the further **integration of health and social care**. Work is underway to establish a new Integrated Care System (ICS) made up of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and an Integrated Care Partnership. The ICB for Sussex will be responsible for a health budget of over £2bn and will oversee the commissioning, performance, financial management and transformation of the local NHS. The current focus is on setting out the arrangements between local NHS organisations, Local Authorities and wider partners covering the ICS vision, principles, and governance arrangements. The intention is to complete the governance arrangements and key recruitment campaigns so that the ICB starts operating in shadow form no later than 1 April 2022.

Thirteen **road safety** schemes were completed during the first three-quarters of 2021/22 to improve road safety infrastructure, with a further 13 schemes scheduled for completion before the end of the financial year.

A partnership between Public Health and Hastings Borough Council was successful in securing £2.2m from the Government's Sustainable Warmth Competition. The funding will boost the ESCC Warm Home Check service until March 2023, offering **home energy efficiency improvements** to at least 150 low-income, fuel poor households.

Making best use of resources in the short and long term

The Council's **budget and Council Plan** for 2022/23 were approved at the meeting of Full Council on 8 February 2022. ESCC approved a £453m budget for 2022/23 for the day-to-day provision of services and £753m for capital investment, which includes a commitment to spend an additional £6m to help combat climate change and £31m to maintain and improve roads and pavements over the next decade. The 2022/23 budget also cancels almost £900,000 of savings due to be made from the early help service.

In autumn 2021, Councillors reaffirmed their commitment to become a carbon-neutral authority, setting aside £3.055m (additional to the £6m highlighted above) to be spent on reducing **climate change**. The Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan includes reducing corporate carbon emissions by 13 per cent a year and the additional funding agreed will be spent on replacing ageing boilers, installing solar panels and low energy lighting.

The Council spent £288m with 928 **local suppliers** over 2021, equating to 68.3% of total spend. In addition, during the first three-quarters of the year, 21 contracts which qualified for the **Social Value** Measurement Charter were awarded with a total value of just under £50m with over £3.5 million of social value commitments included.

Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES) is a partnership of public bodies and other organisations to improve sharing of the property estate, to save property costs and release capital receipts. The SPACES strategy was approved in May 2021 and the programme has now developed an Implementation Plan, including activities around Electric Vehicle infrastructure. The **Property** team was awarded the Outstanding Customer Satisfaction SECBE award for the building of Ropemakers' Academy in Hailsham; a £12.5m build creating a new 80 place social, emotional, and mental health facility for children.

Report from Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green, ESCC

From my perspective, having been elected in May last year, I have spent the past 10 months learning about potholes, speed limits, drainage and road maintenance in general! I hope that residents will begin to see, if they have not already, improvements to the state of roads. I am certainly very vocal about the issues in my division, and we have had the good fortune of a one off payment of £5.8 million for road improvements along with £31 million to be spent over the next ten years.

A latest update regarding Ukraine is that Cabinet will be receiving a report on the 19th April on the Ukrainian situation and that briefing will consider the broader national issues in addition to the local impacts for East Sussex. This update relates to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the work undertaken to date.

Government is providing initial funding for councils, the sponsors and the refugees arriving in the U.K. Further clarity is being sought to establish the ongoing nature of this funding to ensure we can continue to support the successful implementation of this scheme.

The latest information is that 688 refugees have been matched to sponsors in East Sussex; it is difficult to assess how many refugees will arrive in East Sussex as the scheme is uncapped.

National guidance is being regularly updated and we are uploading the most up to date information we have to this webpage, <https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council/ukraine-crisis>.

Additionally, we are in the process of creating two information 'packs', one for sponsors and one for refugees. These will be available in the very near future. We have emailed all sponsors earlier this week to make initial contact and to advise as to how we can assist.

By Tuesday (5th April) ESCC will be running a dedicated public helpline for Ukrainian refugee issues, this will be with the same organisation who supported our Community Hub work during the COVID pandemic.

We are aware that a potentially large number of refugees will be children of school age and we will of course attempt to provide places locally, if necessary, through the creation of additional capacity using Government funding.

We are supporting the VCSE in employing dedicated support workers in the community who will help refugees integrate into the community. Additionally, we are looking to work with the existing Ukrainian community to help design our support offer.

Report from Cllr John Barnes, Rother District Council

The Council adopted its new Corporate Plan last summer. It runs until 2027, but since some aspects of it did not have all party support, it may be reviewed in part after the elections next May. It can be accessed on the website and is a worthwhile read. Financial stability is proving hard to achieve. The council will spend £16.7 m. in the current year, up from £16.3m. which means that reserves will have been drawn down by over £3m. last year and again in this one. This contrasts markedly with the £4m draw down that was planned over the whole four years 2019 to 2023 and is clearly unsustainable. While some of the delay in raising income from regeneration schemes can fairly be attributed to the pandemic, government grants are currently marginally better than they were in 2019, and efficiency savings achieved have been cancelled out by fresh spending.

The Environment strategy has made limited progress, but 200 plots in our tree survey have been completed and there has been useful work with our contractors to facilitate biodiversity, reduce carbon emissions and energy usage. A carbon baseline has been identified which will allow us to monitor progress. There has been a slight increase in the amount of household waste re-used, recycled and composted to 51 per cent and a Litter strategy has been agreed.

A review of car parking charges mainly affects Bexhill, but a long stay car park with a reduced charge was identified in Battle last August.

We expect to have completed 100 new affordable homes in the financial year and we have made some progress with reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation. About half the budget allocated to buy properties for those temporarily homeless has been spent purchasing ten houses and flats. In addition, we are accommodating 25 rough sleepers and 4 refugee families from Afghanistan. Recently I have become concerned that Optivo are selling off rented properties in both Woods Corner and Burwash, I suspect to avoid the cost of making them more energy efficient. Since we are short of affordable rented accommodation in our area, this seems to me a retrograde step and one that I have been asked to question.

I should note perhaps that I am the Vice Chairman of Rother's housing company, soon to be renamed. Oddly Blackfriars which Wates are building for us in Battle was named as the best housing development at the Inside Housing Development Awards, but it is an exciting development which will provide 200 houses (28 of them shared ownership and 42 rented) that will be energy efficient.

The Community Grants scheme helped 23 projects last year, including £30k. for the Battle Health Pathway. A fund-raising lottery to help with its financing has recently been launched.

Our record in using Government monies to help business through the pandemic to the tune of £9m. has been widely and rightly praised

THE MESSENGER

The Messenger is the village magazine for the villagers of Brightling, Dallington, Mountfield and Netherfield, by the villagers of Brightling, Dallington, Mountfield and Netherfield.

The numbers speak for themselves: we currently print 420 copies, virtually all accounted for by paid subscriptions. That is an extraordinary level of penetration. And there is even a waiting list for certain types of advertising. It is a news-stand quality magazine for our communities.



The Messenger provides news of forthcoming and recent local events, features about local wild life and local history, seasonal cookery ideas, new books. The magazine kept going throughout the Covid pandemic, providing welcome company for so many people. The move to a new printer enabled us to introduce colour and, most recently, a change to the new glossier paper inside has enabled us to withstand the massively higher costs (led in part by the increases in energy costs) sweeping through every aspect of our lives.



2021 saw our first *Messenger Photographic Competition*. We had no idea what to expect, particularly with Covid still restricting people's lives. The response was fantastic and the standard beyond our expectations.



The Messenger is entirely run by volunteers. It is managed by volunteers, particularly editor Mel and treasurer Andrew Wedmore, and delivered by our hardy team of volunteers.

Above all, *The Messenger* is supported by our wonderful advertisers — and you!
Thank you.

Peter
Chair

Contact: Editorial: Mel m.willisfleming@gmail.com, 01424 838764 Advertising: Andrew darwell.messenger@gmail.com, 01424 838 667 Subscriptions: Peter mountfieldmessenger@gmail.com, 01580 880 614.



The Darwell Area Conservation Society

savedarwell@gmail.com ✦ savedarwell.wordpress.com

BRIGHTLING PARISH ASSEMBLY REPORT 2022

DACS exists to **protect, celebrate and enjoy** the special part of the High Weald AONB which has the Darwell Reservoir and Stream as its spine, from Dallington, through Brightling and Mountfield to Robertsbridge.



*Ancient history talking about ancient history
(with a mine pit, c. 1550, in the foreground)*

Since July 2013, DACS has achieved so much. We have fought planning battles, organised walks, produced publications, organised talks, created a profile to give our voice some authority, and reached out to hundreds of people. Above all, we've spoken up for our special part of the AONB. After two years curtailment by Covid-19, we finally have some positive things to report.

PLANNING We have been active on several fronts including next to All Saints, Mountfield, and Watercress Field in Burwash. The latter is not on our patch but any threats or precedents affecting the wider AONB are a threat to our little corner of it.

However, yet again, huge effort has gone into just one site in our area with a history of planning abuse going back to 2009! At a recent presentation to senior Rother execs we made it *very* clear that enough is enough. The ball is now firmly in Rother's court; we must now wait and see.

CONSERVATION In addition to the planning items above, I would pick out two collaborations with Brightling and Mountfield PCs: a very successful meeting with British Gypsum, and the successful application to join the wild flower verge cutting trial along Kent Lane/Mountfield Lane. A survey by two DACS volunteers found an

astonishing 116 species of flowering plants. With enlightened management, this could be much more. *That's worth fighting for — that's what biodiversity actually means!*

CELEBRATION AND EDUCATION In 2021, over 70 people came on six walks and nearly 50 turned up for a talk. So lots of new friends and lots of fun!

In the summer, I led the walk *Through Trees & Time* three times to some of the most appreciative walkers since I first did it in 2014. This walk looks at historical clues to our landscape (including plants) so you see our local countryside in a completely new light. *TT&T* also raised £360 for All Saints, Mountfield. *(See below for 2022 walks.)*

In September, James Fraser led a brand new walk, *Hornbeams, Hairstreaks & Hawkbits*, in which he showed his woodland and meadow restoration projects. Even though it was out of season for so much — flowers, butterflies, dragonflies — this was huge success. This raised £200 for Thomas à Becket, Brightling. *(See below.)*

In October, I gave a talk to the Rother Environmental Group and locals on the historical background to our AONB particularly the local economy and environment.

WHAT NEXT?

The threats to our landscape keep coming — development, ignorance, climate change — but so too do the opportunities. So...

- **2022 Walks** We will be repeating both the walks mentioned above, *Through Trees & Time* and *Hornbeams, Hairstreaks & Hawkbits* this year. Both will transform how you view the world. Come and join the fun. Contact me for dates and details
- **New activities** We need new ideas for walks, talks, visits, and other activities that celebrate our landscape: woods, fields, farms, houses, flowers, history — whatever!
- **New members** We welcome new members as the membership is a vital part of our credentials. There is no annual subscription. Just a one-off joining fee. After that, you help simply by showing up in our membership figures.
- **The DACS Committee** We would love to have new members with new energy and new ideas. All that counts is caring.

For more information, to swap ideas, or just to chat, please contact us.

Peter Miles

Chairman, DACS, 01580 880 614, savedarwell@gmail.com



*A local hedge-bank dating from Anglo-Saxon times.
(Photos by 2021 walker Shelagh Weir)*

Brightling Village Trust

What have we done in the last year?

The Trust exists to support charitable purposes in Brightling and can also make grants to help individuals and relieve hardship. This gives the Trustees discretion to support a wide range of activities which will benefit people in Brightling and which are not otherwise supported.

In last year's report, I mentioned proposals relating to four other small Brightling charities. These are the Mary Herbert Educational Foundation (set up in 1728 to support girls' education), the Catherine Stone Bequest (to support the welfare of Sunday School children), the Jesse Gregson Charity (to provide bread to needy Brightling parishioners) and the FH Scott Charity (to support the poor of the parish including through the provision of coal). Meeting the Charity Commission requirements for these very small trusts has proved hugely burdensome – and their precise objectives are now out of date. The suggestion was made that the Village Trust might take them over and use what funds there are to benefit modern Brightling.

Because of Covid restrictions, it has taken longer than we would have wished to take this forward. We were eventually able to have an open discussion at our AGM in September of last year. At that meeting, we agreed in principal that the four charities should be merged with the Village Trust.

Actually making the change turns out to be a lot more complicated than any of us had expected. None of us who are trustees of the Village Trust or of the other charities are experts in charities law or the hoops that we are having to jump through to get Charities Commission approval. That is one of the reasons why the problem has hung around for a number of years. We have therefore appointed an expert in charity law to help us through this. We have had some initial advice from her and she is hoping to be able to get fully underway very soon now. We have had a very generous donation which will cover a significant part of the cost of this advice.

On other matters, as in previous years, the Trust provided mulled wine and mince pies after the Village Carol Service.

We would welcome suggestions generally and for grants that the Trust should consider making, as well as donations and proposals for raising funds.

The Trustees are Mark Bridge (Treasurer), Charles Everett (Chair), Louise Dando, David Gasson, Brian Holliday, Bob Howell and Nicola Magill (Trust Secretary).

Charles Everett

Chair, Brightling Village Trust
April 2022

2022 Tree Warden Report to Brightling Annual Parish Assembly

The situation with the Eucalyptus at Little Hoaths Wood is still unresolved.

A formal complaint about lack of action was made to the Forestry Commission who have a duty to enforce the terms of the felling licence with which the landowner has failed consistently to comply. The FC say they've visited the site and are now satisfied the Eucalyptus has been removed, but it's clear from the adjacent road that this isn't the case. The FC have failed to respond to requests for a meeting on site.

The Brightling Tree Group has been collecting information on notable trees in the Parish (thank you volunteers), and there is more of the Parish still to be surveyed. If you'd like to take part, please contact me.

As you will have read in the Messenger, the Parish Council planted a Walnut tree on the Observatory Triangle as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. You may be wondering why a Walnut tree was chosen. A memorial tree needs to be a long-lived species and the climate here in 50 to 100 years dictates which species will be thriving at the end of the century. Sadly, it won't be our Oaks and Beeches. But species currently at home in the warmer climes of southern Europe should be fine.

Our parish needs more Tree Wardens and I'm looking to recruit at least 3 more people with an interest in trees. You don't need to be a tree expert, I'm not, just enthusiastic. Please contact me if you can help.

If you'd like to come on a walk or be involved in helping to organize the walks, please contact me at the tree warden email address – treewarden@dallington.org.uk

Brightling Flower Show Report - 2022

Accounts have remained stable over the last 2 years.

Income has been generated by plant sales and we have used these funds to update our PA system with a new amplifier and long-range wireless microphones.

It has been agreed that all funds raised by the plant sales this year will be donated to Ukraine.