

WARTLING PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF

4th March 2025

This meeting was held at the Reid Hall in Boreham Street.

65 Present

Councillors K Stevens (Chairman), W Reid and M Shine.

County Councillor B Bowdler, District Councillor M Fairweather, A Stevens (Clerk) and six members of the public were also in attendance.

66 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paterson. The reasons for his apologies were accepted by the Full Council.

67 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 7th January 2025

The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 7th January 2025 were read, confirmed as a true and accurate record, and signed by the Chairman.

68 Clerk's Report on Matters' Arising

Any matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

69 Disclosures of Interests

There were no declarations of interests or changes to the Register of Interests.

The meeting was then suspended.

70 Report from the District Councillors on matters from the District Council affecting this Parish.

District Councillor Fairweather's report was read out and is attached to these minutes.

There was a discussion on the local government reorganisation and the potential impact on parishes and town councils. The details of the reorganisation remain unclear, necessitating further discussion and clarification to ensure all stakeholders understand the implications and next steps.

71 Reports from the County Councillor on matters from the County Council affecting this Parish.

County Councillor Bowdler sent a written report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

The County Councillor discussed the public's negative response to booking appointments for waste tips and the A259 bridge replacement plan.

72 Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions from any members of the public.

The meeting was then re-opened.

73 Planning Applications

There were no new planning applications, but a retrospective application for caravans at Dyffryn is pending.

74 Reports

a) Planning

This was covered in Minute 73.

b) Environment

There has been one minor incident of flytipping since the last meeting and it was swiftly removed.

c) Footpaths

The Parish Council has submitted its response to the East Sussex Rights of Way Access Plan and residents were encouraged to do the same. The consultation deadline is the 14th March.

The Parish Council has received a complaint about the footpath running down past Greenman Yard because it is impassable. The complaint has been referred to Rights of Way.

d) Highways

There was a discussion on potholes which once reported were quickly repaired. Reporting them via FixMyStreet seems to be working well.

Concerns were raised about the work that's being done on the increased entrance to the fields opposite Preston Farm and its impact on road safety. A conservation concern is also being checked.

e) Police

There was nothing new to report from the Police.

f) Communication

Councillor Reid provided an update on email list changes and website postings.

g) Speedwatch

The latest Speedwatch Report is attached. It was noted that there were 8 sessions not six as stated incorrectly at the top of the report.

h) Trees

There was nothing new to report on this occasion.

75 Reports from outside meetings and courses attended

Councillor Stevens had been due to discuss Devolution at this point but the subject was covered earlier on in the meeting.

76 Finance Report

Councillors resolved;

- To approve the payments list to the 4th March 2025. The payments were as follows;

		<u>£</u>
101078	British Legion – Commemorative Products	974.98
101079	Plaud AI – Recorder	169.99
101080	A Stevens – Salary – January	420.91
101081	A Stevens – Salary - February	420.91
101082	HMRC – PAYE	86.40
101083	ESCC – Pensions	245.62
101084	ESCC – Grit Bin	423.24

- To approve the accounts to 30th January 2025.
- The Remembrance Day flag, poppies and bench have been received. Councillors Shine and Stevens will carry out a site visit to agree where to fix them too. The Men’s Shed has very kindly agreed to fit the bench on land outside the Reid Hall.
- The Parish Council has been approached by the trustees of the Reid Hall who would like to apply for CIL funding. The Parish Council is awaiting a response from East Sussex Highways (see Minute 61) before committing funds.

77 Highways

- i. Councillors Stevens, Reid and Shine met the Road Safety Team Manager at ESCC with the clerk to work out what measures can be taken to improve road safety in Boreham Street. Councillors are now waiting for a report from Highways.
- ii. The new grit bin at the junction of Wood Lane and The Strait, is on the list for the next round of installations.

78 Emergency Plan

The Emergency Plan requires further development, including specifics on implementation and coordination with local emergency responders to ensure readiness and efficiency in case of emergencies. That work on the Plan is ongoing.

79 Questions from Parish Councillors

There were no further questions from any of the Parish Councillors.

80 Dates of future meetings

The following meeting dates are; 7th May 2025, 1st July 2025, 2nd September 2025 and the 4th November 2025.

This meeting ended at 8.05pm

Direct Debit problem

This now looks to be resolved. Only one person had to be compensated for losses (£12).

An external report has been received which itemises the learnings that can be taken from the communication failures by Officers (largely due to the, then, impending Xmas break) .

Local govt re-organisation

In January the White Paper had only just been published (just a few days before Xmas) and the implications hadn't fully emerged.

After the January Pevensey PC, East Sussex CC met to decide how to respond to the Govt's very tight deadlines. ESCC voted to apply for the Govt's Priority (fast-track) Programme in conjunction with West Sussex and Brighton to be under a "Mayor of Sussex". (The Priority Programme carries a subsidy towards the re-organisation costs, that otherwise would not be available.) The Govt. has already breached its own "deadline" (31st Jan) for saying whether the application is accepted and whether the County elections will go ahead in May. The Local Govt. Assn. is exerting pressure for clarity on this elections point (and quickly).

The Districts were kept in the dark and not consulted, perhaps unsurprisingly, only the "first tier" authorities (eg. County Councils) were. The re-organisation would see Districts eventually disappear but legacy Districts might endure for a year or two beyond their 2027 term to wind things up in an orderly manner. Parishes are predicted to need to take on more powers locally, but there are also prophesies that small parishes might need to merge to be able to manage these powers. All these proposals are due to go out to public consultation sometime in Feb – Apr. What will be consulted on is totally unclear. (There are suggestions the Brighton will swallow up Shoreham and Worthing. Surrey are bidding to take over Crawley and Gatwick. At least the East Sussex proposals are fairly clear-cut.)

This process is also dubbed "devolution" by the Govt., but there are precious few details about this, beyond that the Mayor would have power to ram through Planning Applications. (Although there are mutterings that there may be new powers around transport.)

The pending re-organisation has injected more urgency into Wealden delivering its community projects (eg. Pevensey Sports Pavilion) and there are other projects in the offing.

Wealden Cllrs. have a briefing (Weds. 5th March) that might shed more light on what is happening.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The pending re-organisation means that Wealden Cllrs. see even more urgency in getting community benefits down to the grassroots.

Coastal Management

Wealden's Oversight and Scrutiny Committee had Nick Gray, Manager at Pevensey Bay in for questioning. The reason that building cannot be allowed on the flood zones is that the EA does not have funding for its projects beyond 2038, whereas 100 year certainty is required to allow building. There is a Coastal Strategy Plan in preparation, but that is about two years away.

Traffic in Pevensey and Westham High Streets

A national newspaper has shown interest in the aspect that relates to the school. It is far too early to say if anything will come of this.

East Sussex Planning Enforcement is badly under-staffed and is very disinclined to take an interest in the Rubbish Transfer Station. More pressure is needed.

Adverts at Pevensey Rec

I carried forward the complaint about unhelpfulness on this issue on the part of Wealden's Planning Dept. The reply to the complaint, from the Head of Planning, was highly unhelpful. I then raised, with the relevant Portfolio Holders, the issue of whether this was the level of service that Wealden aspires to deliver. I am aware that informal discussions have taken place behind the scenes.

Sports Club

I have approached them to prepare a "Phase 2" scheme as funding is likely to become available!

St. Nicholas' Close, Pevensey

I have chased up a scheme to provide "Reserved Carers' Parking" as a source of funding has been identified.

Tree

Tree at junction of High Street / A 259 has been reported.

Listed Building in Windmill Hill

A case with the Heritage Officer is being pursued.

Listed Building in Pevensey Conservation Area

A case with the Heritage Officer is being pursued.

Defective street lighting in Hobney Rise / Pelham Close, Westham

A case is being pursued.

This defect may have facilitated a car being broken into.

Westham Crossroads and Level Crossing

Road defects have been reported.

Westham High Street

Both Zebra crossings were reported and have since been re-painted.

Collins Honda, Herstmonceux

I have been working with the Parish Council to establish whether the loss of possible social rented housing is inevitable.

Local Plan update

The Local Plan Report, and its Appendices, were published last week (and are attached). It is quite easy to read, and to find the section related to Westham, and Peelings Lane in particular (pages 151 - 155 of Appendix A). It is a very high - level summary. The Officers say that they have just collated the responses to see what common themes emerge. The Officers say that they have not yet considered the details of individual comments yet, and that will be done in the course of the spring and summer.

The Local Plan Reg. 18 consultation will re-open, for 6 weeks, in Quarter 3 (July - September), we need to be mentally ready for that re-opening, with any new material ready for submission. I have found extensive, and quite troubling, errors in the Sustainable Settlements Study in so far as it relates to Westham (and I know other errors relating to other villages). I am preparing a detailed critique of the Study in so far as it relates to Westham. The Officers publicly concede that the accuracy of the Study has been challenged, and seemingly not just by me.

I will update everyone as new information (eg. dates) becomes available.

If there are queries about this report, or any other matters concerning my Ward, then I suggest anyone to email my WDC email: Cllr.Mark.Fairweather@wealden.gov.uk.

WDC Cllr. Mark Fairweather

Members' Update – East Sussex County Council – February 2025

Cllr Bob Bowdler - Wealden East Division - *"The Heart of Wealden"*

(Heathfield, Horam, Hooe, Herstmonceux, Ninfield, Warbleton & Wartling parishes)

(and temporarily Pevensey & Westham Parishes)

LOCAL ISSUES:

Heathfield, Rushlake Green & Punnetts Town: Water main Update:

The utility road works are now at the junction of Burwash Road and Battle Road. Major pot holes created in the region of Hugletts Lane and Halley Road junctions (all reported) due to heavy traffic use on one carriageway. The whole of Battle Road has now been inspected and potholes marked for intervention (some already done)!

All Areas - Reported Scam:

Please look out for potential Scam email/Text messages from The Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) which suggests that *"you have not yet completed your 2024 Winter Fuel Allowance application"*. It is utter nonsense, and the giveaway is the *"Good Luck"* sign off! Please DO NOT click on and any links within unsolicited messages!

COUNTY REPORT:

Adult Social Care

"I test" – Residents urged to test regularly for HIV

People across East Sussex are being encouraged to test regularly for HIV, as part of a national awareness week which began on 10 February. The council is backing the National HIV Testing Week campaign 'I test', which aims to encourage more people to get tested to help stop the spread of the virus. There were 30 new HIV diagnoses in East Sussex in 2022.

In the three-year period between 2020 and 2022, nearly 1 in 3 people diagnosed with HIV in East Sussex were diagnosed at a late stage of infection. A late HIV diagnosis is when someone tests positive for HIV after the virus has already damaged their immune system. This can lead to poorer health outcomes and an increased risk of transmitting the virus to others.

Free finger-prick tests, delivered in discreet packaging, can be ordered online with the results available by text within a few days. Over 7,500 online HIV tests were completed by East Sussex residents in 2024. Anyone diagnosed with HIV in the UK can access free treatment and support.

More information is available [here](#).

Children's Services

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](#).

Communities, Economy and Transport

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](#).

More skills projects benefit from £1 million boost

Nine more projects in Hastings and Rother have benefitted from Government funding designed to support training and boost employability.

The Skills Capital Fund from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), has already helped 11 projects in the area including a digital skills classroom, virtual reality healthcare training and the creation of a community carpentry studio.

Nine of the 23 bids received by East Sussex County Council will now receive a share of the £1 million fund. The projects include the fitting out of a new artist residency studio, the development of two private learning pods, and the purchase of IT equipment to support young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The new projects were chosen by a panel including East Sussex County Council, officers from Rother and Hastings Councils and a representative from the Local Skills Improvement Partnership.

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](#).

Governance Services

Greater powers for Sussex come a step closer with government backing for devolution

An opportunity to gain new powers and investment for Sussex has moved a step nearer with the government's agreement to make the area a priority for devolution. Following an expression of interest from the leaders of Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council, ministers have approved proposals to create a mayoral strategic authority for Sussex. This will be comprised of an elected mayor and two members of each constituent authority, with strategic powers for transport, public safety, health, environment and climate change, housing, economic growth, skills and jobs.

Local councils in every part of Sussex would work closely with the mayoral strategic authority and would

continue to deliver day-to-day services.

Sussex's upper-tier local authorities agree that devolution could unlock new funding and give people a stronger voice over national decisions which affect them and greater power to steer major projects across the area.

The government will now begin a consultation to seek the views of people and organisations in Sussex.

Alongside devolution, the government is asking for proposals for unitary councils in all parts of Sussex, moving away from the two-tier model of county and borough or district councils where those exist. Discussion with partners will continue on how this might be arranged.

There are no immediate changes to the operation of local authorities in Sussex or the services they provide. The plans for devolution and local government reorganisation do not change the councils' commitment to service delivery for communities across Sussex.

More information is available [here](#).

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](#).

For your info: **Meetings I attended in February as your County Councillor:**

ESCC 3 x Weekly DCS/ADCS Briefings
Foster Carer Training Session – Hastings
Pevensey Parish Council
ESCC Full Council
ESCC Cabinet
ESCC Governance Committee
Pevensey PC SLR

Horam Parish Council
Visit to Military College, Eastbourne
ESCC Cabinet Briefing
Military Veterans, Eastbourne
Herstmonceux Parish Council
ESCC DCMS Youth Webinar
Ninfield Parish Council - DNA
Horam PC SLR
ESCC Cabinet
Visit to Uckfield Family Hub
Warbleton Parish Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. B. H.', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

3/3/25