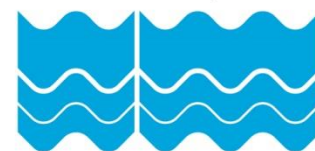


Summary of County Council achievements 2025/26

This summary sets out some of the key achievements of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) in 2025/26 (up to February 2026) under the four strategic priorities of the Council:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council/about/key-documents/council-plans

The Council Plan for the forthcoming year will be on our website from 1st April 2026.



Driving sustainable economic growth

To maintain and improve the condition of our roads, over the first three-quarters of the year, **77 road improvement schemes** were completed and over 17,000 potholes were repaired. The Secretary of State confirmed the legal orders necessary to build a new bridge at Exceat, a significant project which will remove the bottleneck created by the existing one-lane bridge. We have awarded the contract for the new bridge to Jackson Civil Engineering Group.

In December 2025, with Brighton and Hove City Council and West Sussex County Council, we launched the **Get Sussex Working Plan** - a bold strategy to boost employment, tackle inequalities and build a thriving economy. The Plan sets out 6 strategic ambitions to help residents access good jobs and develop new skills for employment and was drafted in collaboration with over 200 stakeholders.

A range of **business support programmes**, creating new jobs, have been delivered, including through our Growth Hub and Rural Business Grants. Through these schemes over 350 businesses have been supported over the first three-quarters of the year. We were also successful in securing £355,000 of funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver an Ambition to Action programme available to small and medium enterprises in Eastbourne, Lewes, Wealden and Rother districts. The programme offers businesses access to one-to-one expert advice and tailored action plans to remove barriers to growth, improve productivity and help them thrive.

In July 2025, **Skills East Sussex** celebrated a decade of working to improve local employment and skills levels. Achievements over the last 10 years have included securing over £60 million (m) of additional funding for employment and skills initiatives and capital infrastructure; launching one of the UK's first Careers Hubs and developing a range of adult learning and employment programmes. In June 2025, we secured funding to launch a Skills Bootcamp programme which offers flexible vocational courses for employees, the self-employed and the unemployed in a range of sectors, including construction, engineering, digital skills, early years, land-based sectors and health and social care. In addition, at the end of 2025, 230 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges with activities such as career talks and Open Doors workplace visits.

The Council's **Alternative Provision** service, which provides for pupils who would not otherwise receive a suitable education, was transferred to the London South East Trust in 2025. The new service - the East Sussex Academy - is operating from sites in Hailsham, Newhaven and Hastings. In 2025/26 the Council is commissioning 220 places at the Academy, a 96% increase on the number of places in 2024/25.

6,779 children took part in The Summer Reading Challenge in 2025, which encourages children to read during the summer holidays. Over 1750 IT For You sessions were also attended in **libraries** during the first three-quarters of 2025/26 and there have been over 800 enrolments on Family Learning Programmes to help people develop their English, maths and language skills. Forest Row library reopened in October 2025 after a refurbishment, including an improved children's library.

The percentage of children achieving a **good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage** is continuing to improve, remaining above the national rate (70.4% compared 68.3%) for 5-year-olds.

The Council spent £416m with 1280 **local suppliers** over 2025, equating to 62% of total contract spend. In addition, during the first three-quarters of the year, 24 contracts were awarded that were in-scope of the Social Value Measurement Charter with a total value of over £22m. Over £4m of **social value** commitments were secured through these contracts, including apprenticeships, creation of local jobs, and support to environmental initiatives.

Keeping vulnerable people safe

Ofsted undertook a Focused Visit Inspection of **Children's Services** in July 2025, which looked at services for children in need or those subject to a protection plan. The report found that these children, in need of additional support, have access to services that make a positive difference to their lives and that continued investment in services and a "relentless focus" on supporting social workers and staff was helping to drive ongoing improvement in the lives of children and families.

The East Sussex **Children in Care Council** won first place for their My Things Matter project in the Campaign Award category at the National Voice Awards 2025. In addition to first place, they were also announced as winners of the People's Choice 'All Star Award', voted as the most inspiring group or project of the day.

As part of our Family First programme, a Family First Consultation Advice Line was launched in 2025 to help professionals provide **early support to families** across East Sussex, improving outcomes for vulnerable children. It is available for professionals in education, health, early years, police, the voluntary and community sector as well as families and provides advice, guidance, reflection on family challenges, access to specialist support and signposting to community resources.

Keeping vulnerable people safe continued...

ESCC operates seven **children's homes** for our children in care, including a secure children's home that is a national resource. Six of the homes are graded 'good' by Ofsted and one home is graded 'outstanding', ensuring that we provide excellent care and support to our children and young people.

A new contract to provide safe accommodation for people seeking safety from **domestic abuse** in the county began in July 2025. The new provider has taken over the existing 37 units of accommodation and plans to provide an additional 18 units. 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence began with White Ribbon Day in November 2025, and included events, new resources, and a social media campaign.

Trading Standards has made over 130 interventions over the first three-quarters of 2025/26 to protect vulnerable people who had been the target of rogue trading or financial abuse, including installing call blockers and CCTV. In addition, the team has provided advice and support to over 280 businesses.

Helping people help themselves

The new Heathfield and JOFF (Peacehaven) **Youth Hubs** opened in 2025, to provide high quality facilities and services for young people. New facilities at the Hubs include kitchens, art rooms, music rooms and fitness suites and both are attracting high numbers of young people with excellent feedback.

Adult Social Care (ASC) commission and provide a range of services to support adults and older people, with increasing demand and increasing complexity of needs being seen amongst people accessing support. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the Council in 2025, giving a positive assessment of our services. Giving the Council a rating of 'good', the CQC highlighted the collaboration with those using the service as a real strength and that people felt listened to and treated with dignity. The ASC prevention strategy is developing a new prevention portal - an online hub to enable people to take action to maintain their wellbeing and independence and secured £350,000 from Sport England to support the physical wellbeing of older people in Hastings. Work also continues on the **integration of health and social care** with our 5 Integrated Community Teams (ICTs), across the health and care system, addressing local priorities and focusing on multi-disciplinary team working with proactive care for the most complex and vulnerable patients. East Sussex was also successful in applying to be part of the first wave of the National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme to support a shift from hospital-based care to more community focused support. With an initial focus on Hastings and Rother, the national support will help us accelerate and build on our local plans for ICTs and proactive care.

9 road safety schemes were completed during the first three-quarters of 2025/26 to improve road safety infrastructure. The Council also runs courses aimed at giving children and adults the skills they need for riding their bikes on the road. Over the first three-quarters of the year we delivered over 300 Bikeability courses, with over 2400 people benefitting, and over 340 'Wheels for All' sessions with over 5000 attendees.

The **Wellbeing at Work** (WAW) programme, which supports employers to create and deliver a health and wellbeing survey, the results of which highlight priority areas for support, including mental health, musculoskeletal health, and workplace culture and leadership, celebrated its 100th award in November 2025. The programme has helped to improve the workplace for thousands of people.

The **Stronger for Life in Hospital** scheme, run by Adult Social Care and Health, at the Bexhill Irvine Unit won the President's Award at the Community Hospitals Association Innovation and Best Practice Awards in 2025. The scheme supports hospital patients, particularly those recovering from strokes, to maintain physical conditioning both during their hospital stay and after discharge.

Making best use of resources in the short and long term

The Council's **budget and Council Plan** for 2026/27 were approved at the meeting of Full Council on 10 February 2026. Councillors approved a budget spending over £693m on services in 2026/27 which includes new service investments of over £70m, to meet increased costs and demands on services. To meet these costs and demands, and to mitigate the impact of a reduction in Government grant funding, the budget includes increasing Council Tax by 4.99%, savings of £6.3m and an approved request to Government for Exceptional Financial Support.

We have worked to maximise the possible benefits for residents from the Government's reforms to the **structure of local government**. We submitted our response to the Government's consultation on different models for unitary government for the Sussex area, setting out our strong support for the One East Sussex (single unitary) model. We have also worked with partners to support the creation of the **Sussex and Brighton Mayoral County Combined Authority** which will bring devolved strategic decision making to the area, as well as unlocking a 30-year investment fund totalling £1.14bn for locally agreed priorities. An Informal Partnership Board has been launched, an interim leadership team is in place, and the three upper-tier constituent councils have all formally consented to the legislation required to establish the new Authority.

ESCC has received £4.441m from the Government's **Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure** (LEVI) Fund, to support the rollout of on-street electric vehicle charge points. Following a procurement exercise, a preferred supplier has been selected to take forward delivery, and we will soon be awarding the contract. Thirteen **energy efficiency** projects were completed on Council buildings during the first three-quarters of the year, including insulation projects and solar energy schemes. Carbon emissions for quarter 1 and 2 of 2025/26 saw a 23% reduction compared with the same period in 2024/25 and a 52% reduction compared to the same period for the baseline year 2019/20.