



Cllr Paul Redstone
Email: Cllr.Paul.Redstone@eastsussex.gov.uk
Phone: 07510 074267
Address: Edgingtons
Cripps Corner
Robertsbridge TN32 5RY

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Report to Parish Councils – December 2023

This report is written is for Parish Councils meeting in December (or January for those which do not have December meetings). It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother.

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.

Highways Maintenance

As I have previously reported, ESCC has allocated more than £15M extra this year on top of normal budgets for road maintenance, particularly potholes and drainage (the underlying cause of many road degradations). This amount of extra investment is not sustainable each year.

The government has recently announced that monies from the cancelled section of HS2 would be reallocated. As a result of this £52M has been allocated to East Sussex for resurfacing over the next 10 years. Of this £1.674M is allocated for each of the next two years with the remainder spread over the following 8 years.

Ideally, we would spend a lot more – we estimate that to get all red and amber condition roads to green standard would cost more than £300M which is more than £500 for each person in East Sussex, clearly not reasonable.

As with all county, district and borough councils we continue to lobby government for more financial support to meet the needs of residents. Although highways are the most prominent ESCC responsibility, they are only a small part of our expenditure which is dominated by adult and social care, and children's services, supporting the most needy in our communities.

Long Term Transport Plan 4

The government requires councils to produce a long-term transport plan for their area on a regular basis. LTP4 has already been through a series of consultations including with a cross-party reference group of county councillors which I chaired. It has involved a huge amount of work by officials, a firm of consultants who carried out extensive modelling and others. It covers the 26 years to 2050.

The draft report has now gone to public consultation and can be seen at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/draftltp4>. The report is also being made available at 22 public libraries and there are a series of drop-in sessions from now until mid-February. You can also provide feedback online. Details are on the web site.

Key themes from the draft:

- Alternatives to private cars will become more important, including public transport, walking, cycling and wheeling.
- Decarbonisation of the transport system will require more use of electric vehicles or other fuels such as hydrogen.
- Planning to allow more services such as shops, schools and surgeries to be local would help reduce travel, though this clearly might have cost implications and may not be feasible.
- Employment changes such as more home or hybrid working will reduce the needs to travel, though this will change further over the period of the plan.
- There is a clear need to improve travel links to help residents to get to work, to leisure or other needs, as well as those travelling into the county. The plan includes improvements to road, rail and similar infrastructure.
- East Sussex is made up of urban areas along the coastal strip but also rural areas, including of course the 7 parishes in Northern Rother. Although improved public transport can serve villages better, for example from the recent increase in scheduled bus services and Flexibus, private cars will continue to be important.
- The plan is a 'living' one. We do not expect it to be unchanged over the next 26 years.
- The plan includes billions of pounds of 'interventions' including to roads, rail, buses and facilities such as 'mobility hubs' which provide interchange between different means of transport. Which ones go ahead depends on feasibility but also sources of funds/grants from central government.

I am very happy to discuss LTP4 at Parish Councils – in fact I could speak with some authority for hours on it, but I am sure this would not be welcome!

Keeping Warm in Winter

Supporting those who are unable to heat their homes is the responsibility of both county and district/borough councils. People who struggle to keep their homes warm can get support and advice through the council's Warm Home Check service. See <https://warmeastsussex.org.uk/services-and-support/winter-home-check-service/>. The telephone number is 0800 464 7307.

The service offers telephone advice for anyone struggling to afford to keep warm at home, with

money-saving advice and tips on how to stay warm for less.

Eligible households can also receive a home energy efficiency assessment which includes advice on how to reduce energy costs and details of the financial support available to help with heating costs.

Assistance with small home improvement measures such as pipe insulation, draught-proofing or radiator reflector panels may also be available.

If you know anyone who could benefit from this, please pass this on to them.