

## **East Sussex County Council Report to Bexhill Town Council – February 2023 Bexhill County Councillors Azad, Geary and Hollidge**

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In addition to our monthly report, please see the PDF separately attached (if this is issued by email), with the just published ESCC's summary of achievements for 22/23. There may be some slight repeats, but we wanted to ensure that you had both your county councillors update and the newly published ESCC summary. As with below, if anyone wishes to discuss any of these reports or issues, contact us.

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### **Adult Social Care**

#### Members of the public encouraged to share views on health and wellbeing service

East Sussex residents are being encouraged to share their views on proposed changes to One You East Sussex, the integrated health and wellbeing service for people living in the county. The council is considering changing how the service supports residents when the current contract ends in March 2024. One You East Sussex helps residents to eat well, manage their weight, move more, quit smoking and drink less. The service supports approximately 5000 residents each year. The proposed change would still see holistic health assessments offered to all eligible residents, and everyone would have access to online support programmes to help them make changes to their health-related behaviours. More intensive support, such as weight management group delivered in person or face-to-face support from a health coach, would only be routinely offered to those with the highest needs who could gain the greatest health benefits. This change would help the service tackle health inequalities by offering greater levels of support to those who need it the most, including those living in areas with high levels of deprivation, where life expectancy is lower than average, or to people living with a disability or mental health issue. Any savings from the proposed changes would be used by the service to help it achieve the best possible health outcomes for residents and communities. The consultation also seeks people's views on the possible ways any saving could be re-invested back into the service. The consultation can be completed online

<https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/public-health/behaviourchangeservice/consultation/subpage.2023-01-04.6708848010/>

#### Council backs national HIV testing week campaign

As part of a national awareness week which commenced on 6 February, people across East Sussex are being encouraged to regularly test for HIV. The council is backing the new National HIV Testing Week campaign, 'I Test', which aims to encourage more people to get tested and help stop the spread of the virus. The annual awareness programme is part of the government's action plan to reduce new HIV infections by 80 percent by 2025 and eradicate new cases of HIV by 2030. Testing for HIV is quick, confidential, and can even be done at home. Free finger-prick tests, delivered in discreet packaging, can be ordered online [here](#). The results are available to receive via text. In addition to at-home testing, people can also get tested at their local GP surgery or specialist sexual health clinic.

### **Communities, Economy and Transport**

#### East Sussex marks anniversary of Ukraine Invasion

On Friday 24 February, the Ukrainian flag was raised in solidarity with the people of Ukraine as the country marks the anniversary of the Russian invasion. At 11am, the council joined the national one-minute silence to commemorate one year since the start of the year.

East Sussex residents have shown their continuing and steadfast support for Ukrainians during the last 12 months. Over 500 host families are currently offering shelter to those fleeing the conflict, with more than 1,400 Ukrainian guests now living in the county. A further 300 guests are expected to arrive locally during the coming weeks. Numerous local groups and organisations have provided activities and support to assist Ukrainian guests in getting to know their new communities. As the war continues, more Ukrainians are having to leave their homeland and the council is seeking more host families. Information on hosting Ukrainian guests, the support available to those arriving in East Sussex and other ways people can help is available at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/supporting-refugees/ukraine>

#### Families urged to claim fruit and vegetable payments

Families are being urged to check their eligibility for help to buy milk and food through the NHS Healthy Start initiative. As well as providing funds each month to buy milk, fruit and vegetables, the scheme also allows those who are eligible to obtain free vitamins. Women who are over 10 weeks pregnant and families with a child under 4 who are in receipt of certain benefits can apply for the scheme. It is estimated that over 1400 eligible families in East Sussex are missing out on at least £320,000 of available funding every year. People who qualify will be sent a Healthy Start card with money loaded onto it; this can be used in shops such as supermarkets, convenience stores, petrol stations and pharmacies that display the Mastercard® symbol and sell healthy food and milk. The card can be used to buy plain liquid cow's milk; fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables; fresh, dried, and tinned pulses and infant formula milk based on cow's milk. It can also be used to get Healthy Start Women's vitamin tablets and children's vitamin drops for free. More information on the Healthy Start initiative and details of how to apply can be found at <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk>

#### Library book amnesty to be held across East Sussex

A book amnesty is being held in libraries across the county to recover many missing library books. From February 13 to March 31, fines will be waived by the library service for any books returned. Popular titles such as *The Hungry Caterpillar*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Gruffalo* are some of the overdue children's books. Over 70 copies of children's titles by Roald Dahl are currently missing from East Sussex libraries. Books can be returned to any East Sussex library during opening hours. Alternatively, most libraries have drop boxes for out of hours returns. Residents who are not finished with the books they currently have out on loan are being encouraged to renew them as soon as possible.

#### **Children Services:**

##### Use of Household Support Fund approved to support vulnerable households

At the meeting of 27 February, the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability resolved to approve the proposed use of £2,052,500 of the Household Support Fund to provide support to households with children between 1 April – 30 September 2023. The scheme provides a further opportunity to extend the support to households with children, households with pensioners, households with a disabled person and other vulnerable households within East Sussex who are experiencing financial challenges.

#### **East Sussex County Council signs new Armed Forces Covenant**

At the meeting of 14 February, the Lead Member for Children & Families and Armed Forces Champion resolved to agree to the pledges outlined by the East Sussex County Council Armed Forces Covenant and to sign the updated document.

The re-submission of the Covenant demonstrates the council's continued support to the Armed Forces Community and Veterans and allows for the council to aim for Gold Accreditation on the Employers Recognition Scheme in 2023.

## **Governance Services**

### **Budget protecting vital services approved**

The county council's 2023/24 budget, which will pay for services including roads, libraries, and support for vulnerable adults and children, was approved at a meeting of the Full Council on Tuesday, February 7. The authority's plan for delivering its priorities in the coming year was also announced. As well as day-to-day spending on services, Full Council also approved the proposed capital programme, which includes investment in improvements to the highways infrastructure, school places, SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision, as well as further supporting the council's commitment to reduce its carbon footprint from its operations. The Council Plan for the coming financial year was also announced. This sets out the programme of how services will be delivered, including improved bus services, integrated care services, a new strategy for providing Special Educational Needs and Disability support for East Sussex children, and the development of a new economic strategy for the county.

### **County Roads**

Update on pothole repairs, as at 1 March – 8,261 potholes repaired since the beginning of January this year and 595 potholes currently awaiting repair – which is now below 'normal' levels. ESCC had doubled the number of gangs to deal with the unprecedented number of reports, but levels are now reduced, and we hope a more normal level of service will be sufficient. We as the Bexhill County Councillors appreciate that we still have much to do across so many our roads and pavements across Bexhill, but we continue to liaise with the Highways Stewards and officers.

### **Rother Parking Review**

Please visit, [Rother | East Sussex County Council](#) for details of Rother's Parking Review process on the ESCC website. This is the formal consultation link for details and please note final date for submissions is **Friday 17 March 2023**. Affected homes and businesses have had letters delivered explaining the proposed new traffic regulation orders. They will be given the opportunity to Support or Object. These will be reviewed and eventually go to ESCC's planning committee and either be withdrawn or given a reason why they should go ahead as proposed.

There will always be winners and losers where traffic management measures are brought in. ESCC as the Highway Authority have a difficult task in making space available for everyone to move around, especially those who find difficulty. Many in Bexhill have limited sight, mobility problems or other challenges and for them driving isn't always an option. Keeping dropped kerbs and pavements free of clutter and vehicles is one reason some of these measures are needed. Drivers who need to access our Town by vehicle should be able to move around with ease, find space and in certain areas pay the small appropriate fee easily. There is only one thing worse than not being able to find kerb space when you need it, that is receiving a parking ticket once you have parked in what you think is a reasonable way. For Bexhill to function successfully you should be able to access it by whatever means you need or choose as easily and as cheaply as possible.

If town councillors need to raise any matters or seek further information on any of the above, or the separately provided ESCC summary report, please let us know.

Cllrs Azad, Geary and Hollidge, as always, happy to provide more specific updates or a presentation at a future Town Council meeting, please contact us.