

Rudgwick Parish Council

Weekly Clerk's Update: 15th – 21st February 2025 (Agenda March 2025)

To: Parish Councillors

c.c: Christian Mitchell (West Sussex County Councillor)
Richard Landeryou (Horsham District Councillor)

From: Anna Clayton

The weekly update provides information regarding:

- Announcements/delegated decisions by the Clerk
- Planning information
- Correspondence/communications from parishioners
- Correspondence/communications from outside organisations

List of organisations that communicate with the Council on a regular basis.

- AIRS (Action in Rural Sussex)
- APCAG (Association of Parish Councils Aviation Group)
- CAGNE (Communities Against Gatwick Noise Emission)
- CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England)
- HALC (Horsham Association of Local Councils)
- HDC (Horsham District Council)
- NALC (National Association of Local Councils)
- WSALC (West Sussex Association of Local Councils)
- WSCC (West Sussex District Council)

Clerk's announcements/delegated decisions:

- Environmental Cleansing Grant has increased by 3.9% to £2,643.78 for 2025/26

GENERAL REMINDER: If you wish to speak face to face to a member of staff, please contact the Clerk on 07927 702321 during her office working hours (Monday – Wednesday 9.30 – 15.30).

Applications for noting at Rudgwick Parish Council Meeting

Applications for noting at Rudgwick Parish Council Meeting 10 th March 2025	
Application No: DISC/25/0038 11.02.2025	Response/Comments:

Applicant: Rudgwick Brick Works, Unit 1 Kiln House, Lynwick Street, Rudgwick	
Reason for Application: Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 3, 4 and 5 to approved application DC/24/0272.	
Official Response Date: Not available / Determination 08.04.2025	
Application No: DISC/25/0042 12.02.2025	Response/Comments:
Applicant: Okewood House, The Haven	
Reason for Application: Approval of details reserved by condition 3 to approved application DC/22/0871	
Official Response Date: Not available / Determination 09.04.2025	

Applications for consideration at Rudgwick Parish Council Meeting

Applications for consideration at Rudgwick Parish Council Meeting 10 th March 2025	
Application No:	Response/Comments:
Applicant:	
Reason for Application:	
Official Response Date:	

Decisions

HDC Council Decisions – Rudgwick Parish Council Meeting 10 th March 2025

Application No: DC/24/1806	Response: Permitted / RPC - No objection provided the HDC Heritage Officer is satisfied that the setting of the listed building will not be affected by the development.
Applicant: Swains Cottage, Tismans Common	
Reason for Application: Erection of an oak-framed carport, landscaping alterations including extension of gravel driveway and addition of new vehicle access to the highway. (Householder Application).	
Official Response Date:	
Application No: DC/24/1969	Response/Comments: Permitted / RPC - The question to be asked is whether the changes made during the construction, and deviation from the HDC approved plans, can be regularised under this Variation of Condition application or is a further retrospective planning application necessary.
Applicant: Okewood House, The Haven	
Reason for Application: Variation of Condition 1 of previously approved application DC/22/0871 (Demolition of existing western wing and store. Erection of a two storey side extension. Blocking up of existing and creation of new openings and construction of a single storey glazed link. Alterations to existing Cottage building including erection of a porch. Closure of existing access and upgrading existing gated opening to form main access with associated landscaping) Relating to the relocation of the approved chimney, re-orientation of the chimney pots and narrowing of the chimney to the west elevation. Removal of the chimney from the eastern elevation. Minor internal alterations and materials change.	
Official Response Date:	

Applications going to Committee

Applications going to Committee – Rudgwick Parish Council Meeting 10 th March 2025	
Application No:	Response/Comments:

Applicant:	
Reason for Application:	
Official Response Date:	

Appeals Lodged / Appeals Determined

New Appeals Lodged / Determined – Rudgwick Parish Council Meeting 10 th March 2025	
Application No:	Response/Comments:
Applicant:	
Reason for Application:	
Official Response Date:	

New Planning Compliance Issues

New Planning Compliance Issues – Rudgwick Parish Council Meeting 10 th March 2025	
Application No: EN/25/0043 10.02.2025	Response/Comments:
Address: Land at 512316 135862, Honeywood Lane, Okewood Hill	
Nature of Complaint: Alleged: Clearance of woodland, erection of cabins and siting of caravans, both being used for residential occupation.	
Official Response Date:	

Parish Councils Website

Rudgwick Parish Council's New Website is now live!
Thank you for your ongoing patience while this was under construction.

Correspondence

Email dated 19.02.2025 from WSALC

Sussex and Brighton devolution – government consultation opens

A consultation on proposals for a Mayoral Combined Authority for Sussex and Brighton is now open and everyone across the county is invited to have their say.

The government is running the consultation, which is specific to the Sussex and Brighton region, until the end of the day on Sunday 13 April.

All interested parties are welcome to have their say, including organisations as well as individuals who live and work in the region.

The consultation specifically asks about:

1. The proposed geography
2. Governance arrangements
3. Supporting the economy
4. Improving social outcomes
5. Local government services
6. Improving the local natural environment
7. Supporting the needs of local communities and reflect local identity

West Sussex County Council and neighbouring upper tier authorities in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove will be submitting our own responses to the questions.

We encourage you to consider your responses and appreciate your support in encouraging others within your own networks and communities to take part.

Full details of the consultation can be found on the gov.uk website here:

[Sussex and Brighton devolution - GOV.UK](#)

Further information is available in the government press notice here:

[Devolution Priority Programme consultations launch - GOV.UK](#)

As previously mentioned, our bid to be on the government's devolution priority programme is a positive opportunity to draw down more powers and funding for our areas from central government.

Ministers have agreed that a strategic authority for Sussex and Brighton, made up of an elected mayor, and two members of each constituent authority, offers the chance to give the people who live here more control and influence over the issues that affect them, from transport and housing to skills and employment, as well as a stronger voice in how national decisions affect them.

The decision whether or not to proceed with the proposal will be one for the government to take based on its assessment of the consultation responses. We are not able to put in place any formal steps towards setting up a combined authority for Sussex until that decision is made. However, we will look to engage you as key partners in informal discussions in the coming weeks, so that we are ready to move ahead at pace, if we do receive the green light.

Separate to this process, authorities across our region are discussing plans for local government reorganisation, with a proposal to government due to be submitted soon. We will update on this shortly.

Regards,

Paul Marshall
Leader, West Sussex County Council

Email dated 20.02.2025 from WSCC

Things to see and do in Sussex, devolution update, and more!





Our Budget 2025-2026

Our balanced budget with no cuts to frontline services

We have agreed a balanced budget for the year ahead which provides support for the most vulnerable, without cuts to frontline services.

In the coming year, we will spend more than £2.2bn on vital services, including:

- £1,284m for schools, education, and children's social care
- £553m to care for adults and keep people healthy
- £98m to protect the environment, recycling and waste disposal
- £87m to maintain roads and provide transport
- £65m for Fire and Rescue services and support for communities
- £5m to support the local economy

The pressures facing us outweigh the funding we receive from government, and we were able to achieve a balanced budget by reducing spending by £12.3m, and an increase in council tax of 4.99% (2% for adults' social care and 2.99% for general fund services).

The increase in council tax for a Band D property is £85.59 per year or approximately £1.65 per week.

[WATCH: Council Leader Cllr Paul Marshall said:](#) "We approved our budget to spend on essential services to support Our Council Plan, and that's about keeping people safeguarded, protecting our communities, focusing on our economy, and of course underpinned by protecting the environment."

[More information](#)



Devolution: have your say on plans for Sussex

Sussex has moved a step closer to gaining new powers and investment for local communities.

[The government has approved a joint bid](#) between West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, and Brighton & Hove City Council to be a priority for devolution.

It means the county as a whole will have an elected mayor to lead on big issues such as transport, public safety, health, housing, the economy and the environment.

Now is your chance to have your say on the plans for a Mayoral Combined Authority for Sussex and Brighton.

[Take part in the government consultation.](#)

Cllr Paul Marshall said: “A mayoral authority will give our communities greater influence in the big decisions that affect the region. I’m pleased the government has accepted us onto its priority programme, meaning we can unlock these benefits sooner rather than later.”

[Read more on devolution](#)



Get involved in our libraries' centenary year

It's 100 years since the county council adopted the Public Libraries Act and established a county-wide library service.

A special event was held last week at Burgess Hill Library, the service's newest library which opened in 2019.

The celebrations included the launch of the service's exciting Library of Possibilities and Wonders virtual reality (VR) experience, created especially for the centenary.

You can try out the VR headsets as they tour libraries across the county, as well as take part in a whole host of activities including special events for adults and children, a history webinar, and much more. Click on the link below to find out more.

Photo shows left to right: Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, Russell Allen, Head of Libraries and Heritage, and Cllr Duncan Crow, West Sussex County Council Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue.

[Join the celebrations!](#)



Welcome to Experience Sussex

We're excited to introduce Experience Sussex – your ultimate guide to discovering the best of Sussex!

Formerly Experience West Sussex, the website has been transformed to offer even more ways to explore, experience, and enjoy the area.

If you're looking for fun days out our [Things to Do](#) section is packed with ideas, from family attractions and historic sites to thrilling activities for all ages.

Check out [What's On](#) for the latest events, festivals, and theatre in Sussex, or if you are planning a visit for friends and family our [Trip Builder](#) makes it easy to create a tailor-made itinerary, just click the heart icon on your favourite places to start.

If you need inspiration, explore our [Ideas and Inspiration](#) section, where you'll find blogs, news, and discover new places right on your doorstep.

And you can use our [Food & Drink](#) search to find great dining spots, hidden gems, and dog friendly pubs in your local area.

Start exploring via the link below or follow @experiencesussex. Share your own adventures with us using #ExperienceSussex.

[Experience Sussex](#)



Have your say on fire service emergency response standards

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has launched a public consultation to review its Emergency Response Standards.

Emergency Response Standards refer to the time it takes us to attend incidents such as fires and road traffic collisions in West Sussex.

The proposed changes will not affect the location of any fire stations or fire engines within West Sussex or change the time it takes for a fire engine to attend an incident but will bring the way the service measures its performance in line with other fire and rescue services to allow for greater transparency.

You can review the proposals and share your views as part of the public consultation via the link below until February 27.

[Take part in the consultation](#)



More local buildings to benefit from solar power

More schools and other buildings across West Sussex will soon be able to generate and use their own renewable energy thanks to the expansion of a county-council solar project.

We are growing our Solar Photovoltaic (PV) & Battery Storage programme and plan to install new renewable energy systems at 60 further sites across the county, including libraries, fire stations, and schools.

Excess energy will be stored in batteries for later use or exported to the national grid depending on the set up and needs of each site.

[Read more](#)

Environment and Climate Change News

Take a look at the [latest news about the environment and climate change](#), including progress with electric vehicle chargepoints, how to tackle food waste, and a podcast from the reuse shop and repair cafe.

More news



Head to our [Newsroom](#) to find all the latest news.

- We are seeking views on how you use pharmacies to help us understand how local residents and communities use them. [Take part in the survey which is open until Monday 3 March](#). Your feedback will help to inform a draft West Sussex Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, which we'll be asking for further public comment on later this year.
- Sunday 9 March is the national Covid-19 Day of Reflection, which marks the fifth anniversary of the pandemic. It's a time to remember and commemorate those who lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic. [Click here for help and support or ways to commemorate the day](#) or [here for local bereavement support](#).

- Anyone diagnosed with HIV in the UK can access free treatment and support. HIV testing is free, quick and easy and you can get tested at a sexual health clinic, your GP practice, or by ordering a test online. [Order a free test for HIV and other STIs online.](#)
- Our West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service is urging people to [close their internal doors and shut fires out](#) following a fire in Chichester.
- It's National No Smoking Day on 12 March and it's never been easier to quit smoking in West Sussex, as there's now even more support available. Visit [Smokefree West Sussex](#) or call 0330 222 7980 to get free, non-judgemental support and the right quit aids from specialist advisors to help you quit smoking for good. Support is available face-to-face, over the phone or by downloading the new [Smokefree app](#).
- If you're looking to start a rewarding career where you can make a difference to children, young people and their families then come along to our Children's Services recruitment event on 12 March. [Sign up here to attend.](#)
- A campaign has been launched to help [tackle the growing problem of drivers using their mobile phone behind the wheel.](#)

Did you know?



West Sussex schoolchildren [enjoyed a special visit to the Houses of Parliament](#) in recognition of their inspirational efforts in helping young people have their voices heard.

Did you receive this eNewsletter from a friend? [Sign up here.](#)

Celebrating 100 years of West Sussex Library Service

[Click here to find out more](#)



Email dated 20.02.2025 from NALC
Chief Executives Bulletin

NALC calls for the inclusion of parish and town councils in the government's reorganisation guidance

Our chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, has written to the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon MP, [expressing our concern over guidance to local authorities regarding local government reorganisation](#). The letter highlights our dissatisfaction with the guidance emphasising engagement with local partners, stakeholders, and public sector providers such as mayors, police and crime commissioners, and the voluntary sector but fails to include parish and town councils. We seek urgent clarification and have urged the government to include parish and town councils as key partners in shaping proposals for new unitary authorities. This week, the government also launched the [Devolution Priority Programme consultations](#) in six areas (Cumbria, Cheshire and Warrington, Norfolk and Suffolk, Greater Essex, Sussex and Brighton, and Hampshire and the Solent) on proposals to establish mayoral combined authorities or mayoral combined county authorities as part of its devolution agenda.

NALC supports plans to strengthen compulsory purchase for affordable housing

We have welcomed the government's proposal to [strengthen the compulsory purchase](#)

[order process](#) for parish and town councils. It would enable small affordable housing schemes where back-to-back agreements could be arranged with registered affordable housing providers. We also agreed with the evidence collected by other government departments on compulsory purchases that some parish and town councils are eager for a more proactive approach to using compulsory purchase orders on their behalf. The [consultation](#) sought views on reforming the compulsory purchase process and compensation rules and on various proposals to implement technical reforms to make it cheaper, quicker, and fairer.

Smaller Councils Committee

The [Smaller Councils Committee](#) held its first meeting of the year on 13 February 2025, with the chair hosting from Thailand! The committee welcomed the new County Officer Forum representative, Sheena Spence, to the committee. Sheena will consult county officers about which principal authorities in their areas have parish liaison teams and will report back. We will work with the Law Commission on any key smaller council burial authority implications of its grave re-use proposals and keep the committee updated on the Law Commission's recommendations to the Ministry of Justice on parish and town council re-use of burial grounds. Alex Howell, policy advisor at the Local Government Association (LGA), joined the meeting to speak about the LGA's take on the English Devolution White Paper. The committee also heard updates on the recent meetings of the national network on micro councils and Martyn's Law Steering Group. We will update the committee on any post-Royal Assent implications of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill for smaller councils. The committee also agreed that the in-person meeting would take place on 31 July 2025 at our partner, CCLA, London office.

On the blog: Shrewsbury Town Council

[In this week's blog](#), Shrewsbury Town Council clerk Helen Ball explores the financial pressures facing parish and town councils and the innovative ways they can adapt. With principal authorities struggling with rising social care costs, parish and town councils are asked to do more with limited resources. From funding cuts to increased demand for services, the challenges are real, but so are the opportunities. Through localism, partnerships, and more innovative financial planning, parish and town councils can take control and shape the future of their communities. Read the full blog to learn how parish and town councils navigate these challenges and what this means for you.

Fortnightly county officers call

In this week's fortnightly meeting between NALC and county associations, Eden Project Communities joined us to discuss [The Big Lunch](#), an annual get-together for neighbours and communities that several parish and town councils already support. We provided an overview of plans for an in-person county officers' day and proposed updates to advice notes. There was also an information exchange on proposals in different counties to respond to the English Devolution White Paper.

NALC and London School of Economics emergency planning survey

Promoting the role of parish and town councils in community safety is one of our major campaigns this year, and our [community safety webpage](#) provides plenty of information about what they can do. Emergency planning is one of the key roles, and we have collaborated with the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) on a joint community resilience survey about parish and town councils' role in preparing for emergencies. The survey is being conducted and administered by a team led by Professor Edward Page of the Department of Government at the LSE. The results will help us make the case for further support for parish and town councils and enhance their role in resilience forums. [Please fill out this short survey \(20 questions\)](#) and pass it on to colleagues. If you have any questions about this research, please email chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk or e.c.page@lse.ac.uk.

And finally...

We're [proud to announce that we have successfully achieved Cyber Essentials accreditation](#) for the third consecutive year. This milestone underscores our commitment to maintaining high cybersecurity standards and protecting data across its operations. Cyber Essentials is a government-backed certification that helps organisations guard against the most common cyber threats and demonstrate their dedication to cybersecurity. Learn about [Cyber Essentials](#) and how it can benefit your parish and town councils.

Email dated 19.02.2025 from WSCC
Celebrating a century at the heart of our community



news release

Celebrating a century at the heart of our community





Guests at a launch event to celebrate a century of our West Sussex Library Service were transported into a magical immersive world of books and reading as they tried out a virtual reality (VR) experience.

Last Thursday (13 February) was exactly 100 years since the county council adopted the Public Libraries Act and established a county-wide library service.

A special event was held at Burgess Hill Library, the service's newest library which opened in 2019.

Guests at the launch included the Leader of West Sussex County Council, Paul Marshall, Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire & Rescue, Duncan Crow, representatives from Libraries Connected, which represents libraries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The celebrations included the launch of the service's exciting Library of Possibilities and Wonders VR experience, created especially for the centenary.

Displays of archive photographs showing the library service's history were also on show as well as displays of current library service activities.

Our libraries are an integral part of the community, providing valuable services which support residents and help them fulfil their potential, which is one of the priorities in Our Council Plan.

The centenary year will highlight the past, present and future of our libraries, as well as continuing to offer a wraparound service for all ages, needs and abilities.

West Sussex County Council Leader Paul Marshall said: “It was an honour to mark the 100th birthday of our library service and to celebrate the important role our libraries play in our communities.

“Our libraries cater for all residents, from early years through to retirement, with a wide range of services.”

The council’s Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue Councillor Duncan Crow said: “A century ago, county councillors established the library service for the benefit of the people of West Sussex.

“There are so many events and activities going on this year to celebrate the centenary and we hope people will join in and visit their local library.”

The year of special events includes:

- All 36 West Sussex libraries will host the Library of Possibilities and Wonder VR headsets during the year. Exact dates [are on the library service’s website](#). 3D posters and 3D sticker hunts will be starting in all libraries in March. The unique project has been made possible thanks to National Lottery money awarded by Arts Council England.
- Centenary-inspired events will be taking place at libraries throughout the year, including [a history webinar](#), special events for adults, and fun activities for children and families. You can find out what will be happening near you at your local library, [or by checking on the library website](#).
- [Sign up to the Centenary Reading Celebration](#).
- If you would like to reminisce about your favourite books or library memories, you can write on special memory walls and books. Details on the [library service website](#).

Photo 1 shows: Left to Right: Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, Russell Allen, Head of Libraries and Heritage, and Duncan Crow, West Sussex County Council Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue.

Photo 2 shows: Guests trying out the Virtual Reality headsets.

Email dated 18.02.2025 from the Forestry Commission
Forestry Commission - Invasive Spruce Bark Beetle Awareness

I'm a Woodland Officer at the Forestry Commission working on the eradication response to the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle, *Ips typographus*, which is an invasive and regulated pest in England.

Ips typographus targets weakened or damaged spruce trees, and storm events like we're experiencing this winter can create ideal habitat. It is being blown over from outbreaks in Europe and, if left unchecked, it could potentially build in numbers and would be devastating to the country's timber industry. We therefore advise proactive management of spruce to remove potential habitat and risk of infestation.

We're also encouraging everyone in the [Proactive Spruce Removal Area](#) to be vigilant for windblown, snapped, damaged and stressed [spruce trees](#), and to submit a [TreeAlert](#) report for anything of concern or email ips.t@forestrycommission.gov.uk. This could be landowners, those directly involved with managing spruce (e.g. foresters, tree surgeons, Christmas tree growers), or members of the public who use spruce woodlands recreationally (e.g. dog walkers, ramblers).

I'm getting in touch with parish, town, and other community councils across the southeast, with the aim of increasing awareness of this issue at the local level. Attached is an information flyer that we've produced (PDF containing guidance links and JPEG), and it'd be great if this could be shared with members and residents in a newsletter or other email circular. I'd be very grateful if you could also notify me after it's been shared for our records.

Additional info can be found via the [GOV.uk Ips typographus](#) page or do let me know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Elliot Carpenter
Ips typographus Woodland Officer
Forestry Commission, Bucks Horn Oak
Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4LS



Email dated 17.02.2025 from TFSE
Transport for the South East Draft Transport Strategy Consultation - Have Your Say

As you may have seen from our latest newsletter, we recently published a [Draft Transport Strategy](#) which highlights our vision for transport in the region over the coming years.

We are currently hosting a [public consultation](#) on the strategy and asking members of the public, transport users, businesses and interested groups for their views on our proposals. This will remain open until March 7th 2025.

We would love to hear your organisational response to this consultation, but also your help to promote the consultation and encourage as many responses as possible from your area.

To make this as easy as possible, we have created a Media Pack and Social Media Assets, which is available on request, and includes copy for newsletters and website news stories. You are also welcome to share our existing social media content on [X](#) and [Facebook](#) which we will post while the consultation is live.

We greatly appreciate your support in doing this.

If you have any further questions, please let me know.

Kind regards,

Jaimie McSorley

Engagement Manager

transportforthesoutheast.org.uk



Email dated 17.02.2025 from DRTA
BRTA Appeal Press Release 17-02-25

BRTA delivers [updated questionnaire flyers](#) to houses around Cranleigh to awaken support for re-railing the town as part of a new, modern railway linking Guildford with Horsham and vice versa.

We welcome support from the public, councils and government for the reopening of the local railway. It is needed to make the development going in across the areas, more sustainable and to ensure not all the extra traffic goes onto local roads, which are wearing out with potholes, heavier vehicles and general wear and tear of too much traffic, costing the earth to repair time after time.

BRTA sees local rail as a positive news story which the public need to hear amidst so much negative reporting. Local railways help save land, cut congestion, emissions and ultimately NHS waiting lists.

BRTA spokesperson Richard Pill said "BRTA is delivering the questionnaire flyer as part of our on-going mission to rouse public awareness and support and we welcome people to join and get involved with us as ultimately it is local support which can better determine a positive outcome via feet, wallets and at the ballot box."

Our website has more information: <https://brtarail.com/become-a-member/>

Email dated 14.02.2025 from WSCC

County council agrees a balanced budget without cuts to services



news release

County council agrees a balanced budget without cuts to services



A balanced budget for the year ahead which will provide support for the most vulnerable, without cuts to front-line services, has been agreed by West Sussex County Council.

The spending and investment plans for 2025/26 were confirmed at a meeting of the Full Council at County Hall, Chichester, today (Friday 14 February).

In the coming year, the county council will spend more than £2.2 billion on vital services, including:

- £1,284 million for schools, education, and children's social care
- £553 million to care for adults and keep people healthy
- £98 million to protect the environment, recycling and waste disposal
- £87 million to maintain roads and provide transport
- £65 million for Fire and Rescue services and support for communities
- £5 million to support the local economy

The county council reported in July last year it was facing a budget gap of £60 million amid increasing demand pressures and the rising cost of services, particularly in social care, special educational needs and disabilities, and home to school transport.

The pressures facing the county council outweigh the funding received from government, and a balanced budget has been achieved with spending reductions of £12.3 million, and an increase in council tax of 4.99% (2% for adults' social care and 2.99% for general fund services). The increase in council tax for a Band D property is £85.59 per year or approximately £1.65 per week.

Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, said: "We have allocated an additional £47.4 million for service demand pressures along with a further £22.9 for pay and price inflation, giving a gross total of just over £70m, in the budget as well as continued additional investment in our roads.

"This means we will continue to be there for our most vulnerable residents and at the same time we're able to invest in and maintain essential infrastructure such as our highways.

"We appreciate an increase in tax is not ideal. But unfortunately, when government calculates how much money we should receive, it always assumes we will increase council tax. To not do this would leave us out of pocket and could ultimately mean we would be forced to cut services instead."

The agreed budget plans support the county council's priorities, set out in its Council Plan, which are:

- Keeping people safe in vulnerable situations
- A sustainable and prosperous economy
- Helping people and communities fulfil their potential
- Making best use of resources

The priorities are underpinned by a cross-cutting theme of 'protecting the environment'.

Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, said: "We were pleased to see in our recent public consultation that 75% of respondents agreed with our priorities. We are facing extremely challenging times in terms of local government finances, particularly around social care, but we are confident that the funds we do have are being spent in the best possible way.

“Unfortunately, despite the proposals to deliver a balanced budget for the coming year, there remains a budget gap of between £50 million and £191 million for the following four years depending on the level of council tax increase.

“We have balanced our budget for 2025/26 but the challenges we face continue and the impact on our suppliers through NI increase can not be underestimated. Whilst we have balanced the budget for this year, we will still be facing increasing financial challenges in the years to come, and we will continue to call for an increase in government funding.

“The future of local government in West Sussex, and Sussex more widely, will be determined by plans for devolution and the re-organisation of councils into unitary authorities. The details of these are yet to be determined, and in the meantime, we will continue to lobby ministers on the need for a national funding solution to meet the local needs for social care, SEND provision, and home-to-school transport for our communities.”

Alongside the day-to-day revenue budget, a five-year capital programme has also been agreed, which will see investments of £118.6 million in 2025/26 and £739.9 million across the five-year period to 2029/30.

The main areas of capital investment for 2025/26 are:

- £50 million in maintaining roads and providing transport, including an annual highway works programme, major A roads investment, bus services, and street lighting.
- £25.8 million in managing schools and education, children's social care and support, including adaptations in mainstream schools to accommodate a wider variety of needs and work to increase the number of specialist school places to enhance the choices for children with special educational needs.
- £2.3 million to protect the environment, focussed on investment into renewable energy, work to lower the carbon footprint of county council buildings, and changes needed to waste disposal.

Find out more about the county council [2025-2026 Budget](#).

Email dated 17.02.2025 from Rural Services Network
Rural Bulletin



THE RURAL SERVICES NETWORK

The National Champion for Rural Services, ensuring people in rural areas have a strong voice

WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK AT RSN HQ!



I was honoured to have the opportunity to attend and present at the Chartered Institute of Housing South West event in Bristol last week. It was an engaging platform for sharing insights and engaging with professionals dedicated to housing issues. [Read more here](#).

Last week we submitted our response to the [Local Authority Funding Reform consultation](#). We would like to thank our members who engaged with us and contributed their valuable insights, helping us to formulate a response that truly represents our network.

Looking ahead, I'm eager to remind you that our RSN Seminar on Rural Connectivity is just around the corner - scheduled for Wednesday, 26th February. Our seminars are a key member benefit and are free for members to attend. It's an excellent opportunity for our members to gain insights from leading industry experts into enhancing connectivity in our rural areas. [Book your place here today](#).

Kerry Booth, Chief Executive, Rural Services Network

FEATURE ITEM



Chartered Institute of Housing Conference South West

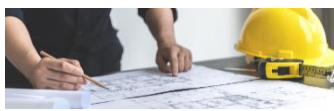
Rural Services Network Chief Executive Kerry Booth was delighted to be invited to speak at the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference South West last week. A busy two days of sessions meant that there were plenty of key points from the discussion to help inform housing work moving forward.

An interesting session on how we talk about homes focused on a Frameworks UK toolkit, produced in partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Nationwide Foundation. As an organisation that aims to influence policy makers and Government it was very useful for us to understand how we can better use language to ensure that those policy makers understand the challenges facing rural communities in accessing a decent home.

Kerry presented at a session on inclusive and sustainable homes, outlining some of the challenges facing rural areas in retrofitting existing stock where homes can be remote, face significant costs in installing low energy heating systems, and often require planning permission for the works if they are in National Parks, or AONB.

[Read more](#)

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RSN MEMBERS NOTICE BOARD

Village and Community Halls: Guide to Surveys

Volunteers managing England's 10,000+ rural community halls are being provided with guidance to help them commission the right type of building survey.



The resource was instigated by [ACTion with Communities](#) in Cumbria who, when working with halls across rural Cumbria, found there was variable knowledge amongst funders, surveyors and village hall committees about what was needed and required in procuring and carrying out surveys of village halls and similar rural community buildings.

The guide has been authored by Ben Stagg, Director of Stagg Architects who wrote ACRE's net zero design guide in 2024.

The guidance takes a hall committee through the benefits of obtaining a survey, explains different types of surveys and how to go about engaging a surveyor. The section for surveyors will be useful for hall committees to share when commissioning their surveyor. There is also a comprehensive chapter on energy surveys.

[Read more](#)

Do you have news or innovative projects to share? Submit your updates and press releases to press@sparse.gov.uk for inclusion in the members section of our weekly rural bulletin!



Looking for funding for your local project or community group? Read the **latest** edition of the **Funding Digest** [here](#)



Read the **latest Government Consultations** that may be relevant to rural communities [here](#)



Member Insights is the place to discover the statistics that define communities within our membership



Find out about our campaign for fairer funding for rural areas [here](#)
This includes our work on the Local Government Finance Settlement

Visit the Members Insights [here](#)

MEMBERS

The Rural Services Network encompasses a wide range of partners and organisations who all work together to help provide a voice for rural communities.

We represent over 500 organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors including leading national bodies, local authorities, utility companies, health trusts, housing associations, grass root community organisations and more.

The Rural Services Network is a membership organisation and includes different types of membership depending on the kind of organisation you belong to.

[For further details click here](#)

EVENTS & MEETINGS



