

County Councillor Report February 2026

Highways: It will come as no surprise that the prolonged period of cold weather followed by consistent heavy rainfall has seen a spike in the number of potholes that have appeared on our roads. At the end of January, 3,725 pothole repair jobs had been raised, which is 1,000 more than the same time last year. Highways have increased their reactive resources to respond to this and have extra safety crews operating, as well as some working in the evenings and on Saturdays to keep on top of it all.

Rainfall in the Horsham area has been 106% above average with a total of 157.4 mm recorded up to and including 27th January. Where there have been reports of significant flooding, the safety response service and reactive jettors have attended to clear flooding. In some instances, it has not been possible to clear flood water where it is linked to run-off from adjoining land and/or flooded ditches. There is also a crew currently focussed on checking for gully grid obstructions and digging out/clearing grips - they attended 79 sites in January and there are two other crews tasked with replacing or resetting broken gully assets.

The team responded to a high volume of emergencies across the network due to the impact of Storm Chandra. From the outset of the storm, a total of 81 emergency call outs were recorded across the county ranging from fallen trees and debris hazards to damaged infrastructure and impassable routes.

The Riparian Drainage Team which was established in September 2024, comprises a Project Officer and a Project Support Officer, and was created in response to severe flooding during the winters of 2022/23 and 2023/24, which revealed widespread issues caused by lack of maintenance of riparian watercourses. This team now supports Area Highway Teams by investigating and progressing complex drainage cases, particularly where highway systems rely on private or riparian watercourses that have not been properly maintained and helps ensure that necessary maintenance is carried out.

Key Achievements to date:

- 68 requests for investigations received since team was launched
- 30 investigations completed with reports provided to Area Teams
- 9 investigations completed with follow up action being progressed by the team
- 9 investigations currently live and in progress.
- 20 sites awaiting commencement of investigation
- Riparian Toolkit distributed to Town and Parish Councils.

West Sussex County Council agreed its proposed balanced budget at Full Council on Friday 20th February. It includes significant capital investment and increased net investment in key services for communities and will spend £2.3 billion in 2026/27 on the 300 plus day-to-day services it provides to residents as follows:

- £1,346.7m Managing schools and education, children's social care and support
- £577.2m Caring for adults and keeping people healthy
- £90.1m Protecting the environment, recycling and waste disposal
- £84.6m Maintaining our roads and providing transport
- £83.8m Running our organisation
- £72.8m Fire and Rescue services and supporting communities
- £5.8m Supporting the local economy
- £61.9m Financing our capital programme and other corporate items

This includes a gross revenue increase of £65.1m to meet increasing demand pressures and costs, particularly in social care, home to school transport, and special educational needs and disabilities. You can read more about the budget setting process at www.westsussex.gov.uk/budget.

The draft **West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy** has been prepared in partnership with East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council and Natural England. The Environment Act 2021 introduced a statutory requirement for each upper-tier authority to prepare and publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to encourage more coordinated practical and focused action and investment in nature. Ours has involved extensive engagement with key stakeholders, including the district and borough councils, South Downs National Park Authority, landowners, farmers, conservation organisations and community groups. It sets out a long-term vision for nature recovery and priority actions for the first five years (including opportunities for habitat creation, restoration of degraded sites and improving ecological connectivity). It also provides a framework for delivering biodiversity net gain, climate resilience and wider environmental benefits. For further information, please go via the following links to our website:

<https://www.sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk/publications>

<https://yourvoice.westsussex.gov.uk/lhrs-west>

Amanda Jupp

Amanda.Jupp@westsussex.gov.uk