

## County Council Report for Itchingfield Parish Council, September 2025

### Adult Services

The County Council is celebrating news that its Adults Services have been rated 'good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in its report published on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

Following its assessment of the council's services earlier this year, the regulator found strong leadership within adult social care teams and effective support that enables people to live healthier lives. While further improvements to address gaps in service are needed, the findings evidence the progress made and the council's effectiveness at making a real difference to people's lives.

**Economy and Skills:** The County Council has launched Skills Bootcamps, a new initiative designed to help people gain in-demand skills that local employers are actively seeking. The programme offers access to industry-recognised, flexible training courses tailored to meet current workforce needs. Skills Bootcamps, which are funded by a £4.3m grant from the Department for Education, are open to anyone aged 19 or over who lives or works in West Sussex, whether employed, unemployed or self-employed. The courses last up to 16 weeks and have a guaranteed job interview or career progression opportunity at their conclusion. Participants gain both technical and soft skills relevant to local industries, helping them secure employment, start an apprenticeship or advance their careers.

Employers play a vital role in the programme, actively shaping course content to meet real-world needs, mentoring participants throughout their training, offering hands-on experience and facilitating interview opportunities. In turn, they are supported to address skills and recruitment gaps within their workforce, which helps boost productivity and drive business growth. Training is targeted at addressing local skills gaps across the county's key employment sectors and supporting employers of all sizes. More information on the website.

### Highways - How often do the verges get cut?

Cut times vary each year to suit growing conditions. It takes about 4-7 weeks to cut all grass across the county.

Urban cuts - In towns and other built-up areas, we cut and maintain grass verges during the growing season, which is typically between March and November.

Rural cuts - In the countryside, or where there are no pavements, we only maintain the verges from a highway safety perspective. Verges in rural areas receive cuts in the following order:

- one visibility splay cut for safety - five weeks during April and May
- one 1-metre-wide cut to grass and vegetation overhanging the road (July to Sept)
- one overall cut a year - from end September to beginning of December.

**On-Street Parking Charges:** The County Council has confirmed that updates to on-street parking charges will come into effect from 1 October 2025. These have been designed to make parking fairer, more consistent and better aligned with local needs. The changes, which were announced in a key decision in September, follow a comprehensive review and support the council's [Integrated Parking Strategy 2022-2027](#), which aims to improve access, reduce congestion and encourage more sustainable travel. These updates are aligned with recent changes to off-street parking charges introduced by district and borough councils, helping to prioritise the use of designated car parks and reduce pressure on residential streets.

Key updates include

- frozen or reduced permit charges for carers, healthcare workers and residents in selected zones
- more consistent pricing across towns to reflect local parking patterns and controlled hours
- updated pay and display charges to help manage demand and encourage the use of off-street parking facilities where available.

**Local Government Reorganisation:** Following the publication of the White Paper on English Devolution in December last year, which contained proposals for the restructuring of existing councils into a new streamlined single tier of local government, an Extraordinary Meeting of West Sussex County Council took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> September to debate the Council's preferred option for LGR in West Sussex and agree the submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This was followed by a meeting of the Cabinet which

resolved to support Option A (one single unitary on the footprint of West Sussex) as the Council's preferred solution for Local Government Reorganisation in West Sussex and to authorise the Leader of the Council to write to the Government setting out the Council's preference.

### **Rethinking verge maintenance**

We have partnered with South Gloucestershire Council to explore new ways to maintain roadside verges and open spaces. In West Sussex we are using special mowers to 'cut and collect' grass on urban verges in Horsham and rural verges in Aldwick, Bersted and Pagham. We are trialling different cutting schedules and taking the cut grass away.

Cuttings are usually left to compost on the ground but that creates carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), the gasses that contribute to climate change.

Collecting the cuttings reduces these greenhouse gas emissions and the grass regrows more slowly so more wildflowers that attract pollinating insects have a chance to grow. This captures more carbon in the soil and the collected cuttings can be processed to create useful products like biofuel and biochar. Slower grass regrowth also reduces the number of times we need to cut the grass each year which means the mowing machines need less maintenance and we use less fuel to power them. Last year we cut and collected over 909 hectares of grass, equivalent to 1,400 football pitches. The project is now in its third year and we are proud of the progress being made.

### **Transforming cuttings into Biochar**

Biochar is a very stable carbon-rich material made from plants. It can be incorporated into construction materials like concrete and asphalt. Because it is very slow to decompose it can safely store carbon for centuries, which can help reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Greenprint is evaluating different ways of converting the cut grass we collect from roadside verges into biochar. Our trials and lab tests looked at two methods.

- Hydrothermal carbonisation (HTC) that processes organic material using heat and water.
- Pyrolysis that breaks down the cuttings using dry heat in the absence of oxygen.

Pyrolysis proved to be the most viable option because HTC had problems processing litter in the grass, which resulted in poorer quality biochar. We are planning road trials to investigate the use of biochar in road maintenance and seeing if biochar made from grass cuttings collected from roadside verges could be used in our road repairs. Adding biochar to road surfaces or using it to build the road substructure helps trap carbon dioxide in a stable form within the ground. We will study how these eco-friendly road construction methods can be used to store carbon and lower emissions. This could play a big role in creating a road infrastructure that helps fight climate change.

Amanda Jupp  
amanda.jupp@westsussex.gov.uk

