

# County Councillor Report to Hadlow Down Parish Feb 2026

## **Budget**

It will come of no surprise, given earlier updates, that the budget setting has been a significant challenge. For the first time ESCC has been unable to set a balanced budget using its own resources. An application has been made to MHCLG for Exceptional Funding. This is not a grant but the ability to borrow to fund revenue and interest is charged by the Treasury. The capital and interest have to be funded by future council tax.

The 2026/26 settlement from Govt did us no favours. The (UN) Fair Funding Review was expected to take account of ESCC's age demographic and areas of deprivation and allocate additional resources. To the contrary the settlement took £6m off our allocation.

CIPFA – Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy recent report, required for Exceptional Funding, did not find any areas where changes in approach would show cost savings beyond those already made.

## **Crowborough Camp**

As you will be aware the first asylum seekers have now arrived having been bussed in in the middle of the night.

The lead authority is Wealden District Council not ESCC although county will need to get involved re Adult Social Care.

The military cadets have been kicked off the site and I understand from a meeting I attended on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Jan that they are still looking for an alternative site. The meeting was for cadets and their families together with a Minister from the Home Office.

For the Home Office to have been planning on using the site for many months without investigating a site for the military cadets is irresponsible. The Minister did not fully answer my question of whether the site was only going to be used for 12 months.

## **Devolution**

ESCC Cabinet last week re-approved the Devo policy with a change in date now the Mayoralty election has been moved to 2028. 2027 would have made more sense and has been suggested to Govt. The Combined Authority will come into operation from March 26.

## **LGR**

Awaiting Govt decision of how Unitaries are to be de organised geographically.

## **SEND**

Frustratingly we still await the White paper, originally promised June 2025. The white paper will re-define SEND as well as setting out future funding. It was promised again for early 2026 but rumours are it will be around Easter.

## **Highways**

The recent weather has caused significant problems including the multi vehicle incident in Hadlow Down. A temporary repair failed leaving a deep pothole hidden by water.

RWS Feb 26