

East Sussex County Councillor Shing
Report to Alfriston Parish Council
Parish Meeting 16 February 2026



Good evening Chairman and colleagues,
Year of horse, Happy Chinese New Year.

MAY COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

I have recently been informed that the County Council elections scheduled for May will now proceed.

The Council did not make provision within its approved budget for the cost of holding these elections. It is understood that the May election will cost in the region of £1.5 million. This unbudgeted expenditure will place additional pressure on an already constrained financial position.

Meeting this cost is likely to make it more challenging for the Council to fund core services within existing resources, particularly given the wider budget pressures previously identified.

This additional financial commitment will need to be carefully managed to minimise any impact on frontline and statutory services.

East Sussex County Council – 2026/27 Budget Summary

Full Council has approved a £693 million budget for 2026/27.

Key elements include:

- A 4.99% Council Tax increase (including Adult Social Care).
- £3.1 million in new savings.
- A request to borrow £70 million in Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) to address a £56 million deficit.

Since 2010, the Council has delivered nearly £160 million in savings. However, funding reforms are expected to leave East Sussex around £18 million worse off.

Impact on households

The 4.99% increase equates to approximately £75–£85 per year for a Band D property (around £1.50 per week), with proportional changes for other bands.

Exceptional Financial Support

The £70 million EFS borrowing must be repaid, typically over up to 20 years (subject to Government approval).

If repaid over 20 years:

- Around £3.5 million per year (excluding interest).
- With borrowing costs, potentially £5–£6 million per year.

Illustratively, this could equate to roughly £20 per household per year, depending on final terms and funding arrangements.

The borrowing spreads costs over time but does not remove ongoing financial pressures.

Exceat Bridge Project Update

The contract for the construction of the new Exceat Bridge has now been signed with Jackson Civil Engineering, marking a key milestone in the project's delivery.

Construction is scheduled to begin in June. In the meantime, pre-construction works will continue, including vegetation clearance and the discharge of planning conditions.

Jackson is finalising its project team, including appointing a Site Manager and Public Liaison Officer who will act as key contacts for the community. Introductions and further engagement sessions will be arranged once appointments are confirmed. A fully detailed construction programme will be shared once preparatory work has been completed.

Reference Group Update

The Exceat Bridge Reference Group met on 16 January and agreed its proposed Terms of Reference and timeline.

It was agreed to postpone the April site visit until later in the summer, once construction is underway. Officers have also suggested cancelling the 23 February meeting and rescheduling it for April to coincide with a meeting with the contractor.

Further updates will follow as the project progresses.