

Members' Update – East Sussex County Council – December 2023

Cllr Bob Bowdler - Wealden East Division

(Wealden East Division:- Heathfield, Horam, Hooe, Herstmonceux, Ninfield, Warbleton & Wartling parishes)

Cost of living payment set for February

Eight million people on means-tested benefits will receive a cost-of-living payment in February to help with high bills. Those on low incomes and receiving benefits such as universal credit are eligible but should be wary of scams – on legitimate payments, there will be a reference on a recipient's bank account of their national insurance number, followed by DWP COL, or the reference HMRC COLS for those who are eligible through tax credits.

The £299 payment will be made directly into bank accounts, without the need to make a claim, between 6 and 22 February.

This story was reported [nationally](#).

Funding boost to bolster green skills

Council bosses have welcomed funding that will help boost green skills and support the county's move to net zero. East Sussex County Council's Employability and Skills Team successfully bid for £240,000 from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) to launch the Retrofit Skills East Sussex project.

As the project progresses, it is hoped that a range of activities, such as careers campaigns and subsidised training courses, will be offered to support the Retrofit Skills Plan. Updates on the project as it progresses can be found on the [council's website](#).

Read more about this story [here](#).

Winter events to take place in East Sussex libraries

A programme of free winter events for both children and adults is taking place in libraries across the festive season and beyond. The events will include author talks, festive crafts and activities, as well as storytelling experiences. On 27 January, Lewes Library and the Lewes Literary Society will host writer, illustrator and cartoonist Chris Riddell in a celebration of the well-loved illustrator Raymond Briggs.

Events are free, but booking may be required. For more information on the upcoming events, visit the Events section on eastsussex.spydus.co.uk. Read more about this story [here](#).

Winner of prestigious art prize announced in Eastbourne

Jesse Darling was announced as the winner of the Turner Prize at an event held at Eastbourne's Winter Garden, winning £25,000 in prize money. The four shortlisted nominees for the prize have had their work on display at the Towner Gallery since September 2023. The Turner Prize was established in 1984 and is one of the world's best-known prizes for the visual arts. It aims to promote public debate around new developments in contemporary British art.

Children's Services

Late December saw an Ofsted inspection team arrive at County Hall for an 'ILACS' inspection (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services). Ofsted completed their work on 15 December and we await their finding, which we anticipate sometime in February.

At my Lead Member meeting this month I was able to confirm that from April 24 there will be a further increase in the expenses we pay to our valued Foster Carers. This is in addition to the increase in expenses I announced only a few months ago.

For your information: Meetings I attended in November as your County Councillor:

National Children & Adults Social Care Conference, Bournemouth

ESCC 4 x Weekly DCS/ADCS Briefings

Gatwick Airport Noise Management Board 1

ESCC Highways Briefing – Ringmer

ESCC Children's Safeguarding

SE Regional LM & Directors Briefing 1

Gatwick Airport Annual Public Meeting

OFSTED Inspection - Interview

SE Regional LM & Directors Briefing 2

East Sussex Civil Military Partnership Board

Gatwick Airport Noise Management Board 2 (Technical)

ESCC Cabinet

East Sussex Health & Wellbeing Board

Visit to Heathfield Community Collage

ESCC Lead Member Children & Families

Meeting Balfour Beatty Community Engagement

OFSTED Inspection – Debriefing

Hooe Parish Council

Horam Parish Council – DNA

ESCC People Scrutiny Review Board

Herstmonceux Parish Council – DNA

Ninfield Parish Council – DNA

ESCC Children in Care Council – Hailsham

My thanks to you all for your support over the past year, working together for all our residents!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



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