

westsussex.gov.uk



Annual Report

2024 to 2025



Aerial view of Bosham

Foreword

The past year has highlighted the council's strength and resilience providing essential services for our communities in the face of continued pressure.

Guided by the priorities in Our Council Plan, we continue to focus our resources where they are needed most. We engaged with ministers and local MPs to lobby government on the issues that matter to our county. We sought answers on plans for the A27, changes to inheritance tax to protect farming and the environment, and more sustainable funding for adult social care.

Our focus on improvements helped us meet some of our biggest challenges, specifically the increasing need for vital services such as adult social care and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

While further improvements are needed, it was encouraging to see our work recognised. The Care Quality Commission gave our Adults' Services a 'good' rating following its inspection. We made progress in delivering Education, and Health Care Plans on time, and will continue to call on government for changes to the system.

Despite the challenges, we were able to again deliver a balanced budget for the coming year without cuts to services, demonstrating our determination to make the best use of money we spend on residents' behalf.

Our joint bid for devolution and a mayoral authority in Sussex was approved. This is a major step forward that will bring more decision-making powers and a funding boost of £38m per year for the next 30 years, money that would not otherwise have been available. In all, devolution will unlock opportunities for our region to flourish and prosper. We progressed with partners plans for local government reorganisation, which will change the shape of councils in West Sussex.

There are real benefits here too, but we must maintain focus on the approaches that genuinely improve outcomes for residents and that manage the financial pressures.

This year, we proudly celebrated the 100th anniversary of the West Sussex library service and its role at the heart of our communities. And we joined the nation in commemorating the 80th anniversaries of D-Day and later VE Day, paying tribute to the courage and sacrifice of those who served, including many from West Sussex.

I was delighted to see three members of staff receive mentions in the King's Birthday Honours List. Their achievements are testament to the professionalism and commitment that underpin everything we do.

This was the first year for Chief Executive Leigh Whitehouse, who met the challenges head on and is helping to steer the council through complex and demanding times.

I want to thank all our staff, my fellow councillors, and our partners for their continued support and collaboration. It is through their hard work and shared commitment that we can deliver on what matters most to our residents, communities and businesses.

Together, we will continue to focus on the priorities in Our Council Plan, delivering effective, efficient services, and ensuring West Sussex remains a great place to live, work and thrive.



Councillor Paul Marshall
Leader of West Sussex County Council

Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations

Performance in both children's and adults' social care was set in the national context of increasing need and increasing complexity of need.

We retained our commitment to prioritising the health and wellbeing of our residents, especially the most vulnerable, and took action to mitigate the pressures.

Our Children's Home Collaborative, which will deliver 30 local children's homes placements over two years, helped reduce the number of unregistered placements and improve stability.

Performance was further boosted by the new Family Safeguarding practice model and a strong recruitment drive for in-house foster carers leading to a new high of 267 permanent placements.

We exceeded targets for successful outcomes for families within Early Help and social care, but performance in children who were subject to repeat protection plans proved challenging.

All six of our children's homes were judged as either good or outstanding by Ofsted, whose inspectors also praised substantial improvements in services for care leavers.

Pressures in Adults' Services were met with an ongoing focus on practice improvement to help manage demand.

The CQC highlighted leadership and innovation as key strengths, and praised our drive to help people live independently for longer. Here, early support work helped keep us on target for a low proportion of adults needing a social care plan.

Areas for improvements included the need for faster completion of Care Act reviews and for addressing gaps in provision for people with complex and multiple needs.

The Fire & Rescue Service carried out a record number of safe and well visits, offering advice and equipment to prevent and detect fires in the homes of people most at risk.

The Domestic Abuse team performed well again with most of the people supported feeling safe on leaving the service.

The Community Hub continued to provide high-quality practical and financial support to households, beating the target of a positive outcome for residents at first contact.

After receiving a high volume of intelligence from our communities, the Trading Standards target to intervene in all cases of traders believed to be involved in the illicit supply of tobacco, vapes and alcohol proved ambitious. The team was successful throughout the year in seizing illegal goods and bringing prosecutions against rogue traders.

To help reduce the number of people seriously injured or killed on our roads, safety schemes were delivered at 13 sites in a programme targeting high-risk locations, and the Road Strategy went out to public consultation ahead of a launch later in 2025.

Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations

How did we do?

The chart below summarises how our initiatives performed against a range of targets and indicators. **GREEN** shows the percentage that were on track, **RED** those off track, and **AMBER** those near target. **NO STATUS** means performance against the target cannot yet be assessed, for example in the case of a new performance indicator.



Visit our [performance dashboard](#) for the latest data.

975

placements of children we care for as of March 2025

5,948

safe and well visits conducted by the Fire Service, an increase of 11%





98.5% 

of residents received a positive outcome on first contact with the Community Hub

90% 

of people supported by the Domestic Abuse team felt safe on leaving the service

64% 

of people receiving adult social care and their carers had their cases reviewed or assessed

2,656 

referrals to the Domestic Abuse team

A sustainable and prosperous economy

The launch of our 10-year economic strategy for West Sussex set ambitious targets for sustainable and productive growth to an economy already worth £27 billion.

The strategy was developed with partners and endorsed by the newly established Economic Growth Board, which includes representatives from industry, education, health and local government.

Our 7 deals in partnership with each district and borough council in West Sussex remained a cornerstone of economic growth and improvements to public spaces.

The Worthing Railway Approach and Bognor Regis esplanade works were completed, with progress also in Horsham, Crawley, and Chichester.

We met our target for supporting businesses to sustain, innovate and grow through a range of programmes including The Track in Bognor Regis, Experience Sussex and supporting the visitor economy, creative digital workshops, plus our Careers Hub and Growth Hub.

We performed well against national benchmarks for excellence in career guidance in our schools and colleges here in West Sussex.

Plans to improve connectivity remain on track with 77.5% of premises able to access high-speed broadband by the end of the year. Our support of the Building Digital programme is set to achieve the government's target of 85% gigabit connectivity by the end of 2025.

Our work keeping roads open and traffic moving remained a major focus. The extra £4 million of revenue funding we invested this year helped to significantly improve performance maintaining our 2,500 miles of roads.

Despite an increased number of tasks raised, our teams beat the target for repairing highways defects on time in the last 3 quarters.

With a focus on a right-first-time approach and durable repairs, the average time taken to fix a pothole decreased to just 14 days.

Challenging weather conditions continued to impact on road conditions and our 2-year rolling programme of investments.

Highways teams responded to hundreds of drainage jobs each quarter, using additional funding to increase capacity to clear floods and ditches.

More than 400 improvement schemes were completed on roads and footpaths, including bridges, traffic signals, road safety, public rights of way and intelligent transport systems.

We progressed projects including Lyminster bypass, which opened in May 2025, and the scheme to extend a bus lane on Manor Royal Road in Crawley.

Sustained funding for the Bus Service Improvement Programme partnership encouraged more people to explore West Sussex by bus through fare incentives and improvement schemes.

A sustainable and prosperous economy

How did we do?

The chart below summarises how our initiatives performed against a range of targets and indicators. **GREEN** shows the percentage that were on track, **RED** those off track, and **AMBER** those near target. **NO STATUS** means performance against the target cannot yet be assessed, for example in the case of a new performance indicator.



Visit our [performance dashboard](#) for the latest data.



Lyminster Bypass opening

£4M

of additional
revenue funding
in-year to maintain
our roads

44,767

potholes repaired

77.5%



of premises with access to gigabit connectivity

3,964



enterprises supported to sustain, innovate and grow

89.5%



of highways defects repaired on time

134.5 MILES



of road surfacing works completed

Helping people and communities fulfil their potential

Supporting people to live independently, access education, and feel connected to their communities are central to the ambitions in Our Council Plan.

Strong performance in our reablement service helped us achieve our target of reducing the need for longer-term adult social care for the majority of users. The service was recommissioned for the coming year with aims to almost double capacity to help meet growing need.

We saw a positive shift in the number of adults needing social care who are supported to live at home or with family. The new measure tracks the effectiveness of our work to enable people to live independently.

While the proportion of people using direct payments to arrange their own care remains below our target, work to refresh our policy and develop the market is underway to reverse this trend and offer more choice and control.

We continued our support for schools and students in West Sussex. Latest data shows attainment at Key Stage 4 remains an area for development, though there are encouraging signs at Key Stage 2, with improvements in reading and writing.

Work is ongoing to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities and do what's best for each child while meeting the high levels of need. The proportion of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) completed on time remains low, but a recovery plan is turning around performance as volumes increase. While more children and young people with EHCPs are accessing mainstream education, national challenges remain with specialist provision.

Careers support remains in high demand, with these services specifically helping to keep the proportion of 16 to 17-year-olds not in education, employment or training low.

Our libraries celebrated 100 years at the heart of communities in West Sussex, launching a year-long programme of public events that are supporting continued growth. With more than 9 million uses of virtual and digital services this year, we once again beat our performance target for encouraging people to access their library.

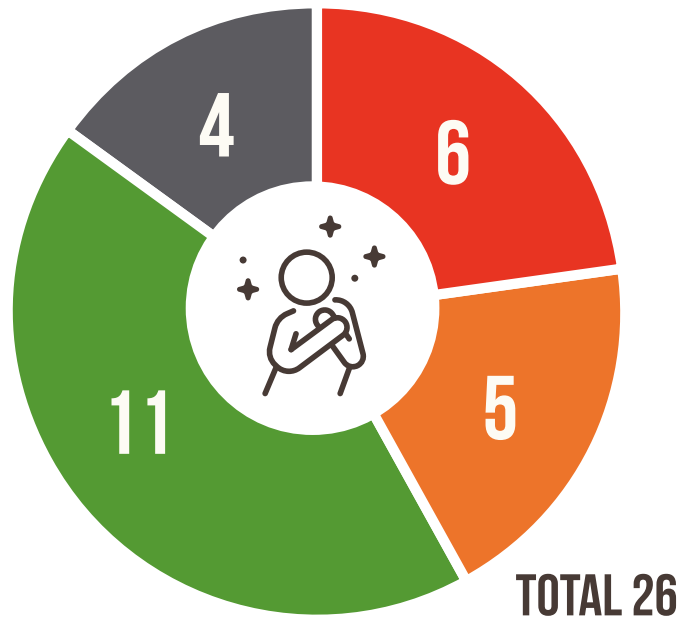
We launched a consultation on the new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy that will guide work to improve public health and reduce health inequalities in the county. The latest data on performance indicators show there is more to do to support families and individuals achieve healthier lifestyles.

The Fire & Rescue Service maintained its strong performance exceeding response time targets for both critical fires and special service incidents. The Community Risk Management Plan ensures the service hears from communities about the risks that most concern them.

Helping people and communities fulfil their potential

How did we do?

The chart below summarises how our initiatives performed against a range of targets and indicators. **GREEN** shows the percentage that were on track, **RED** those off track, and **AMBER** those near target. **NO STATUS** means performance against the target cannot yet be assessed, for example in the case of a new performance indicator.



Visit our [performance dashboard](#) for the latest data.



9M

uses of virtual and digital library services

9,917

children took part in the libraries' summer reading challenge, borrowing 330,000 books



21,700+ 

journeys taken using Book-a-Bus since 2022

0.5M+ 

journeys taken by young people using the 16 to 20 Bus Saver discount scheme since 2022

2.2% 

of 16 to 17-year-olds not in education, employment or training, achieving our low target of 2.7%



82%



of critical special service incidents where the first appliance to attend met our emergency response standard

90%



of critical fires where the first appliance to attend met our emergency response standard

86%



of adults did not need long-term support after a period of reablement support

1,042



people supported by council initiatives successfully quit smoking at four weeks

Making the best use of resources

With increasing pressure on resources, we remained focused on delivering value for money by modernising services that support residents, communities and businesses.

Net revenue expenditure this year totalled £780.5m, resulting in an overspend of £10.1m after the use of reserves.

Adults' Services contributed significantly to this position, with spending driven by rising care costs and delays in planned savings, pressures that are felt nationally. Work on our adult social care improvement programme addressed the challenges, focusing on improving practice, workforce commissioning, the use of technology enablement and promoting early support to reduce the costs of more intense care.

We achieved a 'good' rating for our adult social care provision following a Care Quality Commission visit in February, the findings of which are driving further improvements.

Children, Young People and Learning Services faced similar cost pressures, including in SEND provision, Education and Health Care Plans, and home-to-school transport. Positive steps to increase in-house provision in residential homes and capacity among our foster carers helped to reduce the number of expensive unregistered placements and generate savings.

The Fire & Rescue Service received its best results to date from the independent inspectorate, with no areas of concern identified. A rolling programme to replace ageing fire appliances is underway, ensuring frontline services remain effective and resilient.

We invested a total of £119.6m in our Capital Programme, which included support for smarter working schemes within the council and accessibility improvements at key sites such as County Hall and Crawley Library.

The size of the operational estate reduced slightly, with the sales of surplus property contributing to our Capital Programme. Though we did not meet our target, further rationalisation of assets is under review.

Our approach to making the best use of technology, guided by our new Digital Strategy, helped drive performance in our customer contact centre. A new platform powered by artificial intelligence reduced the percentage of calls abandoned to just 1.7%, with overall customer satisfaction levels rising each quarter through the year.

Staff engagement remained strong with the majority reporting they are part of a supportive team and feel treated with dignity and respect. An action plan to support a positive workplace culture, and senior leaders sponsoring each of the 7 staff networks, will help improve performance.

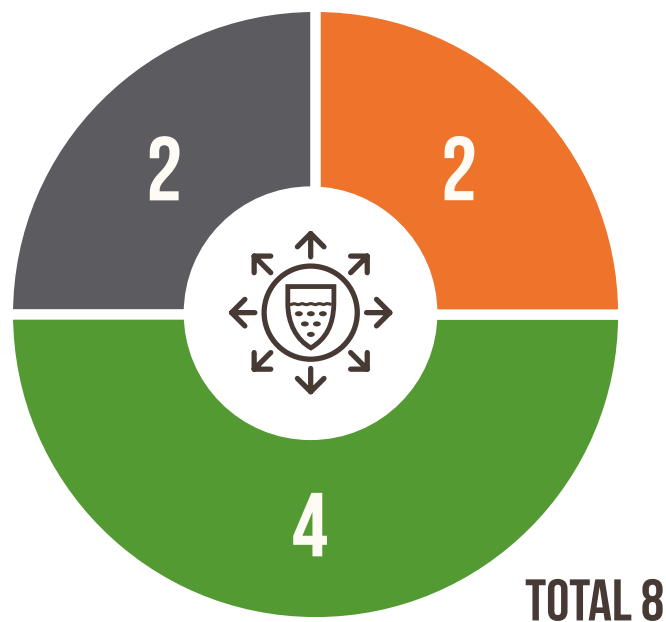
In February, councillors agreed a balanced budget for 2025 to 2026 of £2.2bn without having to make cuts to services. This includes £47.4m to meet service demand pressures and £22.9m for pay and price inflation.

We plan to invest a further £118.6m from our £739.9m 5-year Capital Programme, including improvements to roads, schools, social care, specialist support, renewable energies and decarbonisation works.

Making the best use of resources

How did we do?

The chart below summarises how our initiatives performed against a range of targets and indicators. **GREEN** shows the percentage that were on track, **RED** those off track, and **AMBER** those near target. **NO STATUS** means performance against the target cannot yet be assessed, for example in the case of a new performance indicator.



Visit our [performance dashboard](#) for the latest data.

85% 

of customers satisfied with the service they receive from the customer service centre

111,957M² 

of operational property, a reduction of just under 3%

89% 

of council staff feel treated with dignity and respect

83% 

of council staff feel part of a supportive team

Protecting the environment

The council took significant action throughout the year in protecting the environment for future generations.

The publication of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan marked the start of a programme of action to deliver our Climate Change Strategy across 6 key pathways that include buildings and energy, transport and nature recovery.

A major milestone was the completion of phase one of the Estate Decarbonisation Programme, which saw energy efficiency upgrades to 7 libraries, 6 fire stations and a day centre. The improvements range from air source heat pumps to solar panels and are expected to prevent nearly 200 tonnes of carbon emissions annually. Planning started on phase two, with further decarbonisation works being considered.

We expanded our Solar PV and Battery Storage Programme, and are considering 60 schools and council buildings for possible installations. This will expand our existing infrastructure which includes 2 solar farms. The council generated around 16,000 megawatt hours of clean electricity in the year, enough to power around 5,925 homes on average.

The council's carbon emissions rose slightly, due in part to increased transport emissions, though they remain lower than in the 2019 to 2020 year. Work continues to address key challenges, including employee commuting, with a sustainable travel policy being developed.

We were awarded Level 1 Capability Status by Active Travel England this year as we worked to improve performance supporting more residents to regularly walk or cycle. This included safer crossings in Felpham, Lavant, Shoreham and West Worthing, and a cycle track at Lancing Beach Green.

The council maintained a comparable rate to previous years of recycling, reusing and composting household waste. While dry recycling increased, a rise in overall household waste and a drop in composting impacted the overall rate. We promoted waste reduction through campaigns including Think Before You Throw and expanded re-use initiatives at recycling centres.

The West Sussex Waste Partnership prepared for the rollout of the government's simpler recycling reforms, while investment of up to £7.5 million was approved to adapt the Mechanical and Biological Treatment Centre for future food waste collections.

The Community Food Hub partnership with UKHarvest thrived with more than 1,200 visits in one quarter alone, which fed 3,757 people and saved 15 tonnes of food from going to waste.

The council worked with partners to develop the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy and continued engagement on major infrastructure projects including Gatwick Airport's northern runway project. We consulted on the updated Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, which was then published later in 2025.



Decarbonisation event at Storrington library

£8.2M

invested in the Estate
Decarbonisation Programme

31,392 

equivalent tonnes of CO2 emissions
from council activities this year

49.4% 

of all household waste recycled,
re-used or composted

14 YEARS 

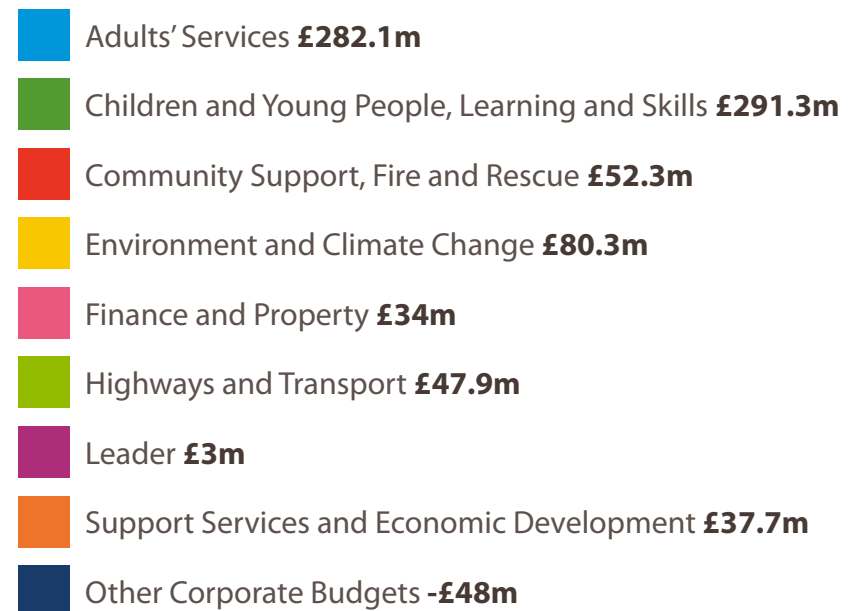
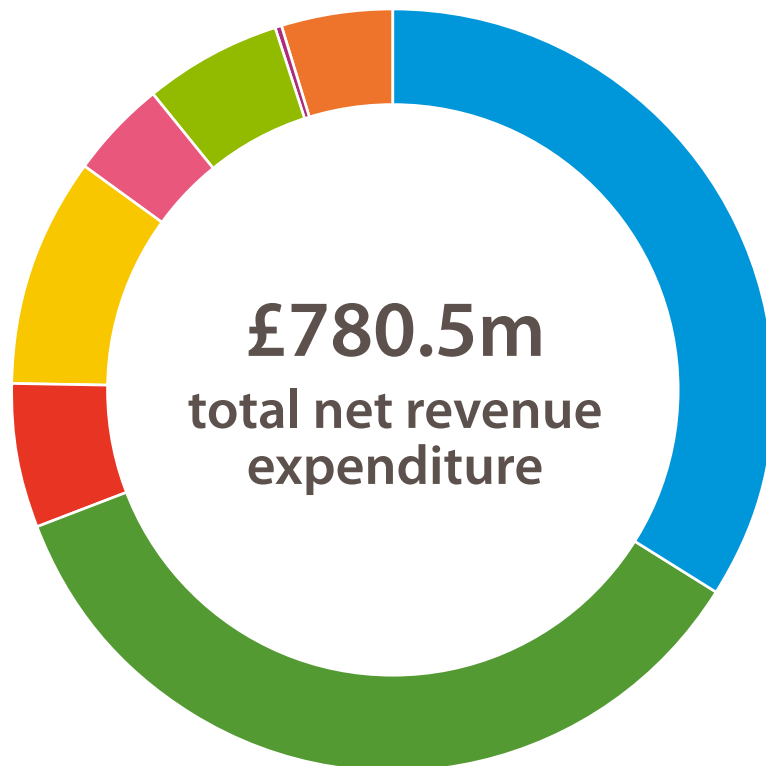
in a row Buchan Country Park awarded
a coveted Green Flag
as of March 2025

3,757 

people fed from UKHarvest Food Hubs
in one quarter, saving 15 tonnes of
food from waste

Our expenditure for the financial year 2024 to 2025

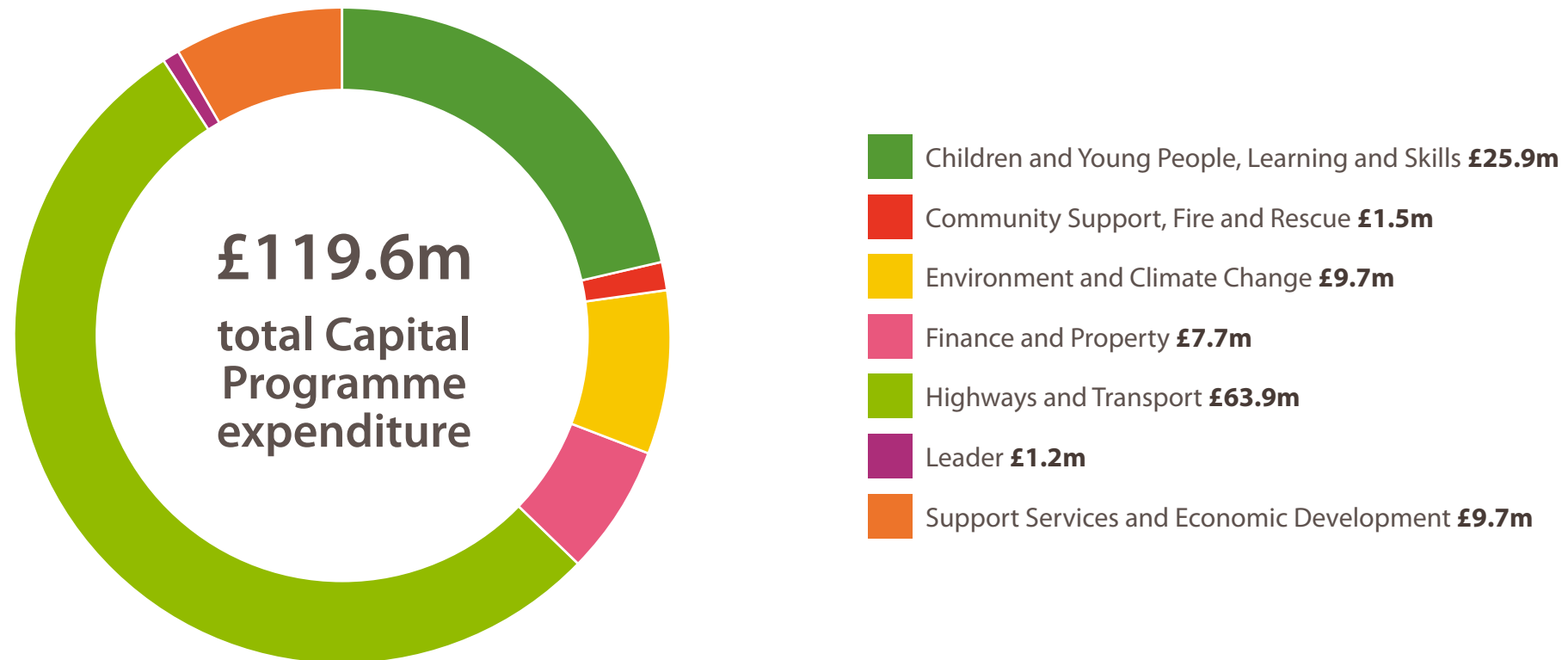
How we spent your money providing essential day-to-day services



The Public Health and Wellbeing portfolio is fully funded by grants and other incomes. The gross spend for this portfolio in 2024 to 2025 was **£26.6m**

Our expenditure for the financial year 2024 to 2025

How we invested your money in major development projects



Our Cabinet

The county council is made up of 70 councillors (sometimes called members) who are elected to represent one electoral division in the county.

Functions are allocated to councillors across the full county council itself, to members of the Cabinet and members of a range of committees. Many functions are delegated from the Cabinet and committees to officers.

The Leader appoints the Cabinet from the political majority and defines their portfolios.

As the political executive of the council, the Cabinet proposes the key policy decisions of the county council, which are subject to agreement by the full county council.

The Cabinet has the authority to take all significant decisions collectively or individually and meets in public when taking decisions.



Paul Marshall
Leader of West Sussex
County Council



Duncan Crow
Cabinet Member for
Community Support
Fire and Rescue



Joy Dennis
Cabinet Member
for Highways
and Transport



Jeremy Hunt
Cabinet Member for
Finance and Property



Amanda Jupp
Cabinet Member for
Adults' Services



Bob Lanzer
Cabinet Member
for Public Health
and Wellbeing



Jacquie Russell
Cabinet Member
for Young People
and Learning



Deborah Urquhart
Cabinet Member for
Environment and
Climate Change
(and Deputy Leader)



Steve Waight
Cabinet Member for
Support Services and
Local Government
Reorganisation



Garry Wall
Cabinet Member for
Economy and Skills

Website: [westsussex.gov.uk](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk)
Instagram: [@lovewestsussex](https://www.instagram.com/lovewestsussex)
Facebook: [@WestSussexCC](https://www.facebook.com/WestSussexCC)
LinkedIn: [west-sussex-county-council](https://www.linkedin.com/company/west-sussex-county-council)
X: [@WSCCnews](https://twitter.com/WSCCnews)
YouTube: [@wsccvideo](https://www.youtube.com/@wsccvideo)

WS33133 09.2025

View of River Adur, Shoreham-by-Sea

