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This has been another year of budget cuts, £18m reduction to the budget for 2015/16. This has meant cuts to all services including front line. The total savings in the last 3 years is £67m

But there is some positive news:

- Last year the number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in East Sussex decreased by 2,125 (to 5,252 in December 2014). ESCC has a number of initiatives in place to help people get back to work and assist companies wanting to expand and create more jobs, or to relocate to East Sussex.
- A total of 92 businesses and organisations have been able to grow their business thanks to the financial support of a grant or loan from our 'East Sussex Invest 3' scheme.
- The Council's commitment to supporting local businesses and job creation has been confirmed by our support for a proposed second runway at Gatwick airport, provided it comes with action to limit the impact on residents of East Sussex and to improve the County's infrastructure.
- Attainment results for the 2013/14 academic year show a strong improvement in results for Early Years Foundation Stage with 65.8% of children achieving a good level of development. This is a rise of 22.1 percentage points since 2012/13, and East Sussex is in the top 20% of our statistical neighbours.

The Council is working with councils in East Sussex and the wider South East to develop and implement an action plan to ensure that our procurement activities are focused on increasing local spend. 44% (£131m) of our procurement spend was with local suppliers in the eight month period to the end of November 2014.

The 2014/15 highways resurfacing programme is progressing on time and within budget to ensure more of our roads are in a good condition and are better able to withstand the winter weather. In the 12 months to the end of March we will have resurfaced over 108 miles of highway, which includes two major in-situ road recycling schemes. This is a cost effective method of reconstructing the foundations of a road which involves breaking up the existing carriageway and mixing in cement and pulverised fuel ash to provide firm foundations that are then resurfaced.

The County Council is investing over £20million in the 2014/15 financial year resurfacing the County's roads, with £5million specifically targeted at the smaller unclassified roads and lanes. A further £23m has been earmarked for resurfacing in the 2015/16 financial year.

The Council repaired 65,144 potholes in 2014, which is over 900 more than in 2013. In October 2014 we introduced a new method of repairing potholes - the Jetpatcher cleans out crevices with a blast of high-pressure air before filling them with a mixture of sand and bitumen. The Jetpatcher enabled us to repair 25,000 potholes in the last three months of the year, which is twice as many as in the same period in 2013 and at lower cost. Potholes can be reported by calling the Highways Contact Centre on 0345 60 80 193, or online at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/fixmystreet.

Adopted children and their new families are being given greater support when they come up against problems, thanks to a joint initiative between our Post Adoption Support Team and the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). The AdCAMHS Service will support families, and also the professionals supporting them, post adoption with a dedicated therapy and consultation service. The aim of the service is to contribute to adoption stability and promote positive attachments within adoptive families and ultimately improve the prevention of placement breakdown. There is a two year plan to provide help to 40 families across the County through this new service.

A commitment to put an end to domestic abuse has earned East Sussex County Council White Ribbon status. The Council is one of only two county councils to have gained this award. The White Ribbon Campaign aims to ensure men take responsibility for reducing the level of violence against women by raising awareness and understanding.

A high-tech approach is being trialled which could help people with dementia stay independent for longer. The Council is conducting a pilot in which people with the condition who have opted into the scheme are equipped with GPS personal locator devices. A range of technology is being trialled with varying functions, including allowing users to summon help from relatives, carers or the police, or triggering an alert if they leave a designated 'safe area'.

In March 2014 Ofsted judged the Council to be 'good' overall in the new inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Adoption services and Permanence Planning received an 'outstanding' rating and were praised in particular for the speed at which children in care are placed with suitable adoptive families.

There has been a welcome increase in the take up of personalised budgets by Carers and Adults receiving support. This helps to maintain independent living for many service users.

More than 50 scam victims were visited on one day in December across East Sussex as part of a Trading Standards operation called 'Operation Bah Scambug'! Trading Standards officers across East and West Sussex joined forces with the National Trading Standards Scams Team to provide advice and support to 54 residents across the County who had been identified as victims of scams such as bogus lotteries, prize draws and clairvoyant scams. The total amount saved by victims as result of the visits was £48,420.

The County's three representatives on the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) spoke in the body's annual House of Commons debate at Westminster in December. The five topics for the debate were selected by a ballot of young people across the country - including a record turnout of almost 7,000 in East Sussex - as part of the Make Your Mark campaign, supported by the East Sussex Youth Cabinet.

The Council continues to work with partner organisations to make efficiencies and share best practice.

The Council has agreed a revised supported bus network which will save a total of £1.88million. Following a public consultation Cabinet approved proposals that will protect peak services, those relied upon by students travelling to school or college and residents needing to access essential services. There was a whole Council debate on the issue following the Council's first petition calling on the Council to reject Cabinet's cuts proposal. The Council voted against the cuts but the decision was merely to advise Cabinet so the cuts were made anyway.

Emissions from the Council's energy consumption for the first six months of 2014/15 were 5% lower compared to the same period last year. Projects being implemented this year include LED lighting improvements at County Hall, boiler conversion improvements at various schools and changes to street lighting in Hastings. Some of us would like to see solar panels on County owned buildings; this has been very cost effective for some councils which have also made money

There was a 15% increase in recycling tonnage in the first seven months of 2014/15 compared to the same period last year. This follows the introduction of new kerbside recycling services in four of the five District and Boroughs as well as a rise in the amount of household waste collected (total household waste has increased by 5%).