

Catsfield Parish Assembly

14 May 2026

Report from District Councillor Nicola McLaren

Council Tax: In February Rother Council unanimously agreed the budget for 2026/27. The proposal was for a 2.99% increase making the baseline charge on a Band D property £216.95 before the Parish, Police, Fire and Rescue and East Sussex County Council add their elements making a total of for Band D £2,700.95.

	2026/27 £	Increase %
Rother District Council	216.95	2.99%
East Sussex County Council	1,960.29	4.99%
East Sussex Fire & Rescue	117.49	4.44%
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner	281.91	5.62%
Sub total	2,576.64	4.87%
Parish & Town average across Rother	124.31	19.32%
Total	2,700.95	5.45%

Unlike recent years, the budget does not include drawing down reserves to bridge any shortfall. This has been the result of identifying saving over the year with officers and members closely involved in the process. The reserves which ideally should be £5 million are at £2.5 million, but it is expected the savings should deliver £443,000 into the reserves at the end of the financial year.

Local Government Reorganisation: This is the biggest change to local government for over 50 years with the disappearance of all districts and boroughs across East Sussex. Sussex councils have been told that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has not yet made a decision on their proposals for local government reorganisation but wants to consider possible modifications to them following further consultation after the May local elections, open now.

Transfer of assets: Meanwhile, work is ongoing with Rother preparing to transfer 71 of their 171 assets to parish or town councils. The principle is that assets such as toilets and recreation spaces could be protected under the local parish and town councils once the new Unitary Authority is in place.

The Government have instructed Councils about to be abolished they are not to transfer fund raising assets, such as car parks.

Relationship between the new Unitary Authority and Parish and Town Councils: One key consideration with Districts and Boroughs disappearing is ensuring that local

knowledge is preserved and good communications are put in place with the new unitary authority.

Rother Association of Local Councils under their new Chair and Vice Chair have taken on this challenge and have set up a working party to gather information from existing unitaries and to agree a proposal which, acting as a template across the new authority will then be passed on for them to implement if agreed. Our CE, Lorna Ford already chairs the Leaders Group of the existing councils, so is in a good position to support the implementation of this work.

Rother's Draft Local Plan

The draft of the Local plan for 2025- 2042 opened for "Regulation 18" consultation until 23rd March. The consultation covered development strategy and site allocations – with three sites included for Catsfield. For the detail see [Rother District Council - Rother Local Plan 2025-2042 – Development Strategy and Site Allocations](#).

The Local Plan is the blueprint for how Rother could develop and change up to 2042. It sets out where new homes, jobs, facilities and infrastructure may be located, while protecting the district's valued landscapes, heritage and character.

The Government has set higher housing requirements for all Councils. For Rother, this means planning for many more homes than has been the case in recent years and this requires difficult decisions about where development takes place. The draft Local Plan being consulted on provides for 8,427 new homes to 2042.

The recent consultation focused on the potential development sites proposed to meet these needs. The Council is now working towards the next "Regulation 19 stage". All comments received from Regulation 18 consultations are now being carefully considered as the Council prepares the next version of the plan. The final Local Plan will be submitted for examination in December 2026. For more information visit [Draft Local Plan 2025-2042 – Rother District Council](#)

Planning Enforcement: The Council has recruited an additional enforcement officer to increase the capacity of the team and the backlog is reducing.

Waste management and street cleansing: Rother, Hastings and Wealden Councils have a joint waste contract with Biffa who continue to provide a very good service with few complaints. This service represents significant budget pressure for the Council. Contract costs amounted to c.£5.9m in 2024/25, rising to c. £6.5m in 2025/26 and forecast to reach £7.58m in 2026/27. Additionally, the introduction of the new food waste service in Rother has increased costs by c.£1m for 2026/27. Food waste makes up an average of 30% of household bins and is being recycled to produce soil improver.

Temporary accommodation: The council has a duty to provide emergency/temporary accommodation (TA) for homeless households whilst assessing their case and/or ahead

of securing more permanent accommodation. This pressure has been increasing over recent years across the country but particularly in the southeast where increasing demand is putting significant pressure on budgets. Whilst some of the costs of this accommodation are covered by housing benefit there remains a significant cost borne by the Council directly. We have reduced the costs considerably by providing our own accommodation. At present we have 54 properties.

As of January this year, we have 249 people in temporary accommodation. 159 of those are with children. We have 1,450 on our housing register.

Community Grants: Rother have transferred the administration of their community grant scheme to Sussex Community Foundation. Nearly £100,000 of funding has been given to 15 grass roots projects across Rother. Community Groups, town and parish councils are eligible to apply. Eligible groups can apply for up to £10,000 for general projects and £20,000 for buildings.

The scheme is funded in part by Rother Community Lottery which has contributed nearly £50,000 between 2021 and 2025.

Climate Emergency: Last year Rother was listed as the most improved district council for its efforts to tackle climate change. Climate Emergency UK assesses all councils on the actions they have taken. We were rated ninth out of 51 district councils. Rother councillors agreed an ambitious target to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 – 20 years ahead of the national target. Officers and members have worked across the council to introduce measures which have contributed to supporting our ambitious target, such as ring fencing some grants and a proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy for projects that address climate change or environmental issues. Every committee decision considers carbon emissions and environmental impacts. There is a Green Team of officers in all Departments to take forward initiatives.

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