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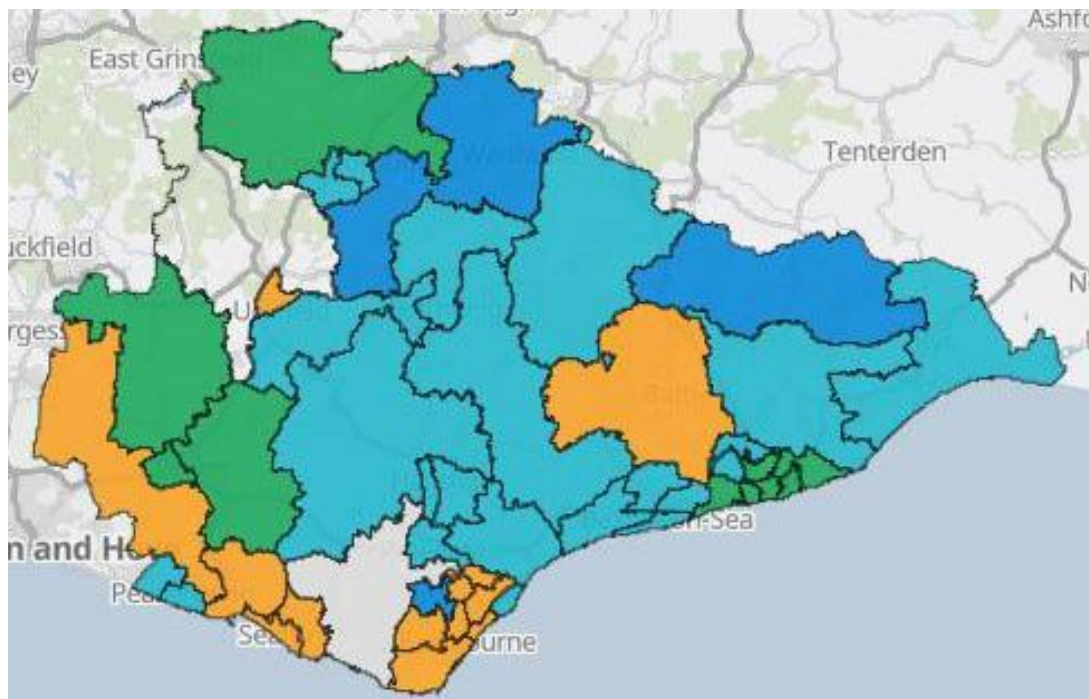
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EAST SUSSEX POLITICS SHIFTS AFTER LOCAL ELECTIONS

East Sussex politics has shifted, with the local political landscape changing after this month's county elections.

Voters across East Sussex delivered major changes in local government during the recent council elections with many experiencing growing frustration with national politics, rising living costs and pressure on public services.



Across the county, traditional party strongholds weakened as parties such as Reform UK and The Green Party gained support from residents looking for change.

**READ MORE ON
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CROWBOROUGH CAMP COULD BE USED FOR UPTO 5 YEARS SAYS HOME OFFICE



Home Office

WDC SAYS: "WE UNCOVERED DETAILS IN COURT PAPERS THAT REVEALED THE HOME OFFICE'S PLAN TO ALLOW THE CAMP THE OPTION TO REMAIN OPEN UNTIL 2030."

In a shock announcement, Wealden District Council has confirmed it uncovered details in court papers revealing that the Home Office is considering allowing the camp to remain open until 2030.

The revelation comes despite repeated assurances from the government and Home Office Minister Alex Norris MP that the site was only intended to operate temporarily for no longer than 12 months. In a statement shared on social media, the council said:

"The leader of the council, Rachel Millward, has expressed her disappointment and concern at the Home Office's failure to communicate this with us."

The camp remains highly controversial within the local community.

Weekly marches opposing the site have taken place every Sunday for more than six months, with groups including Crowborough Says No and Crowborough Shield leading protests against its continued use.

However, others have voiced support for the camp, arguing it provides a safe place for the 650 male asylum seekers currently housed there.

Leader of the council, Councillor Rachel Millward issued a statement and went on to say;

“Everyone round here is wearily familiar with the Home Office’s inability to make a decision. People whose lives are directly affected by that are left guessing. Why can’t the minister have the courage to tell it how it is and outline a plan, instead of hidden conversations behind closed doors? The entire project has been disastrously handled by the Home Office with a shocking lack of communication. We struggle to understand how the Home Office can justify such poor mismanagement.

“Asylum seekers deserve to be treated with dignity and humanity, not left in unsuitable temporary accommodation with inadequate support and no transparency for either residents or the local community. We have asked the Minister Alex Norris for an urgent explanation.”

One person commented on WDC Facebook saying, “We need a GE to get a new government to try and fix this country if possible now it's so far gone”

Another said, “I don't see a problem with this. I never see a problem with Kindness and Compassion.”

Views on the camp are mixed, but most are angry; some believe these asylum seekers deserve better conditions and others wish for them to be removed from the camp and deported back to their country of origin.



PICTURED: CROWBOROUGH TRAINING CAMP SIGN



PICTURED: POLICE OFFICERS STATIONED OUTSIDE THE CAMP



PICTURED: CROWBOROUGH TRAINING CAMP BUILDING FROM THE OUTSIDE

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Brand NEW 24-Hour Gatwick Bus Route Could Transform The Local Economy

A brand-new 24-hour bus route linking Hailsham directly to Gatwick Airport has launched and it could be a big positive for the local economy



The new "Route 500" connects Hailsham with Eastbourne, Uckfield, East Grinstead and Gatwick Airport, operating around the clock with fares capped at £3. The route is officially operating and is being backed by Metrobus, Gatwick Airport and East Sussex County Council.

For the local economy it is less about the route and service and more about jobs, recruitment and investment it will bring to Hailsham and surrounding areas.

The route now gives workers in Hailsham direct overnight and daytime access to one of the South East's biggest employment hubs, London Gatwick Airport, it will allow more local residents to access job opportunities in aviation operations, hospitality, logistics and retail. Local employers are also expected to benefit from easier staff movement into the town's industrial estates and business parks.

Metrobus described the route as a way to improve access to "jobs, education and Gatwick Airport" while strengthening economic links across Sussex.

GDP figures show unexpected economic growth

The new stats released today have put the UK top of the G7 for growth and come despite the Iran war. Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, says they show ministers have "the right economic plan".

The UK economy recorded growth of 0.3% in March, beating forecasts that had predicted a 0.2% decline, according to newly released figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Data published on Thursday also showed the economy expanded by 0.6% across the first quarter of 2026.

Strong performances in the production and construction sectors supported economic growth for this quarter.

There had been concerns that higher fuel and heating costs would reduce consumer spending and slow economic activity.

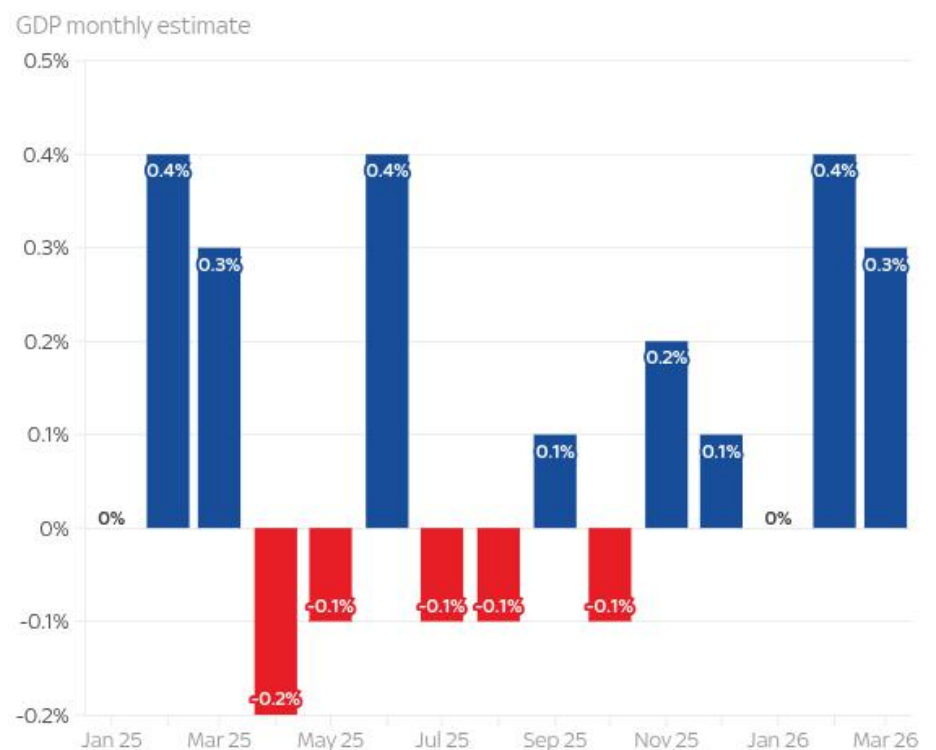
The latest figures follow growth recorded in February, when the UK economy expanded by 0.4%.

Rachel Reeves was quick to suggest that they showed that now was not the time for the change and that the government had "the right economic plan".

"Now is not the time to put our economic stability at risk," she said. "To do so would leave families and businesses worse off.

"Instead, this government is getting on with the job of building an economy that is stronger, more resilient, and prepared for the future."

The UK economy unexpectedly grew 0.3% in March



SOURCE: ONS

PICTURED: UK ECONOMIC GROWTH CHART - SOURCE: ONS



PICTURED: CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER RACHEL REEVES

OUR VERY FIRST EDITION EDITOR'S NOTE

Thank you so much for reading the very first edition of BPE News, hopefully the first of many to come.

My name is Archie, I'm 15 years old, and I am the founder and editor of BPE News. I couldn't be prouder to see BPE News created, printed, and in your hands today.

This would not have been possible without the incredible support of our sponsors, Edwards Cars & Minibuses, Smythe & Barrie, Sweethearts Party Boutique, and The One Stop Sweetie Shop, who have all helped more than I can put into words.

I have a strong passion for business, politics, economics, and journalism. The idea for a community newspaper focused on these topics came to me while I was studying, and from that moment, BPE News was born.

I'm extremely grateful to everyone who has supported this journey so far. There is so much more to come, especially with the launch of our brand-new website, bpenews.co.uk. Expect local news stories, interviews with business owners, economists, and politicians, and much more in future editions.

From me to you, thank you for being part of BPE News' journey.

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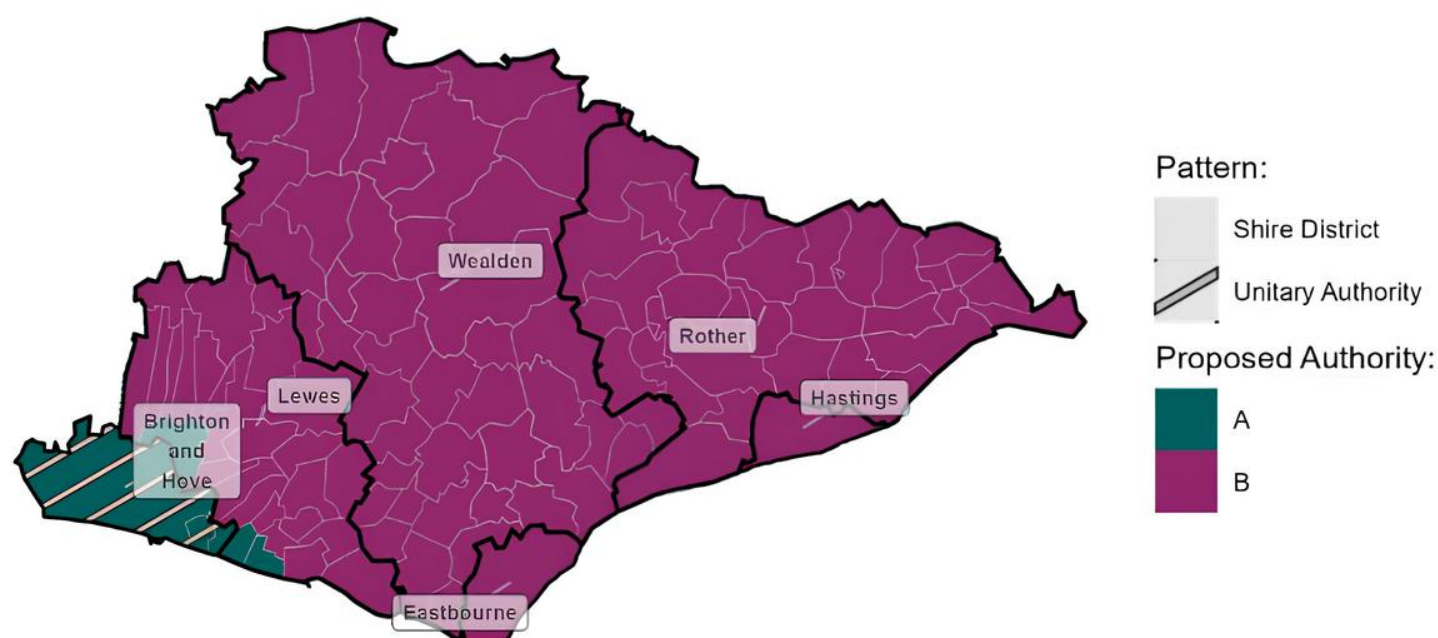


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HAVE YOUR SAY: THE GOVERNMENT IS SEEKING VIEWS ON A POTENTIAL MODIFICATION TO THE 2-UNITARY PROPOSAL FOR THE REORGANISATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN EAST SUSSEX AND BRIGHTON AND HOVE.

Modification to East Sussex and Brighton

Thick borders: District/Unitary; Thin borders: Parish (where applicable)



The proposed unitary authority will merge Wealden, Eastbourne, Lewes, Rother, and Hastings into a single authority.

Questions from residents have been raised regarding the impact this could have on council tax. In particular, those across the Wealden District who are currently paying the least council tax across East Sussex.

As to which, Wealden District Council responded, "When the new Unitary Authority is in position, you will be paying Council Tax to Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services, Town and Parish Councils, and the new Unitary Authority. The new Unitary Authority will be responsible for setting the Council Tax rates".

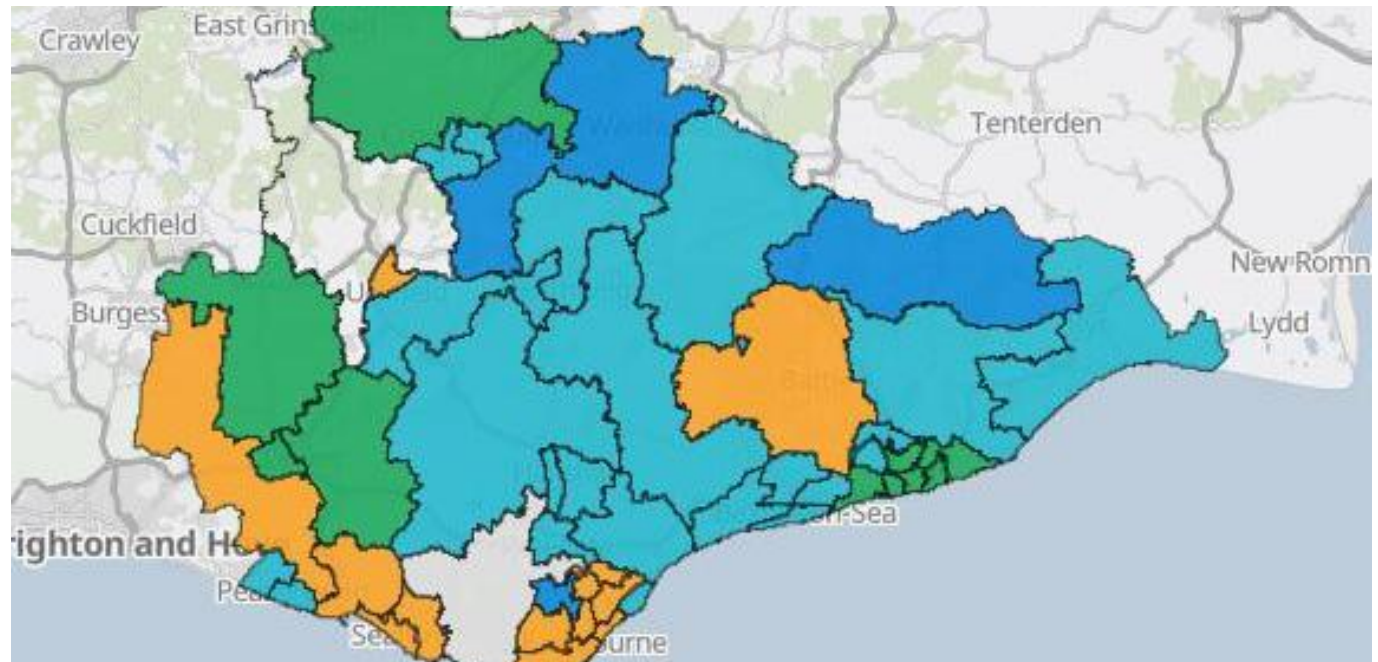
The government hopes this move will allow for more savings across East Sussex in the long term, but it will take a lot of money to roll out the new unitary authority.

The consultation will run from May 12th until June 15th 2026

To take part in the consultation and have your say, visit <https://orlo.uk/6S1EW>

Political shift in East Sussex after Reform UK surge at ESCC elections

Voters across East Sussex delivered major changes in local government during the recent council elections, reflecting growing frustration with national politics, rising living costs and pressure on public services.



Reform UK gained 22 seats on the council, just 4 seats away from a majority, whilst the Liberal Democrats followed behind with 13 seats, now the official opposition to Reform UK.

The Green Party gained 7 seats, bringing them up to 11 seats on the council. The Labour Party lost all 5 seats they had on ESCC, leaving them with 0 councillors.

The Conservatives took the biggest hit, going from 27 councillors, a majority control of the council, to just 3 seats, losing 24 councillors.

The Conservatives have been in control of ESCC since the 1980s, but with the rise of Reform and the Greens, two-party politics appears to be over, not just nationally but locally.

At the council's first meeting, the ESCC Reform UK leader Andy Woolley was elected council leader with 25 votes. Reform councillors cast 21 votes in his favour, while support also came from the council's three Conservative members and independent councillor Stephen Shing.

The remaining 24 councillors present — made up of 13 Liberal Democrats and 11 Green Party members — backed Liberal Democrat group leader Kathryn Field, according to the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

Could New Housing Growth Across Wealden Support Local Businesses?

New housing developments across Wealden could provide a significant boost for local businesses, with firms in and around Hailsham hoping an increase in population will lead to stronger trade and new opportunities.

Thousands of homes are continuing to be built across the district, including major developments such as Cuckoo Fields, Woodbury Manor, and Liberty Place.

The expansion has already brought more families and commuters into the area, with many business owners believing the growth could benefit the local economy.

Independent cafés, restaurants, and retailers in Hailsham town centre may benefit from new residents, with a potential increase in footfall at a time when many high streets continue to face financial pressures.

Tradespeople and construction-related businesses are also expected to benefit from the developments, with demand growing for electricians, decorators, plumbers, and landscaping services as new properties are completed.

However, some business owners have raised concerns about whether local infrastructure is keeping pace with the rapid expansion. Traffic congestion, parking pressures, and strain on public services remain common concerns among residents and traders alike.

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ARCHIE WEEKS: INSIDE WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL'S ANNUAL ELECTION FULL COUNCIL MEETING



ARCHIE WEEKS: REPORTS INSIDE WDC FULL COUNCIL MEETING

Wealden District Council's annual full council meeting last month saw protests from members of the public, heated scenes and emotional discussions about the safety of politicians.

The meeting confirmed Green Party councillor Rachel Millward as council leader for a second one-year term as part of the Green and Liberal Democrat administration agreement. Councillor Gavin Blake-Coggins was re-elected as council chair, while councillor Jessika Hulbert was re-elected vice chair.

However, proceedings were disrupted by members of the public in the gallery, who directed anger towards councillor Millward and shouted accusations including "Shame on you Rachel Millward, traitor".

Council chair Gavin Blake-Coggins suspended the meeting and ordered the public gallery to be cleared after tensions escalated. The group eventually left after several minutes following arguments with security and council officials. The protest appeared linked to concerns over the use of Crowborough training camp to house migrants moved out of hotels under Government plans to end hotel use for asylum seekers by 2029.

Later in the meeting, councillors discussed hostility and intimidation in politics during a debate on councillor Daniel Manvell's motion "Get Great Together".

Councillor Johanne Howell said: "My children have asked me to withdraw from politics entirely because they were worried about my personal safety."

Councillor Ben Cox added: "I almost didn't stand at this election because my partner said she didn't want me to stand". He later said: "I have never published a photo of my child online because I get death threats quite regularly because I stand out and put myself out there."

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