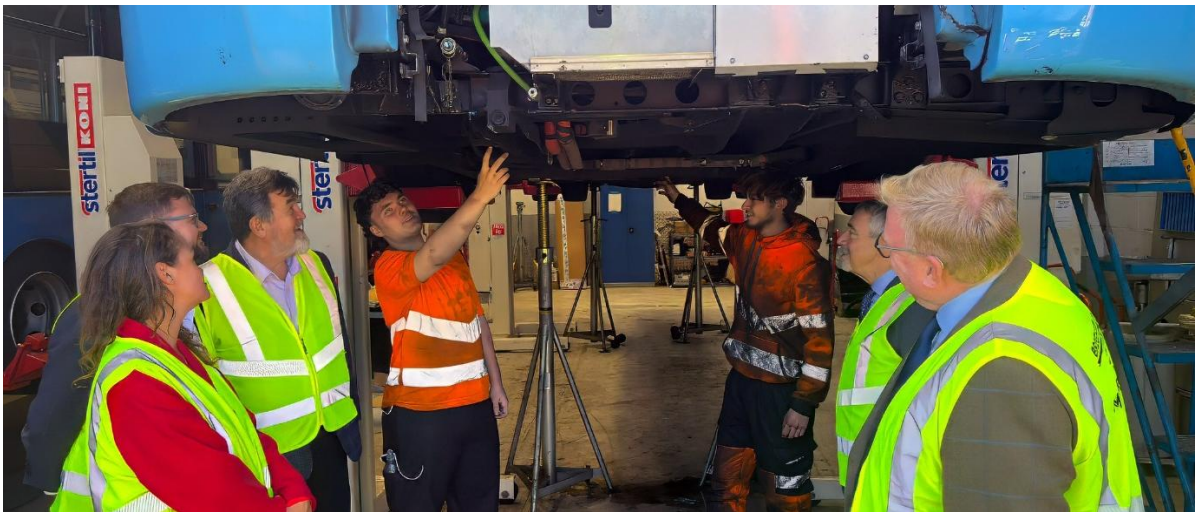


October 2026

One voice for Sussex

In this month's edition: what Government's recent announcements on buses, apprenticeships and devolution mean for us; we travel to Crawley to publish our Local Delivery Transport Plan and meet the hydrogen buses; and welcoming our first graduate management trainees.



The SBSA's Board talking to engineering apprentices at MetroBus depot in Crawley: (l-r) Cllr Bella Sankey, Chair of the SBSA and Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council; Cllr Jacob Taylor, Deputy Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council; Cllr Jay Mercer, Joint Vice Chair of the SBSA and Leader of West Sussex County Council; Cllr Andy Woolley, Joint Vice Chair of the SBSA and Leader of East Sussex County Council; and Cllr Nicholas Russell, Cabinet Member at West Sussex Count Council.

From the Chair

Last Thursday, our Board met in Crawley to publish our first ever, Sussex-wide Local Transport Delivery Plan. This is significant: the first-time improvements to our transport infrastructure have been viewed Sussex-wide. People don't travel in one council area - they cross boundaries to get to work, college, hospital and to see family – so a transport plan for Sussex should look the same way. It also gives us a firmer foundation for the bus reform work the Board agreed last month.

We marked the publication with a visit to the Metrobus hydrogen bus depot, also in Crawley. It's one thing to publish a plan; it's quite another to stand in a depot full of hydrogen buses and see the future of public transport. Sussex is home to the UK's largest hydrogen bus fleet (54 buses) and the UK's biggest liquid hydrogen refuelling station. A bus can be refuelled in under 10 minutes and can cover long distances. They offer lower and more predictable running costs, reduce reliance on imported fuel and deliver cleaner air. Great too to meet local young Crawley apprentice engineers learning the trade.

And there was more welcome news on buses recently: the Government confirmed that the £2 cap on single bus fares will return from January and run for the whole of 2027. That should make a real difference to people's pockets, particularly in our coastal and rural communities.

At Conference this year the Government made a whole series of announcements that matter to us. A new £100 million Local Apprenticeship Service, which will connect young people with employers who have never taken on an apprentice, will be led by mayoral authorities and rolled out from spring 2027.

Mayoral authorities are also gaining new powers over 16 to 19 skills and a new overnight visitor levy, with a roadmap on fiscal devolution to follow. And there's a new fund to revitalise high streets and town centres, alongside a bigger push on council housing.

I want Sussex to be first in the queue with opportunities like these and when I meet Treasury ministers next week I will be making this case, and making it again as often as I can. That's why the Chairs of all the authorities that don't yet have Mayors met for the first time last month. We agreed to work together to ensure no area is left behind. This Government has got a clear focus on devolution, now they need to take everyone with them.

Cllr Bella Sankey

Chair, Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority



From the Chief

Bonfire season is upon us, which in Sussex means woodsmoke in the air, a marching band in a very narrow street, and Lewes making everywhere else look a bit under-dressed. More on that below, and a bit of a theme running through this month's edition, as things are warming up at the Authority.

On the buses

Our Board met at Crawley Borough Council's offices last week – regular readers will remember it's where we held our AGM in July – and then headed to the Metrobus hydrogen bus depot, also in Crawley. The depot is home to hydrogen-powered buses serving Crawley, Horley and Gatwick Airport, and its liquid hydrogen refuelling station is believed to be the first of its kind for buses in Europe.

The reason for the trip is that at our Board meeting we published our Local Transport Delivery Plan. The good thing about it is that it brings together all the local transport plans from our three councils – Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex – in one place.

For councils, businesses and residents, it means one joined-up picture of what's planned across Sussex, making it much easier to see where the pieces connect, and giving us a stronger platform for making the case for investment in them.

Holding our feet to the fire

Our Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met for the first time, appointing Cllr Paul Marshall of West Sussex County Council as its Chair, and Cllr Julia Hilton of East Sussex County Council as Vice-Chair, each for a two-year term. The Committee meets in public, and its Chair will attend our Board. As The Police might have put it, every move we make, they'll be watching us – which is exactly as it should be.

Keeping the home fires burning

Back in June, we told you that we'd submitted an Expression of Interest to Government on expanding local heat networks, and I'm delighted to say we have good news. Worthing and Crawley – home to the two established heat networks – have been successful. These networks supply heating to lots of buildings from a shared source, giving residents and businesses access to reliable, locally sourced and more affordable heat. Unfortunately, not every area that applied was successful, but this is a great result for Sussex, and a good example of what our councils can achieve when they work together and with the Authority.

Getting creative in Crawley

We were delighted to be at a Creative Crawley breakfast event, bringing people together to talk about the National Festival of Play, which comes to Crawley in June next year. The festival is a town-wide celebration of play, created by Creative Crawley with HemingwayDesign, co-founded by Wayne Hemingway MBE. It's a fitting home for it: as a post-war New Town, Crawley was an early pioneer of adventure playgrounds back in the 1950s. It also chimes with what we've been hearing from cultural bodies as we develop the culture section of our Prosperity Strategy – that creativity helps make Sussex a place people want to live, work and visit.

New faces, and plenty of them

We've had quite a few new starters this month (more in 'Who's Who' below), but two deserve a special mention. Ellie Reeder and Gabrielle Burns are our first graduates, joining us as management trainees. They'll be with us for two years, completing four six-month placements, starting in our policy team and PMO function – two bright sparks at the very start of the Authority's story.

We've also been very successful in securing civil service secondments. The Government offered these to all strategic authorities to help with devolution, and we have secured eleven – a high number, and a full football team's worth.

They include Stephanie Foster, our new Chief of Staff; James Robards, working on our analytical and data capability; and policy analysts working across policy and strategy, including on developing adult skills. Best of all, they come to us at no cost: this is government support. I think it says something good about the Authority as a very attractive place to work, and about how well we're being supported by Government.

Remember, remember

And finally, back to bonfire season. Sussex is home to many bonfire societies, all busy with costumes, banners and torches, and nowhere takes it more seriously than Lewes. On Thursday 5 November the town hosts what is billed as the biggest Bonfire Night celebration in the world: torchlit processions through its narrow streets, music, fireworks and effigies, marking both the Gunpowder Plot and, rather more solemnly, the seventeen Protestant martyrs burned at the stake in Lewes between 1555 and 1557. If you're planning to go, please do your homework first – entry to fire sites is by ticket only, there is no parking in the town, and roads close early – so check the societies' guidance before you travel. Many societies, one night, and a very large community effort to make it happen: we know the feeling.

Mark Rogers

Interim Chief Executive



Who's who

Please join us in welcoming:

- **Ellie Reeder, Management Trainee** – Ellie studied social and political sciences and is interested in how research and community engagement can inform policy, and brings leadership and organisational experience from a role as a Co-op team leader, alongside community and education volunteering.
- **Gabriel Burns, Management Trainee** – Motivated by the impact local government can have on communities and the environment, Gabriel brings analytical and communication skills developed through studies and an internship, and as president of the college rugby club.
- **Stephanie Foster, Chief of Staff** – on secondment from the Home Office, supporting the Chief Executive and the Chair with how the office operates and some of our governance.
- **James Robards, Data Analysis and Capability** - helping to strengthen the evidence base that supports policy development and decision-making, James joins us as a Government secondment from the Office of National Statistics
- **Holly Aquilina, Lead for Employment, Skills and Public Sector Reform** – has joined us on secondment from East Sussex County Council where she was leading on Employment and Skills.

Events and dates for your diary

- **5 November** – Bonfire Night, culmination of the Sussex bonfire season
- **9 November** – Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting
- **11 November** – Sussex & Brighton Board meeting, East Sussex

Getting in touch

If you have any questions or know anyone who wants to sign up to our newsletter, get in touch at enquiries@sussexandbrighton-cca.gov.uk

You can also find out more, and keep up with our latest news, on our website at www.sussexandbrighton-cca.gov.uk and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) or befriend us on [Facebook](#).