



Essex County Council

# Summons

To all Members of Essex County Council

You are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of the County Council to be held as shown below to deal with the business set out in the Agenda.

<b>10:30</b>	<b>Tuesday, 25 May 2021</b>	<b>Chelmsford Sports and Athletics Centre. CM1 2EH,</b>
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**Gavin Jones**  
Chief Executive

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**Officer Support to the Council:**

Andy Gribben, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Telephone:** 03330134565

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**Prayers** The meeting will be preceded by Prayers led The Right Reverend Hugh Allan O. Praem, the Titular Abbot of Beeleigh and Chaplain to the Chairman of Essex County Council.

		<b>Pages</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Election of Chairman</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Appointment of Vice-Chairman</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> To note any declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct	
<b>5</b>	<b>Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2021</b>	<b>4 - 36</b>

<b>6</b>	<b>Public Speakers</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Chairman's Announcements and Communications</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Petitions</b>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Return of members elected and proportionality</b>	<b>37 - 44</b>
	The Chief Executive to report on:	
	a) the return of members elected,	
	b) the notification of the memberships of the political Groups,	
	c) the consequent political proportionality on committees and	
	d) the names of Group Leaders and their Deputies	
<b>10</b>	<b>Leader and Cabinet</b>	
	a) To elect the Leader of the Council	
	b) To receive notification from the newly-elected Leader of the appointment of the Cabinet, including the Deputy Leader of the Council, the powers delegated to them and the appointment of Deputies	
<b>11</b>	<b>To note the Political Groups' appointments to committees</b>	
	report to follow	
<b>12</b>	<b>To appoint the Chairmen of Committees</b>	<b>45 - 45</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Other Appointments</b>	<b>46 - 46</b>
	a) To receive notice from the Leader of the Council of the three County Council nominations to the Health and Wellbeing Board,	
	b) to appoint the County Council's representative on the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel and	
	c) to appoint the County Council's representative on the Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board.	
<b>14</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report</b>	<b>47 - 68</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter</b>	<b>69 - 81</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Cabinet Issues</b>	<b>82 - 99</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Council issues</b>	<b>100 - 100</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>Clarification of answers provided to written questions asked by Members of the Council</b>	

**19 Oral questions of the Leader, Cabinet Members,  
chairman of a committee or the Council's representative  
on the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel**

**Essex County Council and Committees Information**

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972. If there is exempted business, it will be clearly marked as an Exempt Item on the agenda and members of the public and any representatives of the media will be asked to leave the meeting room for that item.

The agenda is available on the [Essex County Council website](#) and by then following the links from [Running the Council](#) or you can go directly to the [Meetings Calendar](#) to see what is happening this month.

**Access to the meeting and reasonable adjustments**

This meeting will be live streamed to the [ECC Democracy YouTube Channel](#) and via audio broadcast [here](#). The public are entitled to admitted to the meeting, which is being held at the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre, Salerno Way, Chelmsford, CM1 2EH. However, space for the public is extremely limited due to COVID secure requirements. In addition, due to the venue size, it is likely that the members of the public will only get a limited view of proceedings. It's likely that members of the public will get a better view by watching on YouTube.

Members of the public who wish to attend are asked to email [full.council@essex.gov.uk](mailto:full.council@essex.gov.uk) in advance so that we can reserve a seat, as numbers are limited. Members of the public who do not reserve a seat will be admitted to the meeting if there are spare seats available.

With sufficient notice, documents can be made available in alternative formats, for further information about this or about the meeting in general please contact the named officer on the agenda pack or email [democratic.services@essex.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk)

**Audio recording of meetings**

Please note that in the interests of improving access to the Council's meetings, a sound recording is made of the public parts of many of the Council's Committees. The Chairman will make an announcement at the start of the meeting if it is being recorded.

If you are unable to attend and wish to see if the recording is available, you can find out by checking the [Calendar of Meetings](#) any time after the meeting starts. Any audio available can be accessed via the 'On air now!' box in the centre of the page, or the links immediately below it.

Should you wish to record the meeting, please contact the officer shown on the agenda front page.

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## Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council, held remotely on Tuesday, 23 February 2021

**Present:** Chairman: Councillor J G Jowers  
Vice-Chairman: Councillor E C Johnson

J Abbott	R J Gooding	Dr R Moore
J F Aldridge	I Grundy	J Moran
B Aspinell	C Guglielmi	M Platt
J Baker	M Hardware	C Pond
T Ball	D Harris	R Pratt
S Barker	A M Hedley	J M Reeves
J Beavis	I Henderson	P Reid
K Bentley	J Henry	S Robinson
D Blackwell	S Hillier	W Schmitt
A Brown	P Honeywood	L Scordis
M Buckley	A Jackson	A Sheldon
G Butland	D J Kendall	K Smith
S Canning	S Lissimore	C Souter
J Chandler	D Louis	J Spence
P Channer	J Lumley	M Stephenson
A Davies	M Mackrory	M Steptoe
J Deakin	R A Madden	A Turrell
M Durham	M Maddocks	L Wagland
B Egan	B Massey	S Walsh
D Finch	M McEwen	C Weston
R Gadsby	L McKinlay	C Whitbread
M Garnett	V Metcalfe	A Wood
A Goggin	R Mitchell	J A Young

### Prayers

The meeting was preceded by prayers led by the Right Reverend Hugh Allan O.Praem, the Titular Abbot of Beeleigh and Chaplain to the Chairman of Essex County Council.

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**The Chairman, Councillor Jowers, formally opened the meeting**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

The Chairman reminded members that although attendance at the meeting was 'remote' they should remain engaged in the meeting and refrain from responding to emails and texts during the meeting.

Members were also reminded to keep their microphone on mute for the duration of the meeting unless they wish to speak, and they should remember to address all remarks through the Chairman.

The Chairman confirmed that he had received a list of members wishing to speak on agenda items in advance and that he would call everyone on that list, however if others wish to speak or to raise a point of order or personal explanation the 'raise hand' function was to be used. He then gave other more advice concerning the management of the remote meeting.

The Chairman advised members that the meeting was being streamed live over the internet via the ECC Democracy YouTube channel in addition to the audio broadcast. Recordings of both would be found on the internet after the meeting.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor May.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman reminded Members of the advice they had been given by the Monitoring Officer:

(a) concerning those who may have any arrears of Council Tax outstanding for two months or more that they must make a declaration and were not entitled to vote on the Annual Budget but were not prevented from taking part in the discussion; and

(b) on the need for declarations of interest relating to the Budget debate.

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020****Resolved:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

#### 4. Public Questions

The Chairman welcomed members of the public who had registered to speak in accordance with Standing Order 16.12.8.

**Question 1:** from Councillor Arabella Brentnall of Boxted Parish Council who asked a question concerning Boxted Bridge. She asked:

‘The Historic and Listed Boxted Bridge spans the River Stour in the heart of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an area where, as laid down in the National Planning Policy Framework ( 2019), “Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty” and which has” the highest status of protection in relation to these issues” including cultural heritage.

Having allowed it to fall into disrepair, Essex Highways intends to demolish it and build a much larger structure with widening of the junction, because a desk-study showed that “fire engines cannot safely manoeuvre the junction”. In fact they can and have done since the bridge was built in 1897. In flagrant disregard of their own Options Study of 2018, without public consultation, and in unminuted closed meetings, the decision was taken last summer 2020 by Essex Structures to proceed with Option 7(b) of that report, discounted therein because it “would urbanise a section of the AONB and is likely to require planning permission” which would be” unlikely to be granted”.

Questions started to be asked by Boxted Parish Council and other interested parties about perceived irregularities in the decision-making process of Essex Structures. It was always the stated intention of Essex Highways to apply for planning permission for this project, but in January 2021 it was declared by Essex Structures that no planning permission would be sought and that they would exercise their “ permitted rights” under the TCPO 2015.

Without a formal planning application, there is no opportunity to object to this scheme for those bodies who have already expressed support in saving this bridge,- namely the Dedham Vale Society, Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Association of Industrial Archaeology, SAVEbritains heritage and Boxted Parish Council. Huge numbers of local residents wish to save this bridge and vehemently oppose any widening of the road because of their concerns for increased traffic speed, and needless destruction of this wonderfully tranquil spot.

Today, nearly 4000 people have signed an online petition to Kevin Bentley to Save Boxted Bridge.

Having regard to the above, in deciding to use their “ permitted rights” to demolish this historic bridge and build a modern one nearly twice the width, on an enlarged footprint with junction widening, how will Essex County Council demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duty of regard to

conserving and enhancing the beauty of the Dedham Vale AONB under section 85 of the CROW Act 2000?’

Councillor Bentley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure replied:

‘Like many of the 1,600 bridges in Essex that we look after, Boxted Bridge is valued by the local community it serves, not only as a functional crossing point but also for its historical interest. It is situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) and although not formally a listed structure, has been identified on Colchester Borough Council’s Local List.

The bridge was built more than 100 years ago and as an aging structure that is nearing the end of its natural lifespan, requires future intervention. We have increased the frequency of our inspection regime at Boxted Bridge to every six-months, so we are alerted to changes to its condition early.

Options for managing the bridge have been carefully considered, firstly exploring the option of repairs before determining that the most viable solution is to replace the bridge. The original construction of Boxted Bridge does not lend itself well to the extent of repairs required, without replacing the majority of the structure.

Essex Highways are considering a new replacement bridge that will look visually similar to the existing structure to ensure it is befitting to the area. Recent changes in the design standards publicised following the completion of the Option Study have brought into consideration the resilience and security of the structure as part of the Technical Approval process. We therefore have a duty to adequately address risks identified in the Option Study and incorporate improvements within a new scheme design.

We have been supplied with details via a Councillor of traffic incidents which have caused damage to the bridge and nearby private wall. These are not exclusive to HGVs but apply to different sized vehicles. Our Road Safety Audit has also indicated that larger vehicles cannot safely manoeuvre the junction under the current layout.

Our proposal is to install a structure on wider footprint to address the difficulties a fire engine and other larger vehicles have manoeuvring through the area and reduce the risk of collisions associated with the poor visibility at the bridge and junction. Being visually similar to the existing structure but built to current standards, provides the community with a long-term solution without compromising safety or the AONB.

Signage to warn HGVs that the route is unsuitable for their use will remain in place to deter larger vehicles from travelling on the bridge, just as it does at the moment.

We understand some members of the community are concerned that an improved structure will increase traffic. Due to recent flooding in the area

and while we remain in lockdown due to Covid-19, a traffic survey at this time may not accurately reflect normal traffic flows, however the intention is to undertake an assessment in the future.

Given the level of public interest and feedback received we will submit our proposal through the Essex County Council planning process. In the meantime, we will continue to engage with the local community through the parish council and key interested parties directly. A dedicated Boxted Bridge webpage was created in October 2020 and is updated regularly to keep the community informed of progress, including additional information to explain considerations made to date and answers to frequent questions.'

**Question 2:** from Mr Lee Scott, a resident of Chigwell who asked a question concerning budget provisions. He asked:

'Given the scale of the Covid crisis, and the diversion of resources in that direction, what budgetary provision has been made for all the other non Covid strategies of the County Council? Given the impact of Covid on the care sector, what is the Council doing to ensure quality and choice are maintained across the County?'

Councillor Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance and Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care replied.

'I would like to thank Mr Scott for his question. In the main, budgets have been built for 2021/22 using the assumption that the one-off costs of the pandemic would cease for 2021/22, although where it is believed there will be permanent behaviour changes these have been reflected in our planning and where one-off pressures due to Covid arise we will apply the £29m Covid emergency funding that is being provided by government and look to our targeted reserves that we have set prudently to support the mitigation of such risks. With regards to non Covid strategies this budget sets out an investment of an additional £33m across portfolios for 2021/22. The majority of this growth will protect and grow adult social care services meeting the rise in demand for services and levelling up through pay rises for carers.'

Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care added that:

'Within Adult Social Care we are bursting with ambition – our "Meaningful Lives Matter" programme (supporting better outcomes for people with learning disabilities), the Connect programme – enabling up to 40% more older people to live independently - backed up by care technology – all of which are funded into 2021/22.

We do recognise that the Covid crisis has had a significant impact on care sector. We continue to work with Essex Cares Limited, the Essex Care Association and others to ensure viability of homes in all parts of the county

and the continuing effectiveness of domiciliary care, so that choice and quality can be preserved.'

**Question 3:** from Mr Anthony McQuiggan, a resident of Galleywood who asked a question concerning the Summer Camp Initiative. He asked:

'Following on from the successful summer camp initiative that was launched across Essex last year, can the Cabinet Member for Children and Families confirm whether there are plans to deliver the programme again in summer 2021?'

Councillor McKinlay, Cabinet Member for Children and Families replied:

'Thank you for your question. As you know, last year we ran an extremely successful programme of summer camps in every city, borough and district across the county. Despite the COVID-19 restrictions, we still managed to offer 22,850 free face-to-face places to children across the 6-week holidays at a cost of £262k. The feedback we received from families was extremely positive. This scheme not only provided parents with much needed respite following the first period of home-schooling, but also helped those children rebuild their social connections and aid in their mental and physical wellbeing following the first lockdown. We worked closely with our partners across the different Essex communities to provide activities and fun engagement to young people, along with the provision of food and additional family support where needed. This was pioneering work by ECC and Active Essex and was held up by others as a great example of supporting young people and working with the community to deliver the programme.

This year, having now been in two further lockdowns, and with schools being closed for periods of time during the course of the year, we are very keen to look at how we can deliver even more places to families this year. With government plans now in place to start to open up the economy and our communities, it is vital that we support children in the round. We need young people to be active and able to rekindle those social connections.

Government have also taken note of the summer camps programme that we ran last year and in December announced their Holiday Activities and Food Programme for 2021. This saw an investment of £220m across the country for local authorities to provide free holiday provision akin to that which we offered last summer. Essex is receiving £4m of this funding, which will enable us to deliver the programme on a greater scale this year.

As such, this summer holiday, we will offer 12k places to children each day over the summer holiday period (c240k space over the course of the summer). Essex County Council is also funding an expansion of the scheme, working with our community partners to offer a wider range of activities such as in the arts and STEM. These new additions, along with the physical element will provide the most comprehensive holiday offer ever undertaken and will not only be a lifeline for working parents but for children whilst they socialise and spend time with each other over the summer. We also will

commit to further holiday clubs at Easter and Christmas and will continue to provide targeted holiday hunger activity support during the half terms to those families that need it.

We are also mindful of the lost education that children have experienced over the past few months. Studies show that children who attend extra and co-curricular clubs (e.g. after school or weekends) tend to have higher confidence, a greater sense of wellbeing and belonging, better social skills, improved team work experience, all of which will be vital to helping children catch up after the lockdown. Our focus is very much on supporting and nurturing these elements.'

**Question 4:** from Councillor Holly Whitbread of Epping Forest District Council who asked a question concerning the provision of Health and Adult Social Care. She asked:

'Essex County Council's provision of Adult Health and Social Care provides vital services for some of the most vulnerable residents in our community.

What work is being done to ensure that the best possible service is delivered while providing good value to all local taxpayers?'

Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care replied:

'I have mentioned in my previous answer a number of ambitious programmes, all are programmes that are designed to enhance the quality of life for the residents we serve, whilst providing value for money. We spend over £600m on social care every year. In doing so we will continue to drive value for money for residents. Only this morning, I learned the latest information and achievements of the Essex Wellbeing Service:

- 207,000 Essex residents supported in the last year
- 382,000 volunteer jobs completed to support people with daily living tasks
- Over 500 new befrienders recruited to support those who are isolated and lonely
- Over 1,000 people trained in mental health first aid during covid-19
- 11,000 Volunteers recruited to support shielding, testing and vaccination across Essex to complement the work of community hubs.

Fundamentally, as the above demonstrates, it is not always about spending money, but how we engage with our communities.'

**Question 5:** from Mr Andrew Schrader a resident of Basildon who asked a question concerning financial savings. He asked:

'Given the financial pressures on local authorities could the Cabinet Member for Finance please explain how the savings for 22/23 will be achieved?'

Councillor Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance replied:

'I'd like to thank Mr Schrader for the question this morning. As an Essex resident it is entirely right and proper that he should be interested in and concerned about how we propose to deliver savings and continue to deliver value for money to the taxpayer. As is the case every year, it isn't as simple as savings and efficiencies, it is about working in the most effective manner for our residents. ECC continues to be the only Council of its size and scale of spend that falls within the top 10 most effective councils. During the pandemic, we have demonstrated increased agile and flexible working and it's important that we don't stand still but continue to transform the organisation for the benefit of our residents.

**Question 6: from Mr Ross Playle**, a resident of **Witham** who asked a question concerning flooding. He asked:

'Given all the recent rain, can you reassure me that you will continue to invest in flood prevention measures to help protect residents and people's homes across Essex?'

Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action replied:

'Many thanks for your question. Yes, we will continue to invest in flood prevention measures to help protect residents and people's homes across Essex. Since the 4th December 2020, a persistent period of wet weather has resulted in numerous flood incidents across Essex. Our flood and water management team have seen a dramatic increase in the number of enquiries relating to ordinary watercourses and flooding to private property. As well as the Team being hard at work dealing with hundreds of reported incidents of flooding, each year Essex Highways also maintains thousands of gullies. In this financial year alone around 100,000 have been cleansed. This is just one way of alleviating issues that lead to flooding, however, this will not prevent all flooding when there are sustained periods of heavy rainfall.

The ECC floods team have invested £1.7m as part of the ongoing programme of flood defence improvements. A further £2.6m will be invested in flood defences next year as part of our ongoing commitment to flood defences in Essex.

As part of the wider capital programme, we will have unlocked over £7,000,000 pounds worth of funding and reduced surface water flood risk to over 1400 residential properties in Essex.

During these busy times, we can offer any property that has been affected by the recent flooding a 'Property Flood Resilience' grant of up to £8k per property. Details on [www.flood.essex.gov.uk](http://www.flood.essex.gov.uk) By the end of March 2021, ECC will have installed 450 Property Level Resilience schemes since the Essex grant initiative began in 2017.

In the last year ECC has also provided advice on 500 planning applications improving Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) on over 62,000 properties.

There are 36,000 properties at risk from surface water/rainfall flooding in Essex. We encourage everyone to check their flood risk at [www.flood.essex.gov.uk](http://www.flood.essex.gov.uk) and take steps to prepare where needed.'

## **5. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

### **Deaths**

#### **Former Councillor Brian Wood**

The Chairman announced the death of former Councillor Brian Wood, who passed away on 18 January at the age of 78.

Members were informed that he had been elected on 4 June 2009 to represent the Division of Canvey Island East. During the four years that he had been a County Councillor, he had served on the Executive Scrutiny Committee, the Member Development Steering Group, the Community Wellbeing and Older People PSC and the South Essex Area Forum.

He had also been a District Councillor since 2004 and was the Mayor of the Borough of Castle Point from 2017 to 2018.

Councillors Pond and Sheldon spoke in remembrance.

#### **Former Councillor Mervyn Juliff**

The Chairman announced the death of former Councillor Mervyn Juliff at the age of 87.

Members were informed that he had been elected to represent Great Parndon between 1967 and 1970 and then again between 1993 and 2001. During his time as an Essex County Councillor he had served on the Highways and Transportation Committee, the Education Committee and was a member of the Executive Board as well as many other committees and Boards. He had been the Leader of the Labour Group and had served as Leader of both Harlow Council and Essex County Council.

Members were informed that he had also served as a magistrate and had been involved in many local groups.

Councillor Young spoke in remembrance.

At the request of the Chairman, Members observed a minute's silence.

### **New Year's Honours**

The Chairman informed members that thirty-one people of the great County of Essex have been honoured for their community and voluntary work and public service.

Nine of those individuals have been recognised for their work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairman congratulated everyone who had received a nomination, these individuals have made a difference to many and the County of Essex and the country would have been much the poorer without their work.

The Chairman reflected that the New Year's Honours recognise only a small part of the huge contribution made by many who work tirelessly for their communities and he thanked everyone who had contributed positively to the county's response to the current pandemic.

### **Breaks**

The Chairman confirmed that, should the meeting run beyond 11:30, he intended to adjourn the meeting for ten minutes. If this happened a message will be displayed for members of the public and he asked that all members mute their microphones and turn off their cameras. The broadcasting of the meeting would also be paused.

He anticipated that there would also be a lunch break at around 1:00 pm should the meeting go on that long, and that this break would be for approximately 30 minutes.

## **6. Receipt of petitions and deputations**

The Chairman invited Councillor John Spence to speak and present a petition: concerning fallen fruit from trees causing a nuisance on footpaths.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure, Councillor Bentley responded.

## **7. Organisation Plan and Budget 2021/22**

The Council received the Report on the Budget 2021/22 that was in two parts:

- Part 1 being the Section 151 Officer's report and
- Part 2 being the Organisational Plan and Budget 2021/22.

There were also appendices:

- Appendix A – Essex Organisation Plan 2021/22
- Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (Organisation Plan and Budget

- Appendix C – Pay Policy Statement
- Appendix D – Budget Consultation Report
- Appendix E – Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2021/22

It was noted that there had been an Addendum Report and Replacement Recommendations document required as a result of the National Non-Domestic Rating return (NNDR1) being received from Harlow District Council. The addendum was circulated to all Members since the publication of the original report. It was further noted that the changes to the recommendations did not affect the recommended level of council tax.

The budget motions (1) to note the report of the section 151 officer and (2) the replacement recommendations set in the addendum report circulated to members before the meeting were moved by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Finch, and seconded by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitbread.

It was moved by Councillor Mackrory and seconded by Councillor Kendall that the recommended budget be amended as follows:

‘That the net effect of the budget resolution be amended as set out for the reasons and purposes set out below:

## **1.0 Recognising the enormity of the Climate Change Emergency**

1.1 The recommendations of the Essex Climate Change Commission need to be implemented immediately to tackle what is unquestionably an emergency (Climate Change Action portfolio). An additional £2m funding is proposed to:

- Promote a sustainable approach to growth, development and a low carbon future.
- Implement measures to improve the green infrastructure of Essex and increase biodiversity.
- Improve the environmental quality, attractiveness and recreational potential of public spaces in ECC ownership.
- Implement measures to reduce waste, lower energy consumption and improve air quality in identified hot spots and introduce Clean Air Zones.

1.2 This to be funded by drawing down an additional £2m from the £4m Essex Climate Change Commission Reserve in 2021/22 with a further £2m in 2022/23.

2.0 The following items, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1, to be funded by a 1% increase in Council Tax (£7.1m) and that the budget recommendation be amended as detailed in the section 151 officer's commentary and statement below.

### **3.0 Supporting the needs of children and young people with mental health issues**

3.1 The huge increase in numbers of young people requiring advice and treatment for mental health issues due to Coronavirus is well documented. Current demand is not being met fast enough as shown by waiting times, to the detriment of those young people. Therefore, it is proposed to Increase the Children and Families budget by £2m (Health and Adult Social Care portfolio). This additional funding to enable more vital work with children and young people with mental health issues. Measures to tackle suicide prevention and sexual health conditions will also reduce costly treatment to the NHS. We will promote the benefits of investing in match-funding this significant additional expenditure with the Clinical Commissioning Groups to provide more mental health counselling support in all schools to help identify and address mental health issues at an early age with the intention of reducing demand on services in the future.

### **4.0 Supporting Essex's young people**

4.1 An increase of £500,000 in the budget provision for Youth Services (Education and Skills portfolio) for the provision of Youth Service projects including, support, mentoring and respite for young carers, school lunchtime clubs/drop in sessions run by youth workers and outreach work, including detached working.

### **5.0 Supporting low income families £2.1m**

5.1 Protect low income families from the 1% increase in Council Tax by adding £2.1m to the proposals being developed for the remainder of the £10m Local Council Tax Support grant for 2021/22 (after recompense for any loss of Council Tax base). This scheme will be developed in partnership with Essex District, Borough and City Councils. In 2020/21 District, Borough and City Councils within Essex have supported approximately 52,300 households by applying up to £150 council tax discount to all Local Council Tax Support claimants, at a cost of £7.9m, funded from the government's Council Tax Covid-19 hardship fund.

### **6.0 Investing in our infrastructure and keeping Essex safe**

6.1 An increase of £2.5m in the Highways Capital programme (as a revenue contribution to capital) provision for Road Maintenance (Infrastructure portfolio) to start to clear the massive backlog of footway, cycleway and drainage repairs. Roads Maintenance will be

increased by £1.99m, Footway Maintenance by £390,000 and Surface Water Alleviation by £120,000.

## 7.0 Reducing Fly Tipping

- 7.1 An increase of £250,000 in the budget provision for Waste Disposal (Environment and Waste portfolio) to tackle the scourge of fly tipping which is blighting both the countryside and urban areas, in particular to pursue and prosecution of offenders. This increase is to be funded from the Waste Reserve in 2021/22.'

It was moved by Councillor Henderson and seconded by Councillor Young that the recommended budget be amended as follows:

'That the net effect of the budget resolution be amended for the reasons and purposes set out below:

### Supporting the Community

- 1) An increase of **£600,000** in supporting the community in 2021/22, on a one-off basis to assist the most vulnerable residents across Essex from isolation and loneliness.

This would require an increase in the budget for Customer, Communities, Culture & Corporate portfolio by **£600,000** and a reduction of the same sum in the Transformation Reserve.

- 2) An increase to the Youth Service revenue budget by **£200,000** on a one-off basis to provide a further 8 commissioners for 12 months to help support the additional demand caused during COVID-19 in the most deprived areas within Essex.

This would require an increase in the Education and Skills portfolio budget by **£200,000** and a reduction of the same sum in the Service Improvement Reserve.

### Getting Residents Walking

- 3) An increase in the annual Footway Maintenance capital programme by **£1.8m** to get more people walking through out Essex.

This would require an increase to the Infrastructure portfolio budget by **£1.8m**, funded by borrowing, the revenue servicing of which will be funded through a withdrawal from the earmarked Transformation Reserve totalling **£13,000** for 2021/22.

- 4) An increase in the annual Public Rights of Way capital programme by **£100,000**, maintaining levels of spend in line with previous years. This is to ensure that there is improvement and maintenance of targeted routes to

provide adequate and safe paths, allowing children and parents to walk to school.

This would require an increase in the Infrastructure portfolio capital programme by **£100,000**, funded by borrowing, the revenue servicing of which will be funded through a withdrawal from the earmarked Transformation Reserve, totalling **£1,000** for 2021/22.

### Highway's Quality Assurance

- 5) Increase to the 2021/22 Infrastructure revenue budget by **£45,000**, on a one-off basis to support an independent review of the criteria assessment used by Ringway Jacobs. The review will assess the quality criteria applied when approving maintenance and repairs, carried out under the existing Ringway Jacob contract to quality assure their remedial work.

This would require an increase in the budget for Infrastructure portfolio by **£45,000** which will be funded through a withdrawal from the earmarked Service Improvement Reserve.

- 6) Increase to the annual Infrastructure revenue budget for three years, from 2021/22 to 2023/24, by **£38,000 per annum**. This is to fund twice yearly, independent inspections of highway repair work carried out under the existing Ringway Jacobs contract, sampling a range of completed repairs across the county.

This would require an increase in the budget for the Infrastructure portfolio by **£38,000 per annum** which will be funded through withdrawals from the Service Improvement Reserve for 2021/22 through to 2023/24, a total reduction to the reserve of **£114,000.**'

## 8. Adjournment

With the agreement of Council, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 11:40. The meeting reconvened at 11:50.

## 9. Organisation Plan and Budget 2021/22 (continued)

The amendment moved by Councillor Mackrory and seconded by Councillor Kendall was put to the meeting and was **lost**.

The amendment moved by Councillor Henderson and seconded by Councillor Young was put to the meeting and was **lost**.

In accordance with Standing Order 16.10.2 (Voting on budget decisions) the Motion as shown in the Addendum Report and Replacement Recommendations document was put to a division by name and **carried** by 52 votes for, 13 against and 4 abstentions.

Those voting for the Motion were Councillors:

J Abbott	A Goggin	V Metcalfe
J F Aldridge	R J Gooding	R Mitchell
T Ball	I Grundy	Dr R Moore
S Barker	C Guglielmi	J Moran
J Beavis	M Hardware	M Platt
K Bentley	J Henry	C Pond
A Brown	S Hillier	R Pratt
M Buckley	P Honeywood	J M Reeves
G Butland	A Jackson	W Schmitt
S Canning	S Lissimore	A Sheldon
J Chandler	D Louis	C Souter
P Channer	J Lumley	J Spence
M Durham	R A Madden	M Stephenson
B Egan	M Maddocks	M Steptoe
D Finch	B Massey	L Wagland
R Gadsby	M McEwen	S Walsh
M Garnett	L McKinlay	C Weston
		C Whitbread

Those voting against the Motion were Councillors:

B Aspinell	D Harris	P Reid
J Baker	I Henderson	S Robinson
A Davies	D J Kendall	K Smith
J Deakin	M Mackrory	A Turrell
		J A Young

Those abstaining were Councillors Blackwell, Johnson, Jowers, and Scordis.

**Resolved:**

1. That the Section 151 Officer Report be noted.
2. **Organisation Plan, Revenue and Capital Budget**

- 2.1 That the Organisation Plan be approved in the form appended to the report (Appendix A) subject to the changes set out in paragraph 2.18 below.
- 2.2 The net cost of services to be set at **£1,037.9million (m)** for 2021/22 – Appendix A (page 37).
- 2.3 The net revenue budget requirement to be set at **£894.9m** (net cost of services less general government grants) for 2021/22 – Appendix A (page 41).
- 2.4 The total council tax funding requirement be set at **£717.5m** for 2021/22 – Appendix A (page 41).
- 2.5 That Essex County Council's element of the council tax be increased by 1.5% for the adult social care precept, using the flexibility set out by government to raise a precept of up to 3% for the 'adult social care precept'. Therefore, the Essex County Council element of the council tax charge for a Band D property in 2021/22 will be **£1,340.91**. A full list of bands is as follows:

Council Tax Band	2020/21 £	2021/22 £
Band A	880.74	893.94
Band B	1,027.53	1,042.93
Band C	1,174.32	1,191.92
Band D	<b>1,321.11</b>	<b>1,340.91</b>
Band E	1,614.69	1,638.89
Band F	1,908.27	1,936.87
Band G	2,201.85	2,234.85
Band H	2,642.22	2,681.82

- 2.6 Full Council approve the Essex County Council element of the council tax for each category of dwelling and the precepts on each of the council tax billing authorities for 2021/22, together with the final tax base, as set out in the table below:

Billing Authority	2021/22	2021/22
	Final Tax Base Band D Equivalent	Gross Precept £000
Basildon	60,840	81,581
Braintree	53,721	72,035
Brentwood	33,250	44,586
Castle Point	30,965	41,521
Chelmsford	68,580	91,959
Colchester	62,776	84,178
Epping Forest	54,019	72,434
Harlow	27,386	36,722
Maldon	24,959	33,468
Rochford	32,052	42,979
Tendring	48,436	64,948
Uttlesford	38,108	51,100
<b>Total for ECC</b>	<b>535,092</b>	<b>717,510</b>

- 2.7 Agree that, subject to the funding position prevailing next year, the Council intends to raise council tax in 2022/23 to use the remaining 1.5% adult social care precept in 2022/23.
- 2.8 That the proposed total schools budget be set at **£567.4m** for 2021/22 which will be funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant, Universal Free School Meals Grant, Pupil Premium Grant, PE and Sports Premium Grant, Sixth Form Grant and the COVID-19 Catch-up Grant. The majority of this will be passed through to maintained schools.
- 2.9 That the underlying balance on the General Balance be set at **£65.5m** as at 1 April 2021 (Appendix A, Annex 1, page 68).
- 2.10 That the capital payments guideline be set at **£290.3m** for 2021/22.
- 2.11 That for the purposes of section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 the Council formally determines that the increase in council tax is not such as to trigger a referendum.

### Strategic Performance Measures

- 2.12 That the strategic performance measures as set out in Annex 2 (Appendix A) be approved, noting that Annex 2 was not in the information submitted to Cabinet.

### Capital Strategy

- 2.13 That the 2021/22 to 2024/25 Prudential Indicators and limits, together with updated limits for 2020/21 as set out in Annexes 3A and 3B of the Capital Strategy (Appendix A) be approved.
- 2.14 That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 be approved, comprising:

- a. Borrowing strategy, as set out in Annex 3 of the Capital Strategy (Appendix A, Annex 3, page 85).
  - b. Treasury management investments strategy, as set out in Annex 3 and Annex 3D of the Capital Strategy (Appendix A, Annex 3, page 92).
  - c. Indicative strategy for commercial investment activities, as set out in Annex 3 of the Capital Strategy (Appendix A, Annex 3, page 95).
- 2.15 That the policy for making a prudent level of revenue provision for the repayment of debt, (the Minimum Revenue Provision policy) as set out in Annex 3C of the Capital Strategy (Appendix A, Annex 3, page 103), be approved.

### **Pay Policy Statement**

- 2.16 The Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix C be approved.

### **Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2021/22**

- 2.17 The Flexible Use of Capital Receipt Strategy for 2021/22 (Appendix E) be approved, using the short-term discretion from government to use £1.3m of capital receipts to fund transformation projects that save money or reduce costs.

## **10. Council Issues**

Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, presented the report.

It having been moved by Councillor Finch and seconded by Cllr Bentley it was

### **Resolved**

That the Constitution be amended to

1. Increase in the number of proper officers for the purposes of countersigning declarations of acceptance of office by newly elected councillors and that there be an amendment to the constitution to read:

### **'4.4 Statutory Officers**

Full Council has designated the following posts as shown:

Post	Designation
Chief Executive	Head of the Paid Service under Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and a

	proper officer for the purposes of section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972 (declaration of acceptance of office)
Executive Director, Finance and Technology	Chief Finance Officer appointed under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972
Executive Director, Children and Families	Director of Children’s Services appointed under Section 18 of the Children Act 2004
Executive Director, Adult Social Care	Director of Adult Social Services appointed under section 6 of the Local Authorities Social Services Act 1970
Director, Legal and Assurance	Monitoring Officer under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and a proper officer for the purposes of section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972 (declaration of acceptance of office)
Director, Well-being, Public Health and Communities	Director of Public Health under section 73A of the National Health Service Act 2006
Head of Democracy and Transparency	Scrutiny Officer under Section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000 and a proper officer for the purposes of section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972 (declaration of acceptance of office)

The Post titles as shown in the first column of the above table may be varied by the Chief Executive.’

**2. Remote Meetings**

That a new paragraph 17.4 be inserted in the constitution as set out below and that paragraphs 17.4 and 17.5 are renumbered to 17.5 and 17.6 and all cross-references are updated.

**‘17.4 Remote participation**

Notwithstanding any provision in the constitution to the contrary, any Member of the Cabinet (including the Leader) may participate in a meeting of the Cabinet and vote on any item of business notwithstanding that they are not present at the place where the meeting takes place, if:

- (a) the agenda for the meeting includes instructions on how members may participate in the meeting remotely
- (b) the Member concerned has been able to hear and, where practical, see the meeting; and

- (c) persons present at the meeting have been able to hear and, where practical, see the member during all or most of the discussion of the item; and
- (d) the Member concerned is able to indicate how they wish to vote
- (e) the Member is not prevented by the Code of Conduct from being present or voting.'

### **3. Approved Bodies**

That the list of Approved Bodies in Appendix 3 of Part 26 of the Constitution be amended as follows:

1. Remove the reference to the Basildon Bus Forum.
2. Amend the reference to the 'Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Anglian (Central)' to the 'Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Anglian (Great Ouse)'.

### **4. Date of annual meeting 2021**

That the annual meeting of the Council for the 2021/22 municipal year be held at 10 am on Tuesday 25 May at such venue or by such remote means as the Chairman may determine.

## **11. The Leader's Report of Cabinet Issues**

Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, presented the report.

It having been moved by Councillor Finch and seconded by Cllr Bentley it was

### **Resolved**

To receive the list of urgent decisions taken and the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 15 December 2020 and 19 January 2021.

## **12. Written Questions**

The published answers to the 18 written questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 16.12.1 were noted.

Members sought points of clarification from the relevant Cabinet Members, details of which are available on the ECC website via [the audio recording of the meeting](#).

The written questions and answers were:

**1. By Councillor Beavis of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families**

‘Could the Cabinet Member please provide a summary of the impact that the Coronavirus pandemic is having on our children? What overall effect has there been on the prevalence of food hunger, child poverty or children’s mental health in Essex?’

Specifically, can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- 1) How many children are defined as living in poverty or living with food hunger in Essex?
- 2) What provision was made for free school meals in the February half-term in Essex and
- 3) What is the impact of Essex children receiving free school meals?’

**Reply**

‘Thank you for your question. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 crisis has had a huge impact on the lives of families and children and we know that the pandemic has increased the need for help with food across the country, including here in Essex. As would be expected, the government, both national and local, have responded with additional support. A number of financial support packages, such as increases to Universal Credit and the Winter Covid Support Fund, have been made available to help families during this uncertain period.

Here in Essex, we have used this money in a variety of ways. Members will be aware of the detail that has been provided to them. In both the Christmas and February half term holidays, we provided £15 free school meal vouchers per child, per week to around 35,000 young people who were eligible for benefits based free school meals. In addition to this, we have worked with Active Essex and a team of community organisations in order to provide support for around 2800 families most in need across the county, this includes family food boxes, activity packs, family wellbeing packs, food and nutrition education and a week of online activities.

We have also provided three rounds of funding for community food support groups to bid for money to help with the provision of food parcels for people across the county. The feedback to this has been very positive and has allowed the organisations to increase support at crucial times, such as over Christmas and during the cold weather.

Last Summer, we successfully launched our Holiday Camp Activity Scheme, which provided nearly 25,000 places to families across Essex. The young people who attended them, took part in positive and fun activities and were provided with food and where necessary, additional support and supplies. These schemes have been extremely successful and have had a positive impact on feeding families and supporting them during the global pandemic crisis.

We are already looking at what we can do to ensure the support that continues post-pandemic is appropriate and sustainable and we have some projects already in the pipeline, which include:

- The Holiday Activity Camp Scheme, which were planned before COVID-19 happened and will continue to run again this year, with a greater offer than in 2020. Food will once again be provided.
- Our Working Families programme is currently tackling the issue of affordable childcare and is gathering evidence to pilot a scheme in Basildon, to support parents in their return to work.
- Our “Closing the Digital Divide” laptop scheme has been distributing thousands of laptops to children right across the county and we are working to ensure that this continues post- Covid.
- In Tendring, where we have a disproportionate number of children come into care, we have set up a new multi-disciplinary team in Children Services to specifically target those families who require our support and work with them to build their resilience. We hope if this is successful to expand this work to Canvey.
- We are currently updating our child poverty strategy to ensure that Essex is at the forefront in tackling some of the key issues.’

## **2. By Councillor Smith of the Leader of the Council**

‘When meetings of the Council resume at County Hall, once it is both safe and lawful to do so, will these meetings be recorded and uploaded to You Tube with a person translating the meeting into sign language?’

Also, after the next elections to Essex County Council, can all members be offered a basic course in sign language so that all councillors can talk with their constituents that use this language to communicate?’

### **Reply**

‘We meet regularly with community representatives as part of our commitment to diversity, as well as considering comments made by our residents. We are not aware of any demand for this service, perhaps because people can use the 'closed captions' if they want to, but we will of course keep under review.

I will however refer your suggestion to the Member Development Steering Group and I am sure they will consider it at their next meeting on 1 March, as they consider all suggestions for development opportunities for members.’

## **3. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

‘How much did Redrow pay to Essex County Council for the new primary school for the Westley Green Estate? Has this money been spent or is it sitting in a ring-fenced reserve? If it has been spent, which school was this spent on?’

**Reply**

'I can confirm that ECC has received £1,045,729 (including interest) from Redrow with a further estimated sum of £1,615,844 (plus indexation) that is yet to be received.

This money is to be used as a contribution toward the cost of the new school which is currently anticipated to be in the region of £8.5m. The balance is coming from ECC resources.

The school will be required to solve the need for places in 23/24 academic year, as set out in the Essex School Organisation Service's Ten-Year Plan.'

**4. By Councillor Kendall of the Leader of the Council**

'The charity 'Crohn's and Colitis UK' is encouraging venues providing accessible toilets to install new signage. This is to help stop the stigma and discrimination towards people with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and other invisible conditions. There have been instances nationally where such individuals using an accessible toilet have been accused by staff members of being ineligible to use them. The charity signs have two standing figures and a wheelchair user with the wording Accessible Toilet and the logo "Not every disability is visible".

Will the Leader please take action to ensure that all accessible toilets on Essex County Council premises bear these signs?'

**Reply**

'We are committed to ensuring that everyone in Essex is aware of the many forms of disability. We manage over 350 schools, and they along with our offices and buildings have many accessible toilets. We believe, rather than changing a few signs, that it is through education and national awareness raising that this stigma will be broken. We will continue to train and inform to ensure that our staff and schoolchildren are aware of the important message you wish to convey that not every disability is visible.'

**5. By Councillor Kendall of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure**

'There are a number of large highway schemes across Essex that have been waiting many years for the necessary funding to become available for them to be delivered. One such scheme is the solid island roundabout that is needed at the Devil's Head crossroad in my County Division with an estimated cost of £1.2 million. The Local Highways Panel budgets would never be large enough to fund these types of schemes so will the Cabinet Member for Highway's consider creating a separate Highways funding pot which members could bid for? This initiative would help to ensure that there was a realistic prospect of some of these schemes being delivered in the future.'

**Reply**

'I thank Councillor Kendall for his question. Where schemes are of an order of cost that is greater than can be accommodated by an individual LHP, they are treated as major schemes where initial development work is undertaken and options assessed so that they might be in a position to attract relevant external funding. Examples of these abound in recent years across the County using Local Growth Funding, Pinch Point, Active Travel Funding, and many others. I'm pleased to say in this regard, ECC have one of the best track records in the country for drawing in these external grants, largely due to the commitment we maintain to early scheme development work. It would not however be financially prudent for ECC to borrow more money to fund additional capital schemes in the current financial climate. In the specific example of Devils Head, as Councillor Kendall is aware, these early scheme development works suggested that a solid island roundabout would carry significant cost and not deliver any better outcomes than the scheme we have recently completed in this location. It would also have significantly more impact on the adjacent Common Land.'

**6. By Councillor Blackwell of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure**

'In the recent spell of wet weather many roads on Canvey Island were flooded like many other areas of Essex. Many residents are asking why there were no flood warning signs on the roads.

Would the Cabinet Member consider making "road flooded" signs available to the Local Highway Rangers to allow a quicker roll out of these signs.'

**Reply**

'I thank Councillor Blackwell for his question. The recent wet weather has put great stress on the road network across the county, causing flooding in areas that may not have experienced it to this extent for some time – and we know climate change will make this extreme weather more likely in the future. I would support requests to each of the Local Highways Panels to invest in new flood warning and 'road flooded' signs that can be deployed by the Local Highways Rangers.'

**7. By Councillor Harris of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure**

'Would the Portfolio Holder be able to update members with the revised plan for conversion to LED of all street lights, in Essex and in my area of Colchester - Maypole (Berechurch and Shrub End areas) as I was told two years ago it was the intention to have all lights converted in three years. It may be that COVID or costs have amended the plan and timescales?'

**Reply**

'I thank Councillor Harris for his question. The LED program has been slightly delayed during the pandemic, but we are on course to start installation early in the new financial year. This is one of the largest programmes of its type across the country with a value in excess of £20m to be delivered over 3 years and has required a great deal of preparation with securing orders of the LED lights and engaging the necessary levels of resources. Our communications team will work closely with the project delivery team to keep the public informed.'

**8. By Councillor Harris of the Leader of the Council**

'Can the Leader of the Council update members with any plans for changes in staffing numbers, and any changes in travel arrangements for ECC staff due to working from home.'

**Reply**

'The Council does not have at present any organisation-wide plans for significant changes to staffing numbers for the coming financial year. Following the inception of the Council's Organisation Design Programme in 2017, the Council has maintained its programme of continuous review of staffing structures, within functions, as part of the annual process of workforce planning to ensure the workforce is the optimum size to deliver Council services.'

Whilst the current Government restrictions in relation to the pandemic remain in situ, the Council have implemented a workforce protocol that where employees are able to work remotely they are encouraged to do so and where they are required to have physical presence in a Council building, the social distancing measures are to be adhered to. The Council currently has over 50% of its workforce working at home and therefore they are not travelling to Council offices. All other staff who are required to attend Council offices are asked to adhere to Government guidance in maintaining safe travel.'

**9. By Councillor Scordis of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure**

'Can the portfolio holder advise why is there a £986,000 underspend on highway maintenance across Essex?'

**Reply**

'I thank Councillor Scordis for his question. I can confirm that the £986,000 figure is due to overall costs charged through the year-end closure process being slightly lower than expected due to the impact of COVID-19.'

Essex Highways crews are continuing to repair potholes, grit main roads and repair streetlights as usual, to the maximum capability we have. Our crews have had to

social distance amongst themselves and avoid close contact with local residents. Another issue crews faced is many more cars parked on roads as people stay at home, which makes arranging clear roads for surfacing difficult for everyone. COVID-19 restrictions caused these issues and we had to postpone some town centre and estate road resurfacing. We will come back to these roads this year to improve them and our workers will continue their hugely-valued work.'

**10. By Councillor Scordis of the Leader of the Council**

'Can the Leader of the Council confirm the Council's position on Garden Communities, as his Deputy seemed to be opposed to them at Colchester Borough Council?'

**Reply**

'As you are aware, Essex County Council has been an active supporter of Garden Communities across Essex and partnered with Colchester Borough Council on the North Essex Garden Communities project and continues to do so on the Tendring Colchester Borders project.'

**11. By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate**

'As we go into the elections, can I ask the Portfolio Holder if the future of Essex libraries will be a safe and secure one?'

**Reply**

'Yes, Essex County Council has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to deliver a comprehensive and efficient free library service to all who live, work or study in the county and who desire to use it. The Essex Future Library Services Strategy commits to continuing to deliver our core offer, whilst also seeking new ways of working to ensure we achieve the following:

- Place books and reading at the heart of our library service offer
- Provide a modern library service and library spaces, which are fit for both now and the future
- Empower and support communities and groups to shape and manage community-run library services that best meet the needs of the community they serve
- Offer a consistently good customer experience
- Have a comprehensive eLibrary offer and embrace digital technology.

A £3 million investment was made to the Library Service to support the strategy.

The Library Service will be attending Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 25th February to update on the service's success and the investment that has gone into the library service since the

commencement of the strategy. This includes investing in a new Library Management System, which will provide access to millions more books. Essex libraries will move to the new system in late spring and it will bring with it a host of innovative and interactive features including:

- a system compatible with all mobile devices
- customers will be able to rate books, post reviews and make recommendations to other customers
- access to a 24/7 renewals line so that items can easily renewed
- an enhanced app with lots of new features, including self service functions
- customer alerts and texts

Other workstream highlights, since the publication of the new library strategy include – working on rebuilding Shenfield library to make it bigger and better for customers, partnership working with Adult Community Learning (ACL) to begin to create a modern, vibrant library in Harlow, new LED lighting in 5 libraries (with up to 20 more to be completed in the next year), upgrade of public computers in all 74 libraries, self-service machines to be upgraded and wifi upgrades in 10 of our busiest libraries.

We are also investing in our people, which has included launching a new apprenticeship scheme and providing them with opportunities to learn new skills, such as how to create engaging online rhyme-time activities.'

## **12. By Councillor Young of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure**

'West Quay in Wivenhoe has no working street lights, the pavements are falling into disrepair and the safety of the river wall is not known. Essex County Council refused to formally adopt the area five years ago. This leaves residents in Wivenhoe in very unsafe circumstances and at the mercy of an unresponsive developer. This issue of non-adoption causes untold issues to local communities as developers often walk away from their responsibilities, leaving the public at risk as is the case here.

Can I ask the Portfolio Holder if the County's planning officers can work with Districts and Boroughs to collectively seek a solution to areas such as this where adoption has not been possible? We need the collective force of all tiers of Government to get developers to honour their responsibilities to the community.'

### **Reply**

'I thank Councillor Young for her question. Where we are asked to adopt public highway, it does require the developer to have built the infrastructure to the appropriate adoptable standard. Where roads are to remain private the developer will enter into a legal undertaking that the road will remain private in perpetuity and that ECC will not be required to adopt it at a future date. This is in recognition that it is not built to full adoptable standards. It may be that this is the case with the

development in Wivenhoe and I would be happy to look into the issue in further detail with Councillor Young.

One solution, if there is an absent developer, is for the community to make good the assets to allow the roads, footpaths, and such to be improved to an adoptable standard which could then be taken on by ECC. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution where you have a private road and the developer has moved on.'

**13. By Councillor Henderson of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure**

'Will the Portfolio Holder please advise what is the Council policy with reference to providing bags of salt to Town and Parish Councils, and please clarify who is responsible for gritting the non-priority roads and footpaths across the County.'

**Reply**

'As noted in the question, ECC runs the Salt Bag Partnership with the parish, town councils and some local county members (in unparished towns). We provide bagged or small quantities of bulk salt to such councils, during the proceeding autumn. These councils develop their own local snow plan, to clear footways and very minor roads during inclement weather.

To support the response to inclement weather we also have a reciprocal arrangement with the district, borough and city councils for snow clearing on busy footways. This was exercised in recent weeks with most district, borough and city councils. Essex County Council also employ the services of local snow clearing contractors to clear snow from some of the minor roads. We also direct them to any roads/areas where drifting occurs and re-occurs, in an attempt to keep our main roads open.

Minor roads are not part of our precautionary salting network and do not receive regular treatment. When inclement weather does occur, we will aim to respond to any emergencies, in coordination with the Emergency services.

There is also a network of over 1000 salt bins around the county that are checked and re-stocked every autumn, for the public to use on local roads and pavements.'

**14. By Councillor Abbott of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure**

'The persistently wet weather through the winter of 2020/21 has led to surface flooding in many locations in Essex including in Witham Northern division where a number of sections of road and footway have been repeatedly flooded in recent months. The same places were flooded in the winter of 2019/20.

Does the Cabinet Member agree that Essex County Council needs to do the best it can to keep drainage assets clear and working but also to plan ahead for likely even

greater stress on the system given that increasingly wet winters are expected as a result of Climate Change?’

### Reply

‘I thank Councillor Abbott for his question and concur with him on this issue – we are clearly facing wetter winters and a greater level of flooding in all locations including our highways as a result. In recognition of the recent flooding, ECC has committed to invest a further £326,000 immediately to tackle urgent highways flooding issues and the road repairs necessary because of the damage. More broadly, we are doing a number of things to tackle the issue including investment in additional jetting and gully emptying now across the network to clear drains after the recent flooding and in the longer term through the implementation of SUDS and increases in our enforcement and education activity. Sadly, myths abound when it comes to matters of flooding and drainage and you will have seen our recent Highways Highlights publication majored on increasing some of this basic understanding. We are also increasing seeing badly maintained or lost drainage facilities on private land. Historically these would have dealt with a lot of these flooding issues but development and a growing lack of understanding from landowners mean that more often than not we see the results on our highways, with water and silt pouring off of surrounding land and into our drains and ditch networks compromised. I am committed to tackling this issue, but it will require commitment from everyone to see the improvements we all seek.’

### 15. **By Councillor Abbott of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action**

‘Bellfield in Witham is a piece of land owned by Essex County Council that many decades ago was used in association with the former Crittall Works, but it is now a haven for wildlife in an otherwise built-up area.

Local residents living nearby support Bellfield remaining as a green haven. Witham already has a large amount of housing, commercial and other development underway and so instead of trying to build on this land, would Essex County Council consider allowing Witham Town Council to manage it, as they have offered to do?

The site could then be cleaned of litter and the habitat value could be enhanced with more planting. As a further suggestion, Essex County Council could then include this land in the excellent Essex Forest Initiative.’

### Reply

‘Many thanks for this suggestion. This site unfortunately has some significant challenges in relation to its potential use. Officers are considering the approach by the Town Council, alongside other ways in which the site could provide further value. A portion of the site has been allocated for use by the adjacent school, but the remainder has been declared surplus to ECC’s requirements and the priority will be to use the land most effectively. Green solutions, such as the Essex Forest

Initiative, will of course be given consideration.'

**16. By Councillor Wood of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure**

'With Harwich Port's bid to become a Freeport, and the amount of business this could bring to Tendring, could the Cabinet Member confirm:

- when the A120 will be upgraded to support this development and
- what other assistance Essex County Council will provide to the port in its bid.'

**Reply**

'I thank Councillor Wood for his question. Freeport East has the potential to become a valuable asset to the local, regional and national economy and a crucial global connection in UK trade. We are confident that the Freeport East vision, centred on the Port of Felixstowe and Harwich International Port, delivers a unique opportunity for local and regional regeneration through the development of a manufacturing, green energy, digital and innovation hub.

We are committed to working with Freeport East, Highways England, Transport East and other local partners to make sure the surface transport investment required to support a successful and sustainable Freeport is developed alongside their wider plans, with a focus on improved strategic connectivity by road and rail. We also wish to ensure that employment opportunities provided by Freeport East are accessible to local people by sustainable forms of transport, supporting our ambition to level-up coastal communities and decarbonise transport across Essex. We have submitted a letter to the Chancellor and Secretary of State in support of the freeport bid.

With regard to the A120 specifically, Highways England now has a dedicated team in place to progress the upgrade of the A120 from Braintree to the A12, with a preferred route announcement expected later in 2021 or early 2022. We are working closely with Highways England to progress the scheme and unlock an estimated £2.2 billion in gross value through new jobs, businesses, and housing. Upgrading the A120 to a dual carriageway will also dramatically improve journey times and significantly improve road safety for our residents.'

**17. By Councillor Mackrory of the Leader of the Council**

'The Magistrates Courts Service vacated Shire Hall in 2012 having given at least two years prior notice. The building has therefore remained empty for over eight years. Two years ago, I called in the decision to vary the terms of the lease to exclude community uses but this was unsuccessful. In view of the Essex County Council/Chelmsford City Council discussions on the future uses of this building will the Leader reconsider some community provision within the interior design so that the general public can access and enjoy this iconic landmark building?'

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**Reply**

'The County Council has agreed to extend the contract period under which Aquila must obtain planning consent for an appropriate future use for Shire Hall until August 2021. This continues to represent the best value for money outcome for the taxpayer. If it is not possible to achieve progress in that timescale then other options, such as community use, could be considered and will be discussed with Chelmsford City Council.'

**18. By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate**

'The Council's Art Collection is currently valued at £4.7m for insurance purposes. I understand the collection is largely in storage and out of public view. What plans are there for a permanent display space so that the people of Essex can view the collection which the Council holds on their behalf?'

**Reply**

'With regards to the art collection that ECC holds, much of it is stored at the Essex Record Office in controlled conditions. A small number of the best paintings from within the collection, particularly those of the Barrett Lennard family of Belhus, are hung up on public display at the ERO, in addition to portraits of past Chairmen which can be viewed at County Hall. We are able to provide access to paintings with notice, and officers have brought paintings down several times for talks in the ERO's lecture theatre, which ensures these get some public visibility. High quality images are also available of many of the paintings on the Art UK website.

There are no plans for a permanent display at present, however, we do have close and productive relations with the education functions of both Chelmsford City Museums and the newly recreated Museums Education Group for Essex, so in the future, once Covid-19 restrictions have passed, there could be the opportunity to mount a display if this was felt at the time to be of interest to Essex residents.'

**13. Oral Questions of the Leader, Cabinet Member, a chairman of a committee or the representative of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel.**

A recording of the questions and answers given is available on the ECC website via [the audio recording of the meeting](#).

The questions asked were:

<b>Question asked by:</b>	<b>Question to:</b>	<b>Concerning:</b>
Cllr Pond	Cabinet Member for Economic Development	Loughton Library
Cllr Reid	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	Potholes
Cllr Reid	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Impact of COVID-19 on mental health of children and young people
Cllr Beavis	Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Action	Proposed new electrical line near Castle Hedingham
Cllr Young	Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Action	Creation of new country park.
Cllr Harris	Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Action	Queuing at Shrub End recycling centre for household waste.
Cllr Harris	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	Request for meeting on highways issues.
Cllr Abbott	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	Streetlight in Oak Road, Rivenhall.
Cllr Butland	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	Funding for local highways panels.
Cllr Channer	Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate	Illegal encampment in Maldon.
Cllr Mitchell	Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Action	Solar together scheme
Cllr Reeves	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	Member pothole scheme
Cllr Young	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	Member pothole scheme

**14. Closure of Meeting**

The Chairman, Councillor Jowers, closed the meeting by thanking his Vice-Chairman, Councillor Johnson; expressing gratitude to all Members and officers who had supported him in the discharge of his duties and paying particular tribute to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Finch. A number of other members spoke in support and a recording of the Chairman's remarks and those of other Members of the council is available on the ECC website via [the audio recording of the meeting](#).

The meeting closed at 15:10

**Chairman**

# The Chief Executive's Report on return of Members Elected and Political Proportionality

## Return of Members Elected

The return of Members elected at the ordinary elections held on 6 May 2021 is attached as appendix 1 of this Report.

## Political Proportionality

The law allows groups of two or more councillors to register as political groups. Political groups usually register along party lines but a political group can be registered jointly with different parties or include only some members of a political party. A councillor can only be a member of one registered political group at a time, and they are only a member of a political group if they and the leader of the group give a notice to the proper officer of the Council.

The law requires the Council to allocate committee seats to registered political groups in accordance with political balance rules:

1. The majority party must have a majority of seats on every committee. Where there are co-opted voting members this is a majority of all seats, not just those held by councillors.
2. Subject to (1), the total number of ordinary committee seats must be proportionate. For example, a group with 75% of Council seats should have 75% of the seats on ordinary committee seats. Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Joint Committees do not count as 'ordinary committees'.
3. Subject to (2), each individual committee must be as proportionate as possible. A group with 75% of Council seats should have 75% of the seats on each committee.

The political balance rules do not always completely determine the balance of each committee. Sometimes the Council unavoidably has some discretion as to how to apply those rules.

For example, if there are the committees of the same size which have to be balanced differently under the rules, there is a discretion as to which committees receive which allocation. Any discretion is exercised by full Council.

All members have joined a political group and the Council must now allocate seats to political groups. The seat allocations calculated in accordance with the rules are set out at appendix 2. The names of the political group leaders and their deputies is set out at appendix 3.

**The numbers of members who have indicated their membership of the political groups are:**

The Conservative Group:	52
The Non-aligned Group	10
The Liberal Democrat Group	8
The Labour Group	5
Others	0

**Total: 75**

**Recommendation:**

Agree that seats on committees and other bodies be allocated to registered political groups in accordance with the table at appendix 2 of the report.



# **ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Ordinary Elections  
held on  
6 May 2021**

**Election of 75 County Councillors  
List of Councillors returned by  
Electoral Division**

**Gavin Jones  
County Returning Officer  
County Hall  
Chelmsford  
May 2021**

<b>Surname</b>	<b>Forename(s)</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Division</b>
<b>Borough of Basildon</b>			
Hedley*	Anthony Michael	Conservative	Billericay and Burstead (two member division)
Moore*	Richard Andrew	Conservative	
Brown	Adele	Labour	Laindon Park and Fryerns (two member division)
Henry*	Jeff	Conservative	
Mackenzie	Luke Arron	Conservative	Pitsea (two member division)
McGurran	Aidan	Labour	
Smith*	Kerry James Daryl Luke	Independent	Westley Heights
Ball*	Tony	Conservative	Wickford Crouch (two member division)
Buckley*	Malcolm Robert	Conservative	
<b>District of Braintree</b>			
Bowers-Flint	Lynette Barbara	Conservative	Bocking
Thorogood	Paul Richard	Green	Braintree Eastern
Cunningham	Tom Glencairn	Conservative	Braintree Town
Siddall	Christopher William	Conservative	Halstead
Schwier	Peter	Conservative	Hedingham
Butland*	Graham	Conservative	Three Fields with Great Notley
Playle	Ross George	Conservative	Witham Northern
Louis*	Derrick Jonathan	Conservative	Witham Southern
<b>Borough of Brentwood</b>			
McKinlay*	Louise Jane	Conservative	Brentwood Hutton
Aspinell *	Barry Roy	Liberal Democrat	Brentwood North
Wagland*	Lesley Anne	Conservative	Brentwood Rural
Wiles	Andrew Terence	Conservative	Brentwood South
<b>Borough of Castle Point</b>			
Blackwell*	David Alan	Canvey Island Independent	Canvey Island East
May*	Peter	Canvey Island Independent	Canvey Island West
Reeves*	Jillian Mary	Conservative	Hadleigh
Sheldon*	Andrew	Conservative	South Benfleet
Egan*	Beverley	Conservative	Thundersley
<b>City of Chelmsford</b>			
Steel	Mike	Conservative	Broomfield and Writtle
Spence*	John Andrew	Conservative	Chelmer
Goldman	Marie Clare	Liberal Democrat	Chelmsford Central

<b>Surname</b>	<b>Forename(s)</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Division</b>
Robinson*	Stephen John	Liberal Democrat	Chelmsford North
Deakin*	Jude	Liberal Democrat	Chelmsford West
McQuiggan	Anthony John	Conservative	Great Baddow
Massey*	Bob	Conservative	South Woodham Ferrers
Mackrory*	Mike	Liberal Democrat	Springfield
Grundy*	Ian Spencer	Conservative	Stock
<b>Borough of Colchester</b>			
Scordis*	Lee Paul	Labour	Abbey
Barber	Lewis Charles	Conservative	Constable
Lissimore*	Susan Amanda Jayne	Conservative	Drury
Harris*	David Francis	Labour	Maypole
Jowers*	John Gilbert	Conservative	Mersea and Tiptree
King	David John	Liberal Democrat	Mile End and Highwoods
Crow	Simon Leslie (Sam)	Conservative	Parsons Heath and East Gates
Bentley*	Kevin Paul	Conservative	Stanway and Pyefleet
Cory	Mark	Liberal Democrat	Wivenhoe St. Andrew
<b>District of Epping Forest</b>			
Vance	Marshall	Conservative	Buckhurst Hill and Loughton South
Scott	Lee	Conservative	Chigwell and Loughton Broadway
Whitbread	Holly	Conservative	Epping and Theydon Bois
Pond*	Christopher	Independent Loughton Residents Association	Loughton Central
Whitbread*	Christopher Laurence	Conservative	North Weald and Nazeing
Mclvor	Jaymey	Conservative	Ongar and Rural
Kane	Sam	Conservative	Waltham Abbey
<b>District of Harlow</b>			
Garnett*	Michael George	Conservative	Harlow North
Johnson*	Edward Christopher	Conservative	Harlow South East
Hardware*	Michael Edward	Conservative	Harlow West (two member division)
Souter*	Clive Thomas	Conservative	
<b>District of Maldon</b>			
Durham*	Mark Frederick Lewis	Conservative	Heybridge and Tollesbury
Fleming	Jane Lisa	Conservative	Maldon
Stamp	Wendy	Independent	Southminster

<b>Surname</b>	<b>Forename(s)</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Division</b>
<b>District of Rochford</b>			
Cannell	Craig Charles	Liberal Democrat	Rayleigh North
Lumley*	June Rosemary	Conservative	Rayleigh South
Shaw	Laureen	Conservative	Rochford North
Steptoe*	Mike	Conservative	Rochford South
Hoy	Michael	Rochford District Residents	Rochford West
<b>District of Tendring</b>			
Goggin*	Alan	Conservative	Brightlingsea
Stephenson*	Mark Edward	Independent	Clacton East
Skeels	Michael John	Conservative	Clacton North
Honeywood*	Paul Bernard	Conservative	Clacton West
Platt*	Mark Edward	Conservative	Frinton and Walton
Henderson*	Ivan John	Labour	Harwich
Land	Daniel James	Conservative	Tendring Rural East
Guglielmi*	Giancarlo Valeriano	Conservative	Tendring Rural West
<b>District of Uttlesford</b>			
Barker*	Susan	Conservative	Dunmow
Gadd	Paul David	Residents for Uttlesford	Saffron Walden
Gooding*	Ray	Conservative	Stansted
Foley	Martin Liam	Residents for Uttlesford	Thaxted

\* denotes a councillor who held office immediately before the election.

## Essex County Council

Allocation of Seats on Committees as at 25 May 2021

**Ordinary Committees (which must be overall proportionate and, individually, as proportionate as possible)**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Non-aligned</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat</b>	<b>Labour</b>
Development and Regulation	12	9	1	1	1
Audit, Governance and Standards	10	7	1	1	1
Investment Steering Group	7	5	1	1	0
Foreign Travel Committee	5	3	1	1	0

**Other bodies (which must be individually proportionate)**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Non-aligned</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat</b>	<b>Labour</b>
Corporate Policy and Scrutiny	14	10	2	1	1
People and Families Policy and Scrutiny (includes 4 Co-optees)	14 + 4	10	2	1	1
Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny	14	10	2	1	1
Health Policy and Scrutiny	12	8	2	1	1

**Political Group Leaders and Deputies**

**The Conservative Group: Councillor Kevin Bentley**

Deputy – Councillor Louise McKinlay

**The Non Aligned Group: Councillor Chris Pond**

Deputy – Cllr Michael Hoy

**The Liberal Democratic Group: Councillor Mike Mackrory**

Deputy – Councillor David King

**The Labour Group: Councillor Ivan Henderson**

Deputy – Councillor Adele Brown

**Election of Chairmen of Committees**

**Corporate Policy and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**Chairman:**

Chris Pond

**People and Families  
Policy and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**Chairman:**

Ray Gooding

**Place Services and  
Economic Growth Policy  
and Scrutiny Committee**

**Chairman:**

Alan Goggin

**Health Overview, Policy  
and Scrutiny Committee**

**Chairman:**

Jeff Henry

**Development and  
Regulation Committee**

**Chairman:**

Carlo Guglielmi

**Audit, Governance and  
Standards Committee**

**Chairman:**

Tony Hedley

**Scrutiny Board**

**Chairman:**

Ray Gooding

**Committee To Consider  
Applications To  
Undertake Certain  
Duties By Members and  
Foreign Travel By  
Officers**

**Chairman:**

Kevin Bentley

**Investment Steering  
Committee**

**Chairman:**

Susan Barker

**Other Appointments**

**a) Appointments to the Health and Wellbeing Board**

John Spence, Beverley Egan and Mike Steel as members with Mike Hardware as the named Substitute.

**b) Appointment to the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel**

Ross Playle

**c) Appointment to the Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board**

Susan Barker

## **Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny 2020/2021**

Report by the Scrutiny Board Chairman, Councillor Jill Reeves

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Enquiries to Joanna Boaler, Head of Democracy and Transparency and Statutory Scrutiny Officer on 03330 134578

### **1. Purpose of the Report**

To present the annual report of Overview and Scrutiny to Essex County Council.

### **2. Recommendation**

To note the attached report.

# Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report  
2020-21



# Contents

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<b>What is Scrutiny?</b>	<b>4</b>
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<b>Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee (HOPSC)</b>	<b>7</b>
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# Introduction

By Scrutiny Board Chairman, Councillor Jill Reeves

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I am pleased to present this report on scrutiny activity at Essex County Council over the past twelve months.

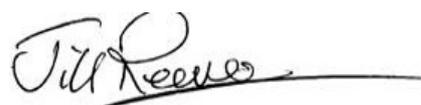
Much like every area of the council, scrutiny has faced significant challenges and pressures throughout the year. I'm so proud of how the scrutiny chairmen and committee members have risen to meet these challenges, adapted to new ways of working and produced some truly excellent work. This report highlights some of our key achievements and demonstrates the work we have done to support delivery of Essex County Council's strategic aims.

The issues and cost pressures facing Essex County Council are significant, and scrutiny has a frontline role in holding the executive to account on behalf of the residents we represent.

Perhaps more than ever over the last twelve months, it's been inspiring to see the value that scrutiny can add to the policy development process, providing a spotlight to ensure transparency whilst also helping to address corporate challenges through delivering policy change and encouraging further partnership working.

It is essential therefore that scrutiny continues to be involved early in the development of policy and has the opportunity to help shape it.

This past year has been testing for officers, strategic partners and members alike. I'm proud of the perseverance and dedication I've witnessed, and the support we've received from across the organisation to ensure that scrutiny could continue as normal.



**Councillor Jill Reeves**  
**Scrutiny Board Chairman**



●● I'm so proud of how the scrutiny chairmen and committee members have risen to meet these challenges, adapted to new ways of working and produced some truly excellent work. ●●

# What is Scrutiny?

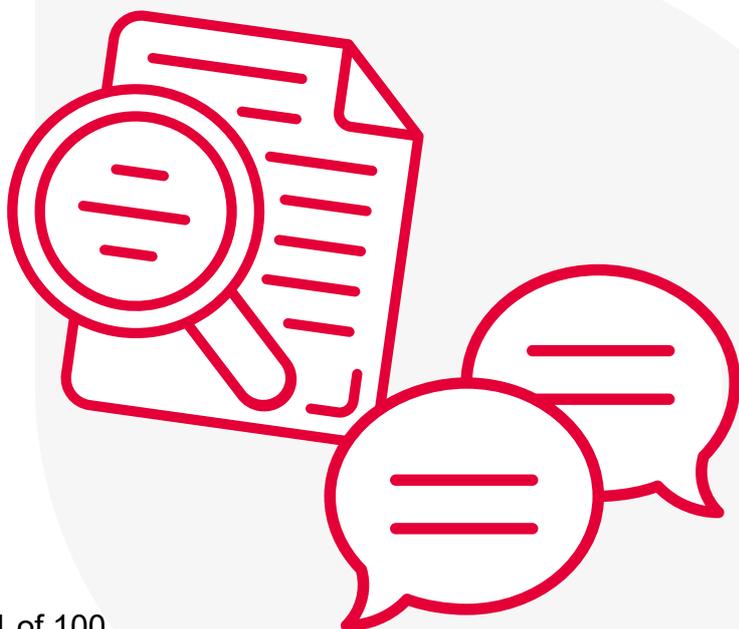
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The scrutiny function plays an important role in reviewing and shaping Essex County Council's services and policy framework.

Scrutiny members are non-executive councillors who act as a critical friend to decision makers (the Cabinet Members), ensuring that the council is delivering services efficiently and effectively. At Essex, there are four Policy and Scrutiny Committees, each looking at a particular area of the Council's responsibilities:

- **Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee**
- **Health Overview and Policy and Scrutiny Committee**
- **People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee**
- **Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

Scrutiny members have an important role in holding Cabinet Members to account – bringing experience, oversight and local knowledge to the policy development process. They can also retrospectively question decisions taken by Cabinet Members and make recommendations on how future decisions could be improved. To carry out their role they undertake reviews, and consider evidence from officers, experts or the general public on particular policy issues. These meetings are held in public and are streamed online.



# Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee (CPSC)

This committee reviews the overall strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Cabinet and Council including the budget strategy, financial resources, equality and diversity issues, procurement and the Council's transformation programme.

Full details of the committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

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This has been another demanding year for the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee. The central role of the committee will always be the effective safeguarding and oversight of ECCs financial health. With the challenges and pressures presented by the pandemic, this role has expanded and we've taken a front seat exploring the impact that the last year has had on our financial resilience and future planning.

●● **This report outlines a number of our key achievements since April 2020, but perhaps what I'm most proud of is how we've managed to achieve our remit throughout – working closely with the Cabinet Member to outline key pressures and provide constructive, critical friend challenge through persistently difficult times.** ●●

As members, we've had to make significant changes to the way we represent our communities over the last year. Our staff are also undergoing a real period of transformation, with an unexpected and fairly dramatic shift to entirely remote working for those people who were previously office based. The wellbeing of our staff is central to our role as a committee, and we've worked hard to establish an ongoing dialogue with officers and members to provide scrutiny throughout lockdown, overseeing the



transformation to remote working and providing feedback to ensure that our staff are able to work from home, rather than 'live at the office'.

While the nature of our work programming as a committee is often fairly prescriptive, it has by necessity become almost entirely reactive over the last year – responding to emergency pandemic decisions and providing oversight to pandemic related internal transformations. Despite this, however, I'm pleased that we've

managed to branch out to more forward focused pieces of work. We've looked at how our overarching highways maintenance contract is managed and delivered and scrutinised the future of our corporate IT systems, and the steps ECC is taking to ensure that our internal and external online services are efficient, effective and accessible. We've even managed to check in with services we haven't spoken to in a long while, such as the Essex Records Office and review our commercial investments strategy.

I'm so incredibly proud of how the committee has adapted to 'the new normal'. By changing how we operated, and with the support of excellent and dedicated officers, we were able to ensure that our work carried on, providing oversight and support to the organisation throughout a difficult time.

**Councillor Mike Mackrory  
Chairman**

## Membership

- Councillor Michael Mackrory (Chairman)
- Councillor James Abbott
- Councillor Malcolm Buckley
- Councillor Graham Butland
- Councillor Mike Garnett
- Councillor Malcolm Maddocks
- Councillor Valerie Metcalfe (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor John Moran
- Councillor Mark Platt
- Councillor Ron Pratt
- Councillor Sue Lissimore
- Councillor Derrick Louis
- Councillor Anne Turrell
- Councillor Julie Young (Vice-Chairman)

# Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee (HOPSC)

This committee reviews and scrutinises matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the County of Essex. This includes primary, secondary, tertiary care, and public health, and may involve reviewing the work of commissioners (such as local clinical commissioning groups), providers of health services (such as hospitals) and other organisations in the health sector.

Full details of the committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).



Essex has one of the most complex health environments in the country. In recent years it has been split across three different strategic health footprints that do not align with our County Council borders. The footprints have been operating at different speeds meaning that the HOPSC has the ongoing challenge of continuing to have strategic oversight over these different paced programmes.

Much of the committee's work over the past year has understandably been in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and the HOPSC scrutinised a number of key health services including mental health services, cancer services and A&E pressures, as well as receiving briefings from the Council's Director of Public Health on the impact the pandemic was having across the County.

●● **The pandemic has affected almost everyone, and members made sure to raise issues on behalf of residents from their local divisions to ensure the public's voice was heard. The HOPSC are incredibly thankful for the work all services, in particular those mentioned above, have done over the past year.** ●●

Moving onto non-pandemic related work, the committee worked collaboratively with the Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) Trust in May 2020 to act as a formal statutory consultee to consider PAH proposals for the relocation and rebuild of the hospital, as well as the proposed public engagement strategy. This work was delivered to a tight schedule and reflected the

commitment of members in engaging with new ways of working to ensure that scrutiny could continue to be delivered effectively.

As we moved into 2021, the committee's focus moved away from solely focussing on the pandemic and, following the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) being placed into special measures by the Care Quality Commission, the HOPSC met in private to discuss evidence provided by the trust and written feedback was provided which included additional questions for the Trust to respond to.

I would like to thank all my HOPSC members for their commitment over the last year and those who participate in additional activities such as extra briefings to broaden their knowledge and expertise.

**Councillor Jill Reeves**  
**Chairman**

## Membership

- Councillor Jill Reeves (Chairman)
- Councillor Anne Brown
- Councillor Jenny Chandler
- Councillor Beverley Egan (Vice Chairman)
- Councillor Ricki Gadsby
- Councillor Dave Harris
- Councillor June Lumley
- Councillor Bob Massey
- Councillor Clive Souter
- Councillor Mark Stephenson
- Councillor Mike Steptoe
- Councillor Andy Wood (Vice Chairman)

## District Councillors

- Councillor Tony Edwards
- Councillor Michael Helm
- Councillor Peter Tattersley

# People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee (PAFPSC)

This committee exercises the scrutiny function on matters relating to children and young people, families, education, adult social care, special needs and safeguarding.

Full details of the committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

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We have succeeded in continuing the work of the committee despite the extra challenges of the pandemic. I have been acutely aware that the PAFPSC's remit means that it has oversight of key service areas that were facing some of the most extreme pressures during the crisis – such as adult social care, children and families, and education services and that the scrutiny function needed to be cognisant of that. I believe that, through regular discussions with Cabinet Members and senior officers, the PAFPSC has been able to respond appropriately and proportionately to the crisis, taking care not to further burden already stretched services, whilst effectively continuing its work.

●● **Despite pandemic pressures there is still an important role for independent scrutiny of decision-makers and it remains a valid challenge for commissioners and providers to evidence how they are responding to the challenges of the pandemic and supporting those who are most vulnerable.** ●●

Part of that challenge is to identify learning from this crisis and the PAFPSC has been pleased to hear about changes to working practices and service delivery being made as a result.



The committee has discussed legacy issues arising from its most recent work programme that it is suggesting the new committee (post May 2021) pursues including support for young people and their emotional wellbeing, safeguarding the vulnerable in elective home education, adult social care provision after the pandemic and the impact of technology on the care sector.

One of our highest profile pieces of work has been the task and finish group scrutiny of the effectiveness of partnership working by local agencies in responding to the challenge of drug gangs, knife crime and County Lines. This review spanned across two reporting years and was completed and presented to Full Council last year. We are recommending that the newly constituted PAFPSC continues to challenge governance arrangements, actions to discourage school exclusions, how to raise awareness of support services and the outcomes achieved from partnership funding. I was pleased to facilitate representatives from the Young Essex Assembly also participating in a full-committee discussion on the issue.

This report highlights some of the other wide-ranging work undertaken by the committee. Three key pieces of work since the start of the pandemic have been detailed to highlight the PAFPSC's successes over the last year.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my committee for their commitment to their work, particularly those serving on Task and Finish Groups, and their collaborative and non-partisan approach to scrutiny - they should be proud of the work undertaken by the committee over the last four years.

**Councillor Jenny Chandler**  
**Chairman**

## Membership

- Councillor Jenny Chandler (Chairman)
- Councillor John Baker (Vice Chairman)
- Councillor Jude Deakin
- Councillor Mark Durham
- Councillor Beverley Egan (Vice Chairman)
- Councillor Carlo Guglielmi
- Councillor Michael Hardware
- Councillor June Lumley
- Councillor Peter May
- Councillor Ron Pratt
- Councillor Patricia Reid
- Councillor Clive Souter
- Councillor Mike Steptoe
- Councillor Lesley Wagland

## Education Representative

- Christine Martin

# Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee (PSEG)

This committee exercises the scrutiny function on matters relating to environment, economic growth and infrastructure, sustainability, highways and transportation, libraries, planning, communities, waste and recycling and trading standards.

Full details of the committee's work over the period can be found on the Council's [website](#).



It's been a challenging year for the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee (PSEG). As expected, much of our work as a committee has been focused on COVID related support and the work ECC is undertaking to ensure that Essex residents and businesses can bounce back once we're safely through the pandemic. This has seen the

committee take on a much more reactive role, working constructively with Cabinet Members and officers to ensure that decisions taken around the provision of services, as well as the closure of community and green spaces, are taken for the right reasons and appropriate for the safety of our residents.

●● **Over the last year we've seen how our services have adapted to national restrictions, and I'm pleased with the positivity with which PSEG members have approached their work, providing insightful and effective critical friend challenge throughout a difficult time.** ●●

As always, the broad remit of this committee consistently presents challenges in establishing our priorities for scrutiny, and pandemic related pressures has taken a lot of autonomy out of the committee's hands when it comes to determining our own agenda. Despite this, however, we've still managed to ensure that our work programme was as varied as possible, opening up opportunities to explore a wide range of the interesting and vital services that we deliver for Essex residents.

We've looked at the work of the Essex Climate Action Commission and fed into developing strategies around sustainable travel and green infrastructure. We've spent a lot of time looking at changes to local and national planning regulations, and the impact these will have on housing and infrastructure provision across the county. The committee has also managed to check in with long running pieces of work around libraries redevelopment and highways maintenance.

This past year has required us, as local representatives, to work differently, and I'm proud of how members of the committee and the officers supporting us have adapted to the challenge. While this report details some of the specific areas of work that the committee has undertaken, perhaps the achievement I'm most proud is simply how effectively we've managed to keep going, providing effective, appropriate scrutiny throughout the crisis.

**Councillor Ian Grundy  
Chairman**

## Membership

- Councillor Ian Grundy (Chairman)
- Councillor Andrew Erskine
- Councillor Ivan Henderson
- Councillor Stephen Hillier (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Paul Honeywood
- Councillor David Kendall
- Councillor Sue Lissimore
- Councillor Bob Massey
- Councillor Richard Moore
- Councillor Chris Pond (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Ron Pratt
- Councillor Wendy Schmitt
- Councillor Carole Weston
- Councillor Andy Wood

# Essex County Council's Strategic Aims

The [organisational strategy 2017 to 2021](#) sets out ECC's four strategic aims:

- **Enable Inclusive Economic Growth**
- **Help People Get the Best Start and Age Well**
- **Help Create Great Places to Grow Up, Live and Work**
- **Transform the Council to Achieve More with Less**

Below are examples of the work that the Overview and Scrutiny function carries out to deliver these aims.



## Enable Inclusive Economic Growth



### Economic Development

Throughout the year, **PSEG** members have carried out constructive oversight to ensure that relief and support to local businesses and residents impacted by the pandemic was meaningful, targeted and transparent. This included scrutiny of business support services and grants and early sight of changes to how ECC manages investment opportunities to maximise growth and impact to local communities.



### Members:

Maintained a close overview of economic growth activity, providing constructive, critical friend scrutiny throughout the pandemic. The committee obtained assurances around support to local businesses, engagement with further education and vocational training providers and investment in local communities.



## Essex Skills Strategy

In February 2021, **PSEG** members received an update on proposals to develop an updated skills strategy for Essex. Members learnt how the Essex economy, and consequently the skills and employment landscape, had been significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This included updates on unemployment statistics, national schemes and grants introduced as a result of the pandemic and the future of affected industries and sectors across the county. Committee members questioned the Cabinet Member and officers around the future of adult learning and shifting nature of the employment market in Essex. Questions were also raised around work to promote STEM subjects in higher and further education institutions.



### Members:

Provided constructive challenge around the future of the employment market in Essex, supporting officers and feeding into emerging strategies to promote resilience and recovery in the wake of the pandemic.

## Help People Get the Best Start and Age Well



## Domiciliary care

Against the backdrop of the second wave of the pandemic in the UK, a **PAFPSC** Task and Finish Group started a review of the structure, sustainability and service quality of the domiciliary care sector and the discharge processes from hospitals. The Group would have liked to have pursued some issues further but was unable to do so due to pandemic pressures and the need to close the review ahead of the County Council elections in May 2021. However, whilst acknowledging some limitations of the review, and that the report was effectively an interim report, a number of key conclusions were still agreed.



### Members:

Recommended looking at the feasibility and constraints in having a more flexible approach on who can undertake some individual assessments and the development of a simple 'one-stop shop' contact sheet to be given to everyone being discharged from hospital. Identified further scrutiny work to take place after the County Council elections, and highlighted issues raised by contributors for ECC officers to investigate further even though many of them were not formalised into recommendations.



## Emotional wellbeing and mental health services for children and young people

**PAFPSC** were consulted on the County Council's role and priorities as part of a collaborative partnership forum which would be re-commissioning emotional wellbeing and mental health services for children and young people. It was confirmed that there had been co-production with young ambassadors, the Essex Family Forum and parent carer engagement representative groups for Essex Southend and Thurrock.



### Members:

Stressed the importance of strong links between the re-commissioned service and broader Children and Families and Education services within ECC, and the need for an increased role and profile in the new collaborative commissioning forum for ECC's Director of Education. Reviewed whether resources could meet increased demand and that enhanced support plans were in place, and suggested the development of a community engagement and communications plan.



## Education - accessibility and opportunity

Throughout the last year the **PAFPSC** has spent considerable time challenging the local system on how it maintains fair educational accessibility and opportunity during and after the pandemic, particularly for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. This included review and scrutiny of the planned Early Years Strategy, initiatives related to emotional wellbeing and mental health (EWMH) support for disadvantaged children, an inspection by the Care Quality Commission and OFSTED into Special Educational Needs and Disabilities services.



### Members:

Sought and obtained assurances that adequate resourcing was available in respect of the Early Years Strategy, that adequate evaluation methods were in place in respect of EWMH provision, and that the improvement actions taken following the OFSTED review were appropriate.



## Covid-19 Pandemic

The **HOPSC** received updates in connection to a number of key areas impacted by the pandemic which included:

- Delays to cancer treatments
- Mental Health services
- A&E Pressures
- Personal behaviour arising from the pandemic

The committee would have liked to have pursued some matters further but were unable to do so due to the impact on health providers caused by the second wave of the pandemic. These issues included further updates from Mental Health services and how the backlog of treating patients with cancer was progressing.



### Members:

Recommended that further work takes place at a less pressured time to look at how the services affected would deal with a future pandemic.



## East of England Ambulance Services Trust

The **HOPSC** requested an update on how the East of England Ambulance Service was progressing with implementing the recommendations put forward by the Care Quality Commission in September 2020, along with a general update on other aspects of the service.

The HOPSC also received a wider update covering aspects of performance, the impact of Covid-19 and staffing progress.



### Members:

Provided in writing thirteen questions and three recommendations for formal response.

Challenged the high number of people moving out of the area as a result of the high cost of housing and the effect this was having on recruitment.

Raised specific concern in relation to the recruitment of paramedics in urgent care in West Essex and the potential impact on the loss of experienced staff and rotation of qualified staff.

# Help Create Great Places to Grow Up, Live and Work



## Essex Housing Strategy

In January 2021, **PSEG** members received a post consultation update on the development of the Essex Housing Strategy and the establishment of Essex Housing Limited Liability Partnership. The strategy focused on three key areas: growing Essex while protecting the best of the county, enabling people to live independently throughout their life and supporting people to have a stable home. The committee provided feedback and recommendations, with assurances provided around partnership working with districts, provision of necessary infrastructure, influence of ECC over determining housing needs and the provision of adequate key worker housing.



### Members:

Provided challenge to the emerging strategy, securing a number of changes to the policy and obtaining assurances around partnership working and provision of infrastructure to support future growth.



## Sustainable Travel and the Essex Climate Action Commission

**PSEG** committee members heard from the sustainable travel team around work taking place to green transport infrastructure across the county and to create additional opportunities for more environmentally friendly travel. Committee members provided input into ECC walking/cycling strategies and steered future policy through feedback on successful local schemes. Members were also able to draw upon experiences working alongside the Essex Climate Action Commission (**ECAC**), providing recommendations to link the two strands of work together.



### Members:

Provided insight and guidance in connection with the success of ECC's current sustainable transport policies, outlining areas for further future investment. Members also offered recommendations for the allocation of incoming central government grant funding for green travel infrastructure. By drawing upon the work of the ECAC, members were also able to feed into the future work programme of the commission and help drive the green travel agenda through both avenues of policy.

# Transform the Council to Achieve More with Less



## Staff Wellbeing and Remote Working

**CPSC members** worked hard to establish an ongoing dialogue with Organisation, Development and People (ODP) early on in lockdown, receiving regular updates around staff wellbeing and remote working arrangements. Committee members carried out extensive work looking at the results of internal surveys, focusing on the support offer to ECC staff and the measures put in place to ensure that remote working could be maintained successfully.



### Members:

Praised officers for their work throughout lockdown, whilst obtaining assurances around the wellbeing of ECC staff and the scrutiny process for any potential future changes to ECC's overarching workforce strategy. The committee also established an effective ongoing relationship with ODP leadership to ensure constructive challenge over remote working arrangements throughout the pandemic.



## Financial Oversight

Throughout the pandemic, **CPSC members** effectively carried out their role in providing financial oversight, receiving regular public and private briefings around ECC finances and spending. In a difficult year, with significant pandemic related pressures, members adopted a more reactive approach to scrutiny, adding value and providing oversight. Regular updates around the annual budget setting process allowed for a 'no-surprises' approach to scrutiny, with members well informed around the year end position, including up to date figures around grant funding and reserve spending.



### Members:

Contributed effectively to ECCs system of checks and balances, obtaining assurances around ECC's financial position throughout the pandemic and providing oversight of emergency spending and grant funding allocation.



## Local Government Reform

**CPSC** members received a position statement on ECC's response to the governments' white paper concerning local government reorganisation. This included an update on discussions with unitary and district partners, alongside an outline of high-level proposals for the scope and shape of any potential reforms across greater Essex. Members were advised that the intention was to prepare an early submission to central government to secure backing for reform in the first wave of local authority areas. Since Autumn 2020 however, the position of central government with regards to local government reorganisation appears to have shifted, with wide-ranging reforms no longer a priority. Members raised concerns over the lack of transparency throughout the preparation process for the submission and obtained assurances that, should reform appear on the national agenda again, local members and scrutiny would be more involved in developing proposals.



### Members:

Provided scrutiny around high-level proposals for reform and the process by which potential submissions to central government had been developed. Assurances were obtained around the transparency and oversight process of future reforms proposals.

# How the Public can get Involved

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## Attending a meeting

Members of the public are welcome to attend any public meeting of a scrutiny committee, which are listed on the [online meeting calendar](#).

All scrutiny committees normally allow 15 minutes for public questions at the beginning of each meeting. If you wish to ask a question, let the Chairman or clerk know by 1pm the day before a meeting is scheduled. Public meetings are usually audio recorded and streamed live on both the council website and YouTube.

Scrutiny regularly asks organisations or individuals to give evidence at meetings for the purpose of their investigations. If you will be attending scrutiny to give information to a committee, you can find information and guidance about what to expect in the [Scrutiny Handbook](#).



## Get in touch

If you would like to feed into the scrutiny process, or suggest a topic for scrutiny's attention, you can get in touch with the Scrutiny Team at [democratic.services@essex.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk).

Alternatively, you can contact any of the Councillors who are on the relevant committee or task and finish group and ask them to consider representing you or calling you to give evidence. You can find out which local Councillors are on which committee by checking the [website](#).

This document has been produced by Essex County Council's Democracy and Transparency service.

**Contact us by email at**

**[democratic.services@essex.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk)**

<b>Report title: Annual Audit Letter for year ending 31 March 2020</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> Council	
<b>Report author:</b> Nicole Wood, Executive Director, Finance and Technology and Paul Turner, Director, Legal and Assurance	
<b>Date of meeting:</b> 25 May 2021	<b>For Approval</b>
<b>Enquiries to</b> Christine Golding, Chief Accountant <b>email</b> <a href="mailto:christine.golding@essex.gov.uk">christine.golding@essex.gov.uk</a> <b>Tel.</b> 03330 138401	
<b>Divisions affected</b> All Essex	

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter for the year ending 31 March 2020 to the Council, following its consideration by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee on 22 March 2021.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Council notes the annual audit letter appended to this report.

**3. Audit of 2019/20 Accounts**

- 3.1 As a large public authority the Council spends a significant amount of public money on delivering public services. In order to demonstrate that the Council has accurate accounts and can demonstrate value for money in delivering services its Council's accounts are subject to external audit by external auditors appointed by Public Sector Audit Appointments, a company owned by the Local Government Association. The external auditors for the 2019/20 financial year were BDO LLP.
- 3.2 BDO's audit of the 2019/20 accounts was delayed owing to the COVID-19 situation, meaning that the Council's Audit, Governance and Standards Committee was unable to approve the accounts until 30 November 2020 which was the day of the statutory deadline. ECC is in a better position than many local authorities whose external auditors did not complete the audit by the deadline.
- 3.3 At that time it was hoped that the annual audit letter would have been issued by BDO in time to be reported to the Council meeting on 23 February 2021,

but regrettably this proved not to be the case and the letter was issued on 5 March 2021.

- 3.4 The Annual Audit Letter is appended to this report. Its purpose is to communicate the key issues arising from their audit work for 2019/20 to Members, and to other key stakeholders.
- 3.5 The Annual Audit Letter summarises the conclusions from the external audit work related to 2019/20, including that:
- i. **Unmodified opinions** were issued in relation to the Council's financial statements and those of the Essex Pension Fund, meaning that BDO consider that the financial statements:
    - Gave a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and the Essex Pension Fund as at 31 March 2020, and of the expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
    - were properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2019/20 issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).
  - ii. An **unmodified conclusion** was issued on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources, which means that BDO consider that in all significant respects, the Council had proper arrangements in place to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.

#### 4. **Why the annual audit letter is being sent to full Council**

- 4.1 The Annual Audit Letter is considered by the Council's Audit, Governance and Standards Committee every year and is published on the ECC website, but in previous years it hasn't been reported to a meeting of the full Council.
- 4.2 A review into the audit of local government accounts undertaken by Tony Redmond was published in Autumn 2020. This made a number of recommendations to central government and three recommendations to local authorities.
- 4.3 ECC already complied with two of the three recommendations; by appointing an independent member to the Audit Governance and Standards Committee and having the facility for the Council's statutory officers to meet with the external auditor.
- 4.4 The third recommendation was that the annual audit letter is reported to a meeting of the Council. This report is the Council complying with that recommendation. The benefit of reporting to full Council is that any issues raised by the external auditor are directly sent to all councillors who have an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns that they may have.

4.5 The intention is to report the annual audit letter to Council every year.

## **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no specific financial implications associated with this report.

## **6. Legal Implications**

6.1 The annual audit letter is not required by law to be reported to full Council but it is good practice for it to do so. The Council is able to make recommendations to the Cabinet or to the Leader if it wishes to do so.

## **7. Equality and Diversity implications**

7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications associated with this report which relates to the external audit of the County Council's accounts.

## **8. List of appendices**

**Appendix A** – Annual Audit Letter for the year ending 31 March 2020.

## **9. List of Background Papers**

None.



# ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND ESSEX PENSION FUND

Annual Audit Letter

Year ended 31 March 2020

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose of the Annual Audit Letter

This Annual Audit Letter summarises the key matters arising from the work that we have carried out in respect of the year ended 31 March 2020.

It is addressed to the Council but is also intended to communicate the key findings we have identified to key external stakeholders and members of the public.

## Responsibilities of auditors and the Council

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

Our responsibility is to plan and carry out an audit that meets the requirements of the National Audit Office's (NAO's) Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Under the Code, we are required to report:

- Our opinion on the Council's and Pension Fund's financial statements; and
- Whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We recognise the value of your co-operation and support and would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the assistance and co-operation provided during the audit.

**BDO LLP**

5 March 2021

## Audit conclusions

Audit area	Conclusion
Financial statements - Council	Unmodified opinion
Financial statements - Pension Fund	Unmodified opinion
Use of resources	Unmodified conclusion
Audit certificate	We are unable to issue our audit certificate until we have completed our review of the Whole of Government Accounts return and issued our opinion on the consistency of the return with the audited financial statements.

We issued our audit opinion on the financial statements and use of resources conclusion on 30 November 2020

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# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## Audit opinion on the financial statements

We issued an unmodified audit opinion on the financial statements. This means that we consider that the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the financial position and its income and expenditure for the year; and
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2019/20.

## Final materiality

Materiality for the Council's financial statements was calculated at £37.3 million based on a benchmark of 1.75% of gross expenditure.

Materiality for the Pension Fund financial statements was calculated at £66 million based on 1% of net assets. Specific materiality (at a lower level) was set for the fund account balances (excluding changes in the market value of investments) at £25 million and this was based on 7.5% of gross expenses in the Fund Account.

## Material audit differences

Our audit identified the following material differences in the Council's financial statements:

- Bank accounts in an overdraft position at both 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2019 were shown net against cash and cash equivalents on the face of the balance sheet. These bank accounts should have been shown gross as current liabilities.

- Cash outflows associated with revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute (REFCUS) were classified as investing activities in both 2018/19 and 2019/20. These cash flows should have been shown as operating activities.
- Cash inflows and outflows associated with purchases of and proceeds from investments were shown net in Note 28 Cash flows from operating, investing and financing activities for both 2018/19 and 2019/20. These cash flows should have been shown gross.

Management amended the financial statements for these audit differences. There was no impact on the total value of the cash balances held by the Council.

No material audit differences were identified in the Pension Fund's financial statements

## Unadjusted audit differences

We identified two audit adjustments in the Council's financial statements that, if posted, would reduce the deficit on the provision of services for the year by £2.195 million.

We identified two audit adjustments in the Pension Fund's financial statements that, if posted, would increase the 'Net decrease in the assets available for benefits during the year' in the Fund Account and decrease 'Net assets of the scheme available to fund benefits' in the Net Asset Statement by £19.123 million.

No adjustment was made for the above differences as they were considered to be immaterial in the context of the financial statements as a whole.

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# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

We set out below the risks that had the greatest effect on our audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit, and the direction of the efforts of the audit team.

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Risk description	How the risk was addressed by our audit	Results
Management override of controls (Council and Pension Fund)	We carried out the following planned audit procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviewed and verified journal entries made in the year, agreeing the journals to supporting documentation. We determined key risk characteristics to filter the population of journals.</li><li>• Reviewed estimates and judgements applied by management in the financial statements to assess their appropriateness and the existence of any systematic bias; and</li><li>• Reviewed unadjusted audit differences for indications of bias or deliberate misstatement.</li></ul>	No issues were identified by our audit of journals and accounting estimates for management override of controls or management bias.
Revenue and expenditure recognition (Council only)	We carried out the following planned audit procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tested a sample of grants recognised as revenue to documentation from grant paying bodies and check whether recognition criteria had been met; and</li><li>• Tested a sample of expenditure either side of year end, to confirm that expenditure had been recorded in the correct period and that all expenditure that should have been recorded at year end had been.</li></ul>	No issues were identified by our audit of revenue and expenditure recognition.

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# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Risk description	How the risk was addressed by our audit	Results
Valuation of pension liability  (Council and Pension Fund)	<p>We carried out the following planned audit procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed the disclosures to the information provided by the pension fund actuary;</li> <li>• Reviewed the competence of the management expert (actuary);</li> <li>• Reviewed the reasonableness of the assumptions used in the calculation against other local government actuaries and other observable data;</li> <li>• Reviewed the controls in place for providing accurate membership data to the actuary;</li> <li>• Tested a sample of membership and cash flow data sent to the actuary for existence and accuracy, and reconciled the membership data sent to the actuary to the membership administration system for completeness;</li> <li>• Checked that any significant changes in membership data were communicated to the actuary.</li> </ul>	<p>We were able to agree disclosures to information provided by the actuary and are satisfied that the assumptions used in the calculation of the liability were within the expected ranges.</p> <p>In respect of cash flow data provided to the actuary for the triennial valuation, we identified no issues. However, testing of the cash flow data provided to the actuary for the roll forward valuation at 31 March 2020 identified some differences between the estimated contributions (based on month 10 actual amounts plus estimated amounts for the final two months of the year) and the actual amounts for the year. We did not consider these to be significant differences that would materially impact on the liability valuation.</p> <p>Following the ruling on age discrimination on the McCloud case and gender discrimination on a Lloyds case in the prior year, the actuary made an allowance at the last accounting date. This was therefore included in the opening liability for this year and the actuary confirmed that this allowance was re-measured 31 March 2020. The approach adopted by the actuary is considered to be reasonable.</p>

# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Risk description	How the risk was addressed by our audit	Results
<p>Valuation of land, buildings and investment properties</p> <p>(Council only)</p>	<p>We carried out the following planned audit procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed the instructions provided to the valuer and the valuer's skills and expertise in order to determine if we can rely on the management expert;</li> <li>Confirmed that the basis of valuation for assets valued in year was appropriate based on their usage;</li> <li>Reviewed accuracy and completeness of information provided to the valuer, such as rental agreements and sizes;</li> <li>Reviewed assumptions used by the valuer and movements against relevant indices for similar classes of assets;</li> <li>Followed up valuation movements that appear unusual; and</li> <li>Confirmed that assets not specifically valued in the year were assessed to ensure their reported values remained materially correct.</li> </ul>	<p>We found that the indexation applied to specialised assets not subject to full revaluation in 2019/20 was outside of our expectations. The Council performed further work (which we reviewed as part of our audit procedures) and concluded that the value of land and buildings recognised in the balance sheet was understated. The maximum value of the error arising from this issue was an £18.250 million understatement of the value of land and buildings.</p> <p>No adjustment was made to the financial statements for this matter as neither the Council nor BDO considered it to be material.</p> <p>This error had no impact on the Council's general fund or the resources available to fund services.</p> <p>No other issues were identified by our audit.</p>

# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Risk description	How the risk was addressed by our audit	Results
Valuation of investments (unquoted and direct property investments)  (Pension Fund only)	<p>We carried out the following planned audit procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtained direct confirmation of investment valuations from the fund managers and requested copies of the audited financial statements (and member allocations) from the fund;</li> <li>• Reviewed the valuation completed by the fund manager and any significant assumptions made in the valuation;</li> <li>• For property valuations, we agreed input data used by the valuer such as agreeing rental information to the underlying rental agreements, and reviewed the rental yields against the comparable data and indices for reasonableness;</li> <li>• Where the financial statement date supporting the valuation is not conterminous with the pension fund's year end, we confirmed that appropriate adjustments have been made to the valuations in respect of additional contributions and distributions with the funds; and</li> <li>• Checked whether the investments have been correctly valued in accordance with the relevant accounting policies</li> </ul>	<p>Our review of direct confirmations obtained from fund managers found that the valuation of private equity was overstated by a non material amount of £3.621 million, with a total overstatement of investments of £5.239 million across all categories of investments.</p> <p>We also reviewed reasonableness of the adjustments made to private equity valuations to account for the impact of Covid-19. Our procedures identified that the reductions applied to reflect the impact of Covid-19 were not consistent with our expectations resulting in the value of private equity investments being overstated by £13.884 million.</p> <p>No adjustment was made to the financial statements for this matter as neither the Pension Fund nor BDO considered it to be material.</p>

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# USE OF RESOURCES

## Audit conclusion on use of resources

We issued an unmodified conclusion on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This means that we consider that in all significant respects, the Council had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people

We set out below the risks that had the greatest effect on our audit strategy:

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Risk description	How the risk was addressed by our audit	Results
The Council will need to deliver significant savings to maintain financial sustainability in the medium term and there is a risk that some required savings may not be delivered.	<p>We carried out the following planned audit procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviewed the financial outturn for 2019/20 and progress against the 2020/21 budget, as a starting point for assessing the effectiveness of financial management arrangements;</li><li>• Considered the reasonableness of the medium term resourcing strategy assumptions, including investment costs associated with major savings schemes and capital projects; and</li><li>• Reviewed arrangements to identify savings, including any relevant Internal Audit work, evidence underpinning a sample of identified savings schemes, and progress towards identifying further savings to balance the budget in the medium term.</li></ul>	<p>The Council has adequate arrangements for business planning, budget setting, monitoring and taking mitigating actions to eliminate the impact of any overspends and undeliverable savings. It has retained its track record of delivering underspends in the General Fund in 2019/20 and is expected to deliver the majority of its savings for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Council's medium term resourcing strategy reflects known savings and cost pressures and the key assumptions are reasonable, although there is significant uncertainty in future funding levels. The strategy indicated unidentified savings gaps of £71 million by the end of 2023/24. This gap is expected to increase as a result of council tax and business rate funding decreases during the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>If no further savings are made in 2021/22 to 2024/25 above those already identified, we understand that the Council would have sufficient reserves to cover this shortfall in the medium term, if necessary, and maintain its general fund balance at 6% of the net budget.</p> <p>The financial position remains challenging and the Council will not have sufficient reserves to cover its cumulative savings requirement by the end of the 2024/25 period if it does not continue to demonstrate strong leadership and action in achieving the planned savings. However, we are satisfied that the Council has adequate arrangements in place to remain financially sustainable in the medium term.</p>

# REPORTS ISSUED AND FEES

## Fees summary

	2019/20 Final £	2019/20 Planned £	2018/19 Final £
<b>Council</b>			
Code audit fee	(1) 137,620	(1) 137,620	126,265
Non-audit assurance services:			
Fees for reporting on government grants:			
• Teachers' pensions return	12,000	12,000	12,000
<b>Total fees - Council</b>	<b>149,620</b>	<b>149,620</b>	<b>138,265</b>
<b>Pension Fund</b>			
Code audit fee	(2) 28,000	(2) 28,000	24,075
Additional fee for IAS19 assurance requests from scheduled bodies	(3) 12,250	(3) 11,500	5,500
<b>Total fees - Pension Fund</b>	<b>40,250</b>	<b>39,500</b>	<b>29,575</b>

(1) The increase in the Council's code audit fee reflects the increased expectations relating to the work necessary to audit valuations of non-current assets, pension liabilities and group accounts and risk related work in respect of the disposal of Essex Education Services and termination of the Tending PPP.

(2) The increase in the Pension Fund code audit fee reflects the increased expectations relating to the work necessary to audit valuations of pension investments (particularly unquoted and direct property investments) and the fund liability applied nationally.

(3) The increased Pension Fund assurance requests fee represents the work necessary in 2019/20 to audit the data cleansing work undertaken by the actuary in connection with the triennial valuation of the pension fund liability (and asset allocations). This element is only relevant in the year of triennial valuation and will not recur until the next triennial valuation (i.e. 2022/23). The increase in actual fee from the planned fee is due to a request received from an additional body.

## Communication

Reports	Date	To whom
Audit plan	6 March 2020	Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
Audit progress report	28 September 2020	Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
	16 November 2020	
Audit completion report	30 November 2020	Audit, Governance and Standards Committee



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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The matters raised in our report prepared in connection with the audit are those we believe should be brought to your attention. They do not purport to be a complete record of all matters arising. This report is prepared solely for the use of the company and may not be quoted nor copied without our prior written consent. No responsibility to any third party is accepted.

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# The Leader's Report of Cabinet Issues

This report is

- a) To note the urgent decisions that have been exempted from call-in as attached as Appendix 1 to the report, since the last meeting of Council on 23 February 2021 and
- b) To receive the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 16 February, 16 March, 26 March and 20 April 2021 and attached to the report as appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5.

## **Recommendations**

To receive the list of urgent decisions taken and the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 16 February, 16 March, 26 March and 20 April 2021.

## Urgent Decisions

### Part 1 : Decisions Exempt from Call-in

The following decisions were taken which were either not key decisions or where prior notice was given, but the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee agreed that it was in the best interests of the Council for the decision to be implemented urgently and the decision was therefore exempted from call-in.

DATE PUBLISHED	CABINET MEMBER	TITLE OF DECISION	REFERENCE NUMBER
04/03/2021	Leader	Final agreement for the Essex Concessionary Fare Scheme Reimbursement Arrangements for 2021/22	FP/988/02/21
05/03/2021	Cllr Ball	Kickstart Essex	FP/994/02/21
17/03/2021	Cllr McKinlay	Allocation of additional Covid Winter Grant Scheme	FP/023/03/21
13/04/2021	Leader	Funding for Adult Social Care: Allocation of Government Funding – Infection Control and Testing Fund	FP/030/03/21
30/04/2021	Cllr McKinlay	Allocation of the Covid Local Support Grant	FP/062/04/21

## Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet that was held remotely on Tuesday 16 February 2021

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### Present:

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>
Councillor D Finch	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor T Ball	Economic Development
Councillor S Barker (for agenda items 1-4 only)	Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate
Councillor K Bentley	Deputy Leader and Infrastructure
Councillor R Gooding	Education and Skills
Councillor L McKinlay	Children and Families
Councillor D Madden	Performance, Business Planning and Partnerships
Councillor J Spence	Health and Adult Social Care
Councillor S Walsh	Environment and Climate Change Action
Councillor C Whitbread	Finance

Councillors Durham, Goggin, Turrell, Scordis, Steptoe, Mitchell, Hedley, Henderson, Wood, Grundy, Weston, Moran and Pond were also present.

### 1. **Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest.**

The report of Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and the following were noted:

1. There had been no changes to membership since the last meeting of Cabinet.
2. Apologies were received from Councillor Mackrory, and for Councillor Barker for agenda items 5-15.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. **Minutes: 19 January 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

### 3. **Questions from the public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### **Change of date of May 2021 meeting**

The Leader of the Council made a statement in respect of a change to the date of the Annual meeting of Full Council, which would now take place on 25 May 2021. This required the Cabinet meeting currently scheduled for this date to be rescheduled to 8 June 2021. The Cabinet meeting currently scheduled for 22 June 2021 would be retained in case it was found to be needed. The Cabinet confirmed their approval of these arrangements.

#### **4. Future Temporary Resourcing Services (FP/860/11/20)**

The Cabinet considered a report seeking agreement to change the Essex County Council (ECC) approach to temporary worker recruitment by bringing all temporary resourcing activity, including management, in house and to procure a separate payroll service for temporary staff and a dynamic purchasing system for the provision of agency staff. The report also sought to seek funding from the Transformation Reserve to fund temporary worker attraction activity and to deliver the in-house temporary resourcing service.

The Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate agreed to provide a written answer to Councillor Henderson in respect of questions relating to the number of temporary workers employed, the benefits and savings of the proposed recruiting method and why, given the benefits, this approach had not been previously utilised.

#### **Resolved:**

1. To bring temporary staff resourcing activity and management in-house.
2. To go out to the market to procure a payroll and time-sheet service for management of ECC temporary staff and to agree that the Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate Services in consultation with the Director Organisation, development and People and Service Transformation to:
  - (a) approve the procurement approach and strategy, procurement process and evaluation model; and
  - (b) following the completion of a compliant procurement process, to approve the winning bidder(s) and award the contract.
3. To undertake a competitive procurement of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for recruitment of temporary staff for hard to fill posts for a period of 5 years, with an option to extend for 5 years and to agree that the Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate Services in consultation with Director Organisation, development and People and Service Transformation will approve the procurement approach and strategy, procurement process and evaluation model.
4. That the £65,000 for temporary staff attraction activity, including the cost of national job board posting and LinkedIn job postings, to be funded from

the Transformation Reserve in Year 1 and built into future years as part of the Medium-Term Resource Strategy.

**5. Approval to place 2021/22 contractual task orders with Ringway Jacobs for values of £2m and over (FP/918/12/20)**

The Cabinet received a report advising that the Council's highways contract with Ringway Jacobs Limited required the Council to place orders for all work undertaken. Some task orders within this programme of work had a value in excess of £2m. Although the highways budget was set by Council as part of the annual budget, spending decisions on executive functions of over £5m should be taken by the Cabinet. The report asked the Cabinet to approve the issue of those task orders likely to exceed £2m to Ringway Jacobs for the 2021/22 financial year.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure responded to a question from Councillor Henderson in relation to the costs when completed repairs subsequently required further work. A written answer would also be provided to Councillor Henderson regarding the level of work that was sub-contracted, and how such work was allocated.

**Resolved:**

1. That the Director, Highways and Transportation may issue the task orders to Ringway Jacobs as outlined in Table 1, Appendix 1 of the Agenda report after taking legal advice about the form and content of the task orders.
2. That the Leader, or Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, may change the work to be undertaken under the task orders.

**6. Establishment of a new 210-place primary school and 56 place Early Years provision at the St Luke's housing development, Runwell (FP/866/11/20)**

The Cabinet received a report asking the Cabinet to approve the establishment of a new 210-place (1 form of entry) primary school and associated 56 place Early Years provision (for children aged 0-5) to meet growing demand for primary age places in the local area and award the relevant contract for delivery of the new school.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills responded to a question from Councillor Pond in respect of how good design principles could be utilised within the development.

**Resolved:**

1. That a new 210-place primary school and 56 place Early Years provision should be established to serve the population growth at the St. Luke's Park housing development.

2. That the Director, Education issues notification that the Council is seeking to establish a free school in the area and seeks bids from potential sponsors by sending the notice to operators of schools in Essex, and by public notice.
3. To undertake a procurement exercise to secure a construction Partner through a mini competition using the Essex Construction Framework, in accordance with the budget set out in the Confidential Appendix to the Agenda report.
4. That the Head of Infrastructure Delivery is authorised to enter into a contract at the end of the procurement exercise to deliver the new primary school and Early Years provision on the St Luke's Park housing development, provided he is content that the following conditions have been met:
  - a. A satisfactory planning permission has been granted; and
  - b. The construction costs are within the agreed budget as stated within the Confidential Appendix to the Agenda report and represent value for money.

**7. Land at Hamberts Farm, South Woodham Ferrers – Residential Development (FP/800/09/20)**

A report was received seeking approval to enter into negotiations with Countryside plc to agree an Option Agreement in favour of Essex County Council (ECC) in relation to ECC's Hamberts Farm site. The Option Agreement would set out the process and terms of development of a 116 acre site in South Woodham Ferrers for residential use. The proposals for development also included for the provision of a primary school, healthcare and recreational facilities for the benefit of the wider community together with road improvements, cycleways and footpaths.

**Resolved:**

1. To enter into negotiation with Countryside PLC based on the Heads of Terms as set out in the confidential appendix of the agenda report in order to finalise the form of an Option Agreement.
2. That a further report would be brought back to Cabinet once there was a recommended final form of option agreement.

**8. Integrated Waste Handling Service Delivery Options (FP/904/12/20)**

The Cabinet received a report seeking approval of the recommended delivery model for the operation of the Recycling Centres for Household Waste (RCHW) and Waste Transfer Stations (WTS) to replace the current Integrated Waste Handling Contract (IWHC).

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action responded to questions from Councillors Henderson and Pond in relation to discussion with relevant trade unions, the terms on which members of staff would be employed and why some matters were noted as being reserved.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action advised Cabinet of a change to one of the published recommendations, specifically the removal of the words “and structure changes” in recommendation no.2. This change was noted and approved by the Cabinet.

**Resolved:**

1. That, after the expiry of the current contract on 31 March 2022, ECC assumes responsibility for operating the RCHW and WTS service using an in-house delivery model.
2. To delegate to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, the approval of the additional resources required to deliver the in-house delivery model.

9. **Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members (FP/941/01/21)**

The decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members since the last meeting of the Cabinet were noted.

10. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Cabinet would take place online at 10am on Tuesday 16 March 2021.

11. **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

**Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved:**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person).

12. **Confidential Appendix: Establishment of a new 210-place primary school and 56 place early years provision at the St Luke's housing development, Runwell (FP/866/11/20)**  
(Press and public excluded)

The Cabinet considered the Confidential Appendix to report FP/866/11/20 which contained information exempt from publication referred to in that report and in decisions taken earlier in the meeting (minute 6 above refers).

13. **Confidential Appendix: Land at Hamberts Farm, South Woodham Ferrers – Residential Development (FP/800/09/20)**  
(Press and public excluded)

The Cabinet considered the Confidential Appendix to report FP/800/09/20 which contained information exempt from publication referred to in that report and in decisions taken earlier in the meeting (minute 7 above refers).

14. **Confidential Appendix: Integrated Waste Handling Service Delivery Options (FP/904/12/20)**  
(Press and public excluded)

The Cabinet considered the Confidential Appendix to report FP/904/12/20 which contained information exempt from publication referred to in that report and in decisions taken earlier in the meeting (minute 8 above refers).

15. **Urgent Exempt Business**

There was no urgent exempt business.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.30am.

## Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet that was held remotely on Tuesday, 16 March 2021

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### Present:

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>
Councillor D Finch	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor T Ball	Economic Development
Councillor S Barker (for agenda items 7-11 only)	Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate
Councillor K Bentley	Deputy Leader and Infrastructure
Councillor R Gooding	Education and Skills
Councillor L McKinlay	Children and Families
Councillor J Spence	Health and Adult Social Care
Councillor S Walsh	Environment and Climate Change Action
Councillor C Whitbread	Finance

Councillors Durham, Turrell, Steptoe, Hedley, Henderson, Wood, Grundy, Weston, Butland, Chandler, Aldridge, Platt, Mackrory, Wagland, Pratt and Pond were also present.

### 1. **Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest.**

The report of Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and the following were noted:

1. There had been no changes to membership since the last meeting of Cabinet.
2. Apologies were received from Councillors Madden and Barker (for agenda items 1-6).
3. There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. **Minutes: 16 February 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

### 3. **Questions from the public**

There were four questions from members of the public. The Cabinet Members for Education and Skills, Environment and Climate Change Action, and Economic Development spoke in response to these questions, all of which

related to item no. 7 on the agenda - Response to Climate Action Commission's Interim Report (FP/915/15/20).

4. **SELEP Local Growth Fund Award to the University of Essex for Parkside Phase 3 (FP/746/07/20)**

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval for the passporting of a grant of five million pounds (£5,000,000) of Local Growth Fund (LGF) from South East LEP Limited (SELEP) to the University of Essex for delivery of the Parkside Phase 3 Project.

**Resolved:**

1. To enter into a grant agreement with the University of Essex for £5,000,000 towards the delivery of the Parkside Phase 3 Project.
2. That the Executive Director, Place and Public Health is authorised to agree the terms of the grant agreement with the University of Essex provided that the terms of such grant are consistent with the terms set out by SELEP.
3. To amend the profile of the capital programme in line with the revised cost profile of £5,000,000 across 2021/22 and 2022/23 for the Parkside Phase 3 Project to be financed by the SELEP LGF grant.

5. **Housing Infrastructure Fund – Contract for Beaulieu Park Station and Chelmsford North East Bypass (FP/544/10/19)**

The Cabinet received a report seeking approval to enter into a grant funding agreement with Homes England before the 31 March 2021 as part of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to secure the release of a grant of £217.861mm to enable ECC to continue with infrastructure works to sponsor and underwrite the development of Beaulieu Park Station and the Chelmsford North East Bypass (the "Project"). The report also sought approval to enter into agreements with Chelmsford City Council (CCC) and Braintree District Council (BDC) in relation to the relevant terms of the GDA that CCC and BDC had involvement in delivering.

The Leader of the Council responded to questions from Councillors Mackrory and Pond in relation to the potential for an increase to the estimated level of passenger numbers, when design and operational information may be expected, assumptions made in relation to existing commuter patterns and the potential to influence the name of the station. The Leader agreed to consider arranging a member briefing on the matter at an appropriate point.

**Resolved:**

1. To enter into a Grant Determination Agreement (GDA) with Homes England for £217.861m.

2. That the Executive Director, Place and Public Health is authorised to agree terms with the Department of Transport (DfT) over the monitoring and evaluation of the DfT conditions that form Annexure 7 of the GDA in consultation with the Section 151 and Monitoring Officers and to ensure that the final terms do not materially change the risks to the Council from those set out in this report.
3. That the Chief Executive writes to Braintree DC to urge it to progress negotiations with the County Council to formalise an agreement relating to the District functions of the HIF project and that Executive Director, Place and Public Health is authorised to agree terms with BDC regarding joint working arrangements for the delivery of the Project.
4. To enter into an agreement with CCC of up to £5m for capital costs in relation to the City functions relating to the HIF project Agreement.
5. To negotiate with BDC to enter into an agreement complying with the terms of the HIF project on terms approved by the Executive Director, Place and Public Health in consultation with the monitoring officer.
6. That:
  - (a) the addition of £13.93m to the Capital Programme to be funded by prudential borrowing to allow the commitment within the GDA to be entered into subject to a requirement that this addition may not be spent on the Beaulieu Park scheme without a further cabinet decision to authorise the expenditure once value engineering has been completed; and
  - (b) that the Executive Director, Place and Public Health undertake an immediate review of the capital programme to find savings of £13.93m to fund the £13.93m should it be required.
7. That the addition of £2.224m to the Capital Programme for Chelmsford North East Bypass to be fully funded by received S106 contributions.
8. That the reprofiling of the capital programme allocations as set out in the table below:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	TOTAL
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Capital Programme Adjustments required								
Beaulieu Park Station	2,860	(216)	(1,768)	6,570	8,019	(3,227)	1,581	13,950
Chelmsford North East Bypass	(192)	(2,272)	(9,574)	12,388	2,224	-	-	2,224
Total Adjustments	2,458	(2,488)	(11,640)	19,217	10,243	(3,227)	1,581	16,155

9. Not to award any contract for the construction of the station or the bypass until:
  - (a) the terms of the associated agreement with the DfT referred to below have been agreed by the Executive Director, for Place and Public Health and he is satisfied that the final terms do not materially change the risks to the Council from those set out in this report;

(b) the Executive Director, for Place and public health is satisfied that terms have been agreed for the acquisition of all land required for the bypass; and

(c) the Executive Director, for Place and Public Health is satisfied that the station has been value engineered in the optimum way.

**6. Reablement at Home Contract 2021 – 2024 (FP/966/01/21)**

The Cabinet received a report seeking approval to direct award a contract for the Reablement at Home Service to Essex Cares Limited (ECL).

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care responded to questions from Councillors Henderson and Mackrory in relation to balancing the need to make savings with the required outcomes for service users, monitoring the impact of hospital readmissions and the need to take service users' experiences into account.

**Resolved:**

1. To award the Reablement at Home Service Contract to Essex Cares Ltd (trading as ECL) for a three-year term commencing 4 May 2021 on terms which allow the Council to terminate after two years.
2. That the contract be structured to secure a minimum volume of people through the service with contractual targets to improve both these volumes and delivery of outcomes.
3. That the contract will include a contractual provision whereby ECC may require the capacity of the service to be increased temporarily or permanently if there is an increase in demand and that any decision to change the capacity will be taken in accordance with the constitution.
4. That the minimum contract value of £18.3m per year for the 3-year term, plus up to 10% variable operational capacity at a marginal rate worth a maximum of £1.5m per year.
5. To note that work undertaken with the Connect Programme may lead to a recommendation that work is transferred from other services into this contract.
6. To note that ECC is the primary commissioner for the contract with ECL and will take a lead role in contract management. ECC will establish local arrangements to ensure delivery of specification with our NHS partners.

**7. Response to Climate Action Commission's Interim Report (FP/915/15/20)**

On welcoming the Climate Action Commission's interim report in November 2020 a further report was requested by the Cabinet setting out the

Commission's recommendations that could be agreed as priorities to action as opposed to those which required a more significant action plan to be developed, discussions with partners or a more detailed cost analysis. This subsequent report was presented for Cabinet's consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action responded to questions from Councillors Turrell, Pond and Henderson in respect of the number of trees planted by Essex County Council, the new fund to support residents and communities to take action on climate change, tree planting on leased land, the non-adoption of the term 'Climate Change Emergency', and the ability to access the funding required to progress the Commission's recommendations. A written answer would also be provided to Councillor Turrell in respect of the detail of the Electric Vehicle Strategy, the intentions for the £400,000 of targeted capital investment specified at point 6.1.1 of the agenda report and the timing of the detailed plans required to establish what was needed to achieve the Net Zero requirement.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure responded to questions from Councillors Pond and Henderson regarding the potential to expand the designation of school streets and the budget in relation to Public Rights of Way.

**Resolved:**

1. To note the current programme of climate action (Appendix A of the agenda report) made in response to the recommendations made in the Essex Climate Commission's Interim Report.
  2. That ECC has a policy to transform its estate to have Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030; creating an electric vehicle strategy for Essex; and the setting up of a Net Zero innovation network.
  3. That officers will report annually to Cabinet on Essex County Council's greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilience measures.
  4. That officers will report annually to Cabinet on greenhouse gas emissions and climate reliance measures across Essex.
  5. That Cabinet Members will bring an update, on a rolling rota basis, on progress made in their portfolio to address the climate challenge, following the publication of the final report of the Climate Commission in summer 2021.
8. **Better Care Fund Plan and arrangements - 2021/22 (FP/955/02/21)**

The Cabinet received a report seeking agreement to vary the six BCF (Better Care Fund) section 75 agreements entered into by the Council with the five Essex CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups), to ensure that the use of the mandatory funding contributions for 2020/21 meet the national conditions.

The report also sought agreement for interim arrangements for the management of the Essex BCF between the end of 2020/21 and the establishment of the new 2021/22 BCF Plan once national planning guidance has been published.

**Resolved:**

1. To vary the six BCF section 75 agreements to reflect:
  - the national 2020/21 5.3% uplift to the minimum CCG contributions (total Essex BCF £159.7m) as agreed by the Council and the five CCGs but not yet formalised due to the delay caused by Covid-19 pandemic; and
  - the national 2021/22 uplift to the 2020/21 contributions (Uplifted Contributions) which are being uplifted by 5.3% for 2021/22 (total Essex BCF £165.2m).
2. That the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health may authorise subsequent variation of the six BCF section 75 agreements to reflect the final allocated contributions (Final Allocations), if and when these are published, if different from the Uplifted Contributions.

9. **Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members (FP/976/02/21)**

The decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members since the last meeting of the Cabinet were noted.

10. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Cabinet would take place online at 10am on Tuesday 20 April 2021.

[Post meeting note – an additional meeting has since been scheduled for 26 March 2021].

11. **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

12. **Urgent Exempt Business**

There was no urgent exempt business.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11.00am.

## Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet that was held remotely on Friday 26 March 2021

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### Present:

Councillor	Cabinet Member Responsibility
Councillor D Finch	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor T Ball	Economic Development
Councillor S Barker	Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate
Councillor K Bentley	Deputy Leader and Infrastructure
Councillor R Gooding	Education and Skills
Councillor D Madden	Performance, Business Planning and Partnerships
Councillor L McKinlay	Children and Families
Councillor S Walsh	Environment and Climate Change Action
Councillor C Whitbread	Finance

Councillors Souter, Garnett, Moran, Mackrory, Johnson, Mitchell, Reeves, Hardware, Durham, Goggin, Wagland and Grundy were also present.

### 1. **Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest.**

The report of Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and the following were noted:

1. There had been no changes to membership since the last meeting of Cabinet.
2. Apologies were received from Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care and Councillor Henderson.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. **Questions from the public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### 3. **Harlow Gilston Garden Town - Decision on Acceptance of Housing Infrastructure Grant Funding (FP/648/03/20)**

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to enter into an agreement with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) under which ECC would deliver infrastructure works in Essex funded through a Housing Infrastructure Grant (HIG) paid to HCC by Homes England.

The Leader of the Council responded to a question from Councillor Mackrory in relation to seeking early engagement with stakeholders in matters such as site access and the infrastructure required to deliver this.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure spoke to the benefits of the scheme and in acknowledgement to the hard work and commitment of colleagues and officers in developing the agreement.

**Resolved:**

1. To enter a Back to Back agreement with Hertfordshire County Council for £42.1m of funding to deliver the Project.
2. That a further report should be brought to the Leader to agree ECC's role in the management of the Gilston Villages project and the management of the proposed section 106 agreement, ahead of the outline planning application being considered by East Herts District Council in June.

4. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Cabinet would take place online at 10am on Tuesday 20 April 2021.

5. **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

6. **Urgent Exempt Business**

There was no urgent exempt business.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 3.09pm.

## Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet meeting that was held remotely on Tuesday 20 April 2021

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### Present:

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>
Councillor D Finch	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor T Ball	Economic Development
Councillor K Bentley	Deputy Leader and Infrastructure
Councillor R Gooding	Education and Skills
Councillor D Madden	Performance, Business Planning and Partnerships
Councillor L McKinlay	Children and Families
Councillor S Walsh	Environment and Climate Change Action
Councillor J Spence	Health and Adult Social Care

Councillors Mackrory, Henderson, Durham, Goggin, Metcalfe and Aldridge were also present.

### 1. **Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest.**

The report of Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and the following were noted:

1. There had been no changes to membership since the last meeting of Cabinet.
2. Apologies were received from Councillor Barker, Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate, Councillor Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance and Councillor Pond.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 16 March 2021 and 26 March 2021 were approved as a true record and would be signed by the Chairman.

### 3. **Questions from the public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### 4. **Housing Related Support for Young People aged 16+ (FP/843/10/20)**

The Cabinet considered a report relating to the provision of housing related support to young people accommodated by others. The reported advised that the contract for delivery of the current service would expire on 31 May 2022 and the report related to the re-procurement of the service.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families responded to questions from Councillors Henderson and Mackrory regarding the feedback obtained from young people and how this would be addressed, the provision of tenancy support including for young people moving between boroughs, and the flexibility of the service including options where full costs were not met through Housing Benefit.

**Resolved:**

1. To procure a single countywide contract for the provision of housing related support services for vulnerable young people in Essex using an open, single stage procurement procedure for a 5 year contract term from June 2022–May 2027 with the option to extend for up to a further two years to May 2029.
2. To agree a maximum total expenditure of £18.025m based on an annual spend of £2.575m.
3. To agree an evaluation model based on 30% price, 70% quality of which 10% may relate to Social Value.
4. To delegate the approval of the detailed evaluation model to the Executive Director, Children and Families.
5. To delegate approval to award contract(s) to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families.
6. To note that the decision whether or not to extend the contract will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Children and Families.

5. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Cabinet would take place at 10am on Tuesday 8 June 2021 with the venue to be confirmed.

6. **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

7. **Urgent Exempt Business**

There was no urgent exempt business.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure thanked the Leader of the Council for his leadership and support over the last eight years, noting that as the Leader was not standing for re-election this would be his last Cabinet meeting. Other Members present also shared their best wishes and appreciation.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.17am.

# Council Issues

## 1. Amendments to the Constitution

### Part 26 - Appendix 3, List of Approved Bodies

Appendix 3 of part 26 of the Constitution is a list of Approved Bodies. Members appointed as County Council representatives to Approved Bodies may claim expenses from the Council for attending meetings if they do not receive payment from any other organisation.

- The Locality Boards of Braintree, Epping Forest, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford have been discontinued.
- IGNITE the Enterprise Centre at Braintree has been disbanded.

#### Recommendation:

That the list of Approved Bodies in Appendix 3 of Part 26 of the Constitution be amended to remove

- a) the Locality Boards of Braintree, Epping Forest, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford and
- b) IGNITE the Enterprise Centre at Braintree.

## 2. Dates of Council

That it be noted that the meetings of the Council are normally held at County Hall in the Council Chamber and commence at 10:00am. However, due to the prevailing uncertainty Members are asked to note that the venue and the time of commencement of the meetings may, with the agreement of the Chairman, be varied.

#### Recommendation:

That the dates of the forthcoming meetings be noted as:

Tuesdays on 13 July, 12 October and 7 December 2021 and Thursday 10 February 2022.