
Essex County Council

8 October 2019

Order Paper

Agenda item 2

The Chief Executive's Report on the Return of Members Elected and on Political Proportionality

A by election for the Clacton East division was held on 3 October 2019. Cllr Mark Stephenson was elected. Cllr Stephenson has indicated that he will be joining the registered Non Aligned group.

The effect of the by election, combined with the other recent change to the membership of political groups, means that the composition of the Council is now:

Conservative:	53
Liberal Democrat:	8
Non Aligned Group	7
Labour	6
Independent	1

Whenever a Councillor joins a political group the Council is required to undertake reviews of committee seat allocations in accordance with the statutory rules of political balance.

The review has been undertaken and no changes to committee seat allocations arise from the recent changes.

Recommendation:

That there be no change to the allocation of committee seat places which remain as determined by the Council at its annual meeting in May 2019.

Agenda item 5

Public Question Time

Prior to the meeting of the Council the following questions will be asked by members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 16.12.9.

Question 1: from Mr John LeSeve, a resident of Wickham Bishops, concerning the widening of the A12 and CO2 emissions. He asks:

‘Given that we are being advised to reduce our CO2 emissions, reduce our use of cars and live closer to work places, how do plans to increase the capacity on the A12 seek to address this issue?’

Question 2: from Mr Peter Cracknell, a resident of Writtle, concerning the declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency. He asks:

‘I welcome the Zero Carbon Essex motion on today’s agenda concerning tree planting; but I would like to ask why Essex County Council has still not declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency?’

Agenda Item 12

Written Questions

1. By Councillor Butland of the Leader of the Council

‘It is now over 18 months since the Essex Economic Commission published its report ‘Enterprising Essex: Meeting the Challenge’

The report identified four keys challenges:

- (I) Exploiting the potential of the Greater Essex economy;
- (II) Enabling business growth;
- (III) Addressing the skills challenge; and
- (IV) Improving connectivity.

Would the Leader inform members of the progress being made by his Administration in tackling each of these four key challenges?’

2. By Councillor Butland of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

‘In September 2013 an Independent Commission, led by Sir Thomas Hughes-

Hallett, published a report entitled 'Who will care?'. The report set out "five high-impact solutions to prevent a future crisis in health and social care in Essex".

The five solutions were:

- (I) Agree a new understanding between the public sector and the people of Essex;
- (II) Prevent unnecessary crises in care;
- (III) Mobilise community resources;
- (IV) Use data and technology to the advantage of the people of Essex; and
- (V) Ensure clear leadership, vision and accountability.

Would the Portfolio Holder for Health & Adult Social Care make a statement setting out the progress made in implementing these five solutions?'

3. By Councillor Pond of the Cabinet Member for Customer, Corporate, Culture and Communities

'Will the Cabinet Member please consider making access to those services provided by the Essex Record Office which are behind a paywall free for local historians and researchers to use within Essex Libraries, as they are in ERO itself? Otherwise, such researchers who live elsewhere in the County are at a great disadvantage compared with the Chelmsford based.'

4. By Councillor Buckley of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

'Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that whilst a single pavement defect is often rightly rated as low risk, an accumulation of such low risks on a short stretch of pavement becomes a significant risk and should be considered a higher priority for repair.'

5. By Councillor Buckley of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

'Will the Cabinet Member give an update on the works and performance of the redesigned roundabout at Golden Jubilee Way Wickford, in particular with regard to the significantly increased congestion at Southend Road and regarding outstanding works left incomplete when the main contractor left the site.'

6. By Councillor Scordis of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

'How much has the council's legal team spent on defending personal injury cases due to highway defects?'

7. By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

‘Given our climate change emergency, and the dangers associated with using glyphosates please will ECC desist from using this weed killer as soon as possible as this product has been linked to serious conditions and is detrimental to wellbeing.

Will ECC consider planting wild flower corridors to encourage insects?’

8. By Councillor Scordis of the Leader of the Council

‘What contingency plans do we have in place for a No Deal Brexit?’

9. By Councillor Reid of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

‘When is ECC going to declare a climate emergency in the County and what strategy are we going to use to implement this going forward?’

10. By Councillor Reid of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

‘Could the Cabinet Member consider changing the criteria for potholes?’

I feel that reducing the depth of the pothole would be beneficial and economical. Financially I believe it would be cost effective and save the council money both in the cost of the repairs to our county’s roads but also cost effective in the amount of claims we receive on an annual basis and legal fees which we have to pay. This would also be of great benefit to all road users in our county.’

11. By Councillor Henderson of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

‘Could the Portfolio Holder provide an update on any discussions that have taken place between the council and Highways England regarding the future joining of the bypass between Horsley Cross and Harwich?’

12. By Councillor Aspinell of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

‘Following the recent Place Services presentation by Highways, can you please confirm that the highways planning advice is simply advice and is non-enforceable

as our highways officer stated. There was a planning application in Brentwood where a plan was withdrawn as highways were insisting they had legal right to keep a condition on the application.'

13. By Councillor Kendall of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

'Following the announcement at the Conservative conference that there will be significant investment in buses, please can the Cabinet Member clarify what funding Essex is going to get and what difference it will make to bus users in our county.'

14. By Councillor Kendall of the Leader of the Council

'Having attended the Brexit briefing I remain unclear what the effects of a no-deal Brexit will be for Essex. Can the Leader of the Council please clarify this?'

15. By Councillor Baker of the Leader of the Council

'Two years ago in this chamber, I asked if the Leader of the Council would be prepared to explore the possibility of negotiating and setting up a cross-party working group to meet on a regular basis, with senior officer input, in order to identify potential opportunities and possible threats for the County of Essex arising out of leaving the European Union. The recent briefing meeting on Brexit, to which all councillors were invited - although not a cross-party working group - was the first time that all members, so far as I recall, were invited to a meeting at which the matter of the United Kingdom leaving the EU and possible implications for Essex was raised.

Has Essex County Council been sufficiently proactive in preparing its residents, businesses, ports, hospitals, etc and ensuring adequate food supplies and the supply of vital medicines, etc for the possibility that we could be leaving the European Union at the end of this month?'

16. By Councillor Baker of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

'Following the decision to sell Essex Education Services last year, could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the current position over the sale in terms of:

1. What is the situation with regard to local authority schools accessing the full range of services formally provided by Essex County Council?

2. Who was the buyer and what was the finally agreed price?’

17. By Councillor Wood of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families

‘Can the Cabinet Member please clarify that Essex County Council do not have any children in our care in unregulated homes. If we do, could you please confirm that Essex County Council have done all the necessary checks to make sure the children are safe, in light of the BBC investigation.’

18. By Councillor Wood of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

‘Can the Cabinet Member please clarify what arrangements are in place for ECC staff employed at EPUT given the contract is due to expire in March 2020. Can the Cabinet Member also confirm if the Social Workers will continue to be employed by EPUT and how they will be paid?’

19. By Councillor Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

‘With many councils changing emphasis to clean energy and investments, can the Cabinet Member confirm if this council is now fully divested from oil and gas company investments?’

Can the Cabinet Member also confirm if this council now uses 100% renewable electricity across all its premises and if not, what plans and timetable does this council have for achieving the above?’

20. By Councillor Mackrory of the Leader of the Council

‘For the past 15 years ECC has provided, in association with Cambridge Open Access, a platform for parish councils for their web sites free of charge. I understand due to a change in legislation coming into effect in September 2020 this platform will no longer comply. I further understand that as from March 2020 ECC will withdraw this funding and parishes will have to find alternative providers and transfer all the information on their web sites from their own resources.

For small parishes finding £1,500 for a new platform will be extremely difficult, let alone transferring all the information. The previous arrangement enabled economies of scale and valuable back-up which will be lost.

Will the Leader reconsider this decision to, at the very least, allow some interim arrangements to prevent hardship and loss of goodwill with our parishes?’

21. By Councillor Abbott of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

‘During the recent planning application processes for two housing developments (Rickstones Road Rivenhall, where I am the local ECC Member and near the B1018 Tye Green where I am a District Ward Councillor) requests were made for pedestrian crossings to be funded in part or whole via developer contributions. In both instances, children living in the new houses would have to cross busy roads to get to nearby primary schools. But in both cases ECC rejected those pedestrian crossing requests despite in one case where the developer had suggested helping with funding. For the Rickstones Road site I have now submitted an LHP bid for a zebra crossing. Can the Cabinet Member explain please, given his welcome stated support for modal shift, why ECC is resisting infrastructure to support safe walking to school? Could he say why in these two cases developer contributions for zebra crossings were rejected by ECC when alternative LHP funding would come directly from taxpayers?’

And can he also please consider reviewing his position that ECC members should not be involved in discussions over developer contributions, even when they can so directly relate to local highway safety matters such as these?’

22. By Councillor Abbott of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

‘In Braintree District recent planning consents have resulted in significant losses of mature native rural hedgerows and in these cases ECC Highways through its recommendations has effectively agreed to the losses, even when they were greater than needed to achieve sight lines. Given growing concerns about climate change and species decline due to habitat loss, could ECC please review its approach such that discussions with developers and LPAs for access arrangements to development sites take full consideration of a positive conservation approach to minimise damage to hedgerows?’

23. By Councillor Smith of the Leader

‘Following the recent article within the Yellow Advertiser regarding what is known as the Kenward Files, can the Leader please issue a public statement to directly address the points raised within this story?’

24. By Councillor Smith of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

‘Basildon Borough Council is now seeking to make the Borough the most disabled friendly authority within Essex. This aim is now being hampered by the Essex Design Guide’s support of shared spaces within new housing estates. These shared spaces mean that both vehicles and pedestrians must use the same shared space to travel.

For disabled, blind/partially sighted and frail persons, these shared spaces create a barrier which will create more isolation for these groups of people living within these new housing developments.

Therefore, will the highway authority review this situation to put the safety of pedestrians above the profits of housing developers that are seeking to cut corners by not building pavements?’

25. By Councillor Davies of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

‘It is my understanding that before 2005, local Borough and District Councils undertook highways management on behalf of Essex County Council. Since 2005 Essex County Council manages highways. As local leaders are best placed to ensure efforts are directed to the areas of most need does the Cabinet Member believe that this was a wise decision to bring highways management under Essex County Council and wouldn't District Councils be better suited to make quicker and more efficient repairs and upgrades?’