

The Leader's Report of Cabinet Issues

This report details the main issues considered by the Cabinet at its meetings on 13 December 2016 and 24 January 2017.

1. Revenue and Capital Budgets 2017-18 and Medium Term Resource Strategy

This is the subject of a separate report to the Council at Agenda Item 6.

2. Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation for Financial Management

This is the subject of a separate report to the Council at Agenda Item 7.

3. Southend, Essex and Thurrock Strategy for Mental Health

A new pan-Essex, multi-partner Strategy for mental health and wellbeing has been developed by 10 partners (Essex County Council, Southend on Sea Borough Council, Thurrock Council and the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups in the ceremonial County of Essex). It outlines the strategic direction of travel for the mental health system over the next five years.

The Strategy is guided by a vision for mental health in Essex, in turn informed by the national prospectus set out in NHS England's Five-Year Forward View for Mental Health. Partners are also mindful of the importance of ensuring that mental health is a priority for Essex's three Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) and for the Mid-Essex Success Regime.

Broadly, the Strategy is about moving systems in the following way:

- from responses based on medical diagnosis, to holistic, strengths-based models
- from expert-led to co-production partnerships with people who use services
- from clinic to community as the focus for solutions and
- from alleviation of symptoms and crisis management to prevention, early intervention and empowerment.

The Strategy fits with the broader transformation agenda for mental health in Essex, aiming both to improve life outcomes and also to address the economic consequences of poor mental health, for the individual and also for public services. County Council leadership around both the strategy and mental health transformation will be key; mental health has an increasing public profile and

residents do not currently experience a system which has 'parity of esteem' with physical health.

An implementation plan has been developed, and an action plan will follow the Strategy to support its implementation.

The Strategy is expected to have been signed off by all the partners, and to have been considered by the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Boards, by the end of January 2017.

The Cabinet has agreed to adopt the Strategy, and has authorised the Cabinet Member for Health to make any necessary minor changes following consideration of the Strategy by the other partners.

4. Changes to Charges for Adult Social Care

Cabinet has agreed the introduction of new charging practices for adult social care with effect from April 2017 and has approved funding of £721,000 from the Transformation Reserve to implement the changes and to provide short-term and additional support to ensure that people receive the services and benefits they need.

The Council provides domiciliary care to around 9,100 individuals at an annual cost of around £210m. Those service users are generally charged for the services they receive. There is a statutory means test for these charges. Those on a low income pay nothing whereas those considered to have sufficient means are asked to pay a contribution towards the cost of the care in accordance with a means test. Those on the highest incomes are required to pay the full cost of their care.

The means test is set by regulations but local authorities are able to allow people to pay less if they so wish. Some of the practices that have developed in Essex significantly exceed the minimum. This means that service users in Essex are asked to make lower contributions than would apply in other local authority areas.

The Council's financial position means that it must review its expenditure and charging policies for services and move to a position which aligns its policies and practices more closely to the national means test. Although any increase in charges will be unwelcome to service users, these charges will only apply to those who are assessed under a statutory means test as being able to afford to pay them.

The following changes will apply with effect from 10 April 2017:

- Service users will be charged for domiciliary care from the date they start to receive care.
- The Council's practices with regard to people receiving domiciliary care will be aligned to the statutory means test in the following ways:
 - by including the capital value of property in the financial assessment (although the value of their home will continue to be disregarded);

- by disregarding income used to pay for disability-related expenditure only where it is required to be disregarded under the statutory means test; and
 - by reducing the amount of capital disregarded from £27,000 to £23,250.
- Service users will be charged for the cost of safeguarding their property and belongings.

5. Participation in the North Essex Garden Communities Project

The Cabinet has considered a report on progress with regard to the North Essex Garden Communities Project. This was previously the subject of a report to the Cabinet in February 2016, when approval was given to continued joint working and development of proposals for the four councils concerned (Essex County Council, Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council) to take an active role in the development and construction of the new garden settlements.

The Cabinet has now agreed that the Council should enter into joint arrangements with the district and borough councils of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring to create an overarching body to be known as North Essex Garden Communities Ltd (NEGC) which will co-ordinate the development of the proposed new garden communities in North Essex. It has noted that NEGC will establish a further company (a local delivery vehicle (LDV)) for each of the proposed settlements (Tendring Colchester Borders Ltd, Colchester Braintree Borders Ltd and West of Braintree Ltd) and has approved the proposed governance structures for each LDV.

Cabinet has agreed in principle that the Council will provide proportionate funding to the LDVs in its area, subject to a satisfactory business case setting out the full terms of the arrangement. This funding will be used to pay for delivery of the required infrastructure in a more timely and co-ordinated way than can be achieved with a traditional development. The cost of infrastructure will be repaid out of land value as the scheme is developed (referred to as a 'waterfall repayment').

6. M11 Junction 7A Harlow – Public Consultation Outcome and Designation of Preferred Route Status

Cabinet has noted the outcomes of a public consultation on proposals for a new motorway junction on the M11 (to be known as junction 7A) and has agreed that a route connecting the M11 to Harlow via a new link road to the B183 at Sheering Road and Gilden Way, east of Harlow, should be designated as the Preferred Route. The Director for Commissioning: Transport and Infrastructure has been authorised to submit an application for planning permission for the preferred route.

The continued growth of the town and the resulting pressure on the road network now demands that a strategic plan for the future needs to be agreed to reduce current and forecast congestion and access issues already manifest and likely to worsen.

The design of the proposed new junction and link road has been informed by previous consultations. It seeks to address current congestion and concerns and has been designed to facilitate the future provision of a northern bypass if proposals for such a scheme are in future brought forward.

The scheme provides for traffic management along the Gilden Way corridor into Harlow, including new pedestrian crossings, a 40mph speed limit, walking and cycling improvements, weight restrictions and other measures to control traffic across the primary impacted area.

In reaching its decision, Cabinet heard representations from local residents regarding the proposals. Whilst understanding the concerns expressed, Cabinet was satisfied that its decision reflected the outcome of due process and was the most appropriate bearing in mind the current and future needs of the wider community.

7. Approval of Main Modifications to the Essex and Southend on Sea Replacement Waste Local Plan

Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council are jointly preparing a Replacement Waste Local Plan. In February 2016, both Councils approved the Pre Submission version of the Plan for public consultation and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State for Examination.

The extant Local Plan was adopted in 2001 and is considered to be out of date and must be replaced. The County Council has a statutory responsibility to plan for future waste management capacity from a land use perspective, and it is fulfilling this responsibility by preparing the replacement Plan to support the achievement of sustainable development within the County until 2032.

The Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State who appointed a Planning Inspector to undertake the formal examination process. The Inspector conducted hearing sessions over a two-week period in September and October 2016.

During the hearing sessions the Inspector advised that:

- the Plan is legally compliant including the Duty to Co-operate;
- the overall strategy is sound;
- the site selection process is sound in its overall approach.

However, the Inspector has indicated that a number of modifications are needed to ensure the Plan is sound, legally compliant and suitable for adoption by the Councils.

The Cabinet has considered and approved the main modifications recommended by the Inspector and noted a number of minor changes/amendments identified by the Planning Authority and approved under delegated authority. It has authorised a period of public consultation on all the modifications for a period of no less than six weeks. Provided that the report to be issued by the Inspector following the consultation concludes that the Plan can be adopted with the main modifications, Cabinet has agreed to recommend this to full Council as appropriate during 2017.

8. Extension of the Integrated Community Equipment Service Contract

Equipment is provided by the County Council and NHS bodies to allow frail, elderly and physically disabled people to live independently within their own homes and to facilitate their discharge from hospital.

The County Council currently commissions the equipment services contract on behalf of itself, Thurrock Council, a number of NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (Castle Point & Rochford, Basildon & Brentwood, North East Essex, Mid Essex) and Mid Essex Hospital Service and Colchester Hospital University Foundation Trust. The joint working is administered via a partnership agreement. The contract is currently let to ECL, a company wholly owned by the County Council. Both the partnership agreement and the contract expire on 31 March 2017.

Cabinet has agreed to extend the contract by three years from 1 April 2017, thereby incorporating two years of further extensions provided for within the current contract plus an extraordinary additional year. The extension is required to make it viable to bring the Pressure Area Care service sub-contract into the core contract so that it can be delivered directly by ECL, and to give a sufficient length of contract for NHS partners to repay the loan arranged to fund the procurement of PAC equipment on hire in the community as part of the current service provision arrangements.

9. Beaulieu Secondary

Cabinet has approved proposals relating to the establishment of a new secondary school in Chelmsford with effect from September 2019. The school is required as a result of a growing demand for secondary school places in the Springfield area of the city, due primarily to the development of new housing at Beaulieu Park. The school will open with 900 places (6 form entry) and then grow to 1,200 places (8 form entry) over subsequent years. It will operate as an all-through provision together with the 420 place primary school already under construction on an adjacent site and to be established for September 2018.

The construction work will be undertaken by Kier Construction Ltd and the school will be operated by a suitable sponsor to be appointed in due course by the Secretary of State for Education.

Councillor David Finch
Leader of the Council