

Leader's Executive Statement

Title: Essex at the forefront of delivering services for residents

Mr Chairman, Members,

I would first like to take the opportunity to wish all members and all of the hardworking staff at the Council a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Budget Settlement

I was hoping to provide you with details of our Budget Settlement – but alas a certain other matter is distracting Government at the moment.

What I can tell you is that we expect the settlement to confirm the allocations of much needed funding for highways and social care announced by the Chancellor in his recent budget –this will help relieve some of the extreme financial pressures ECC has been facing in the short term.

We believe the settlement will be announced later this week or next week, along with news on the next round of Business Rate pilots. We hope Essex will have been chosen as one of these.

We continue to work closely with our Parliamentary colleagues across Essex to lobby the highest levels of Government for more certainty around long term funding for Local Government.

Successes & Awards

iMPOWER Survey

Turning from the unknown to the known – namely that Essex County Council continues to provide excellent services and value for money. Let me bring to your attention some of the recent successes Essex County Council has achieved:

Firstly, our hard work has been recognised in a recent survey of 150 councils. Essex County Council was ranked seventh for spending effectively and delivering the best outcomes for residents.

The results are drawn from performance measured against six different areas: children's social care, older people, disability, health and social care, housing and

homelessness, and waste and recycling. This demonstrates we are delivering quality services across the spectrum.

It is also important to highlight that Essex County Council was the only county from our surrounding peers in the top 10 despite serving by far the largest population, and we have moved up 16 places compared to last year's survey.

This is a welcome independent endorsement of our approach, which recognises ECC for the way we offer value for money as well as keeping Essex residents at the heart of everything we do. We will carry on making the right decisions, so we can continue to offer services which lead to better lives.

Housing

ECC is also proudly re-writing the role of the public sector in housing development. You will be aware by now of our innovative approach to housing delivery through Essex Housing, our in-house development team.

Goldlay Square is the most recent example of our model in action. This scheme has provided 32 high quality apartments, 9 of which are independent living units.

We are hugely proud of this exceptional development, which has been shortlisted for the Inside Housing Development Awards 2018 as well as referenced as an exemplar case study in various trade publications. This is a great example of the Government's national agenda for public sector assets being driven and managed locally in an innovative way, delivering for the people of Essex.

Children's Care

Children's Minister, Nadhim Zahawi, recently visited Essex on 29 November to see in person our country-leading Child & Family Wellbeing service, and to understand how our first of a kind "Family Hubs" are delivering quality services across the county. The contract, in collaboration with Virgin Care and Barnardo's, is centred on 28 outcomes measures and specifically targets disadvantaged families.

In the West of the county the service has been jointly commissioned with West Essex CCG and includes all of the community based paediatric specialist health provision. This aspect in particular of the contract is a 'national first' and we have received interest both internationally and across the country.

This is just one area in which Essex is not only providing a quality service to residents, but also leading the way in new and innovative approaches to old problems that other counties and even countries look to us for guidance on.

I am also delighted that our Youth Offending Services has achieved 'outstanding' in its recent assessment by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation – again, an external validation of the high-quality services we are providing which will hopefully change the outlook for the young people affected.

And, as the Chairman has previously mentioned, at the Social Worker of the Year Awards, held on 30 November, Essex County Council has won the Best Social Work Employer of the Year award, highlighting the pioneering initiatives we have put in place to really enable its staff to learn, develop, and deliver great work. It is also worthwhile noting that ECC is the only local authority in the country to have been accredited by the British Association of Social Workers for excellence in continuing professional development

Alongside this, the Kingsmoor Flood Alleviation Scheme in Harlow has been commended as the best project delivered under £10m that has had a big impact on a local community by the British Construction Industry Awards 2018.

And, as noted, the Essex Association of Local Councils was one of only two runners up out of a field of 120 nominations for the National Association of Local Councils, 'Star Council Award'. This is a recognition of the positive contribution the EALC has made local communities in Essex through the Local Service Fund.

Finally, the Ofsted inspection of Children's services in the County recently went ahead, and although the results are embargoed until January 2019, I am confident of a positive outcome.

Libraries

Mr Chairman, I know that discussion of the Libraries Consultation forms a considerable part of the agenda for this meeting, but if I may I would like to provide

an update on the excellent response we have received since the consultation opened on Thursday 29 November:

We have already received over 7000 responses, including more than 40 offers to run community libraries from organisations such as Parish Councils.

The consultation will be open until Wednesday 20 February 2019 and I would encourage every single resident of Essex to respond, to ensure that our future libraries services is tailored to those who benefit the most from it.

The future is in our hands – let's grasp it.