



Essex County Council

# Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Joint Committee

<b>14:00</b>	<b>Friday, 12 June 2020</b>	<b>Online</b>
--------------	---------------------------------	---------------

The meeting will be open to the public via telephone or online. Details about this are on the next page. Please do not attend County Hall as no one connected with this meeting will be present.

**For information about the meeting please ask for:**

Matthew Waldie, Democratic Services Officer

**Telephone:** 033301 34583

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

## 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.

In accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, this meeting will be held via online video conferencing.

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to any items on the agenda unless the Committee has resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting as a result of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

### How to take part in/watch the meeting:

**Participants:** (Officers and Members) will have received a personal email with their login details for the meeting. Contact the Democratic Services Officer if you have not received your login.

## **Members of the public:**

### **Online:**

You will need the Zoom app which is available from your app store or from [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us). The details you need to join the meeting will be published as a Meeting Document, on the Meeting Details page of the Council's website (scroll to the bottom of the page) at least two days prior to the meeting date. The document will be called "Public Access Details".

### **By phone**

Telephone from the United Kingdom: 0203 481 5237 or 0203 481 5240 or 0208 080 6591 or 0208 080 6592 or +44 330 088 5830

You will be asked for a Webinar ID and Password, these will be published as a Meeting Document, on the Meeting Details page of the Council's website (scroll to the bottom of the page) at least two days prior to the meeting date. The document will be called "Public Access Details".

## **Accessing Documents**

If you have a need for documents in, large print, Braille, on disk or in alternative languages and easy read please contact the Democratic Services Officer before the meeting takes place. For further information about how you can access this meeting, contact the Democratic Services Officer.

The agenda is also available on the Essex County Council website, [www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk). From the Home Page, click on 'Running the council', then on 'How decisions are made', then 'council meetings calendar'. Finally, select the relevant committee from the calendar of meetings.

Please note that an audio recording may be made of the meeting – at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded.

		<b>Pages</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest</b>	<b>5 - 5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Election of Chairman</b> To elect a Chairman for the meeting.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Appointment of Vice-Chairman</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Minutes</b> To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019.	<b>6 - 10</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Finance and Audit Report</b> To receive a Finance and Audit Report. ( <i>Copy of Report to follow.</i> )	
<b>6</b>	<b>ECTU Membership status</b> To receive a verbal report from Steve Andrews, ECTU Manager.	
<b>7</b>	<b>High Level Risk Assessment</b> To receive a verbal report from Steve Andrews, ECTU Manager	
<b>8</b>	<b>Operations Performance Update - key issues</b> To receive a verbal report from Steve Andrews, ECTU Manager.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b> To be confirmed	
<b>10</b>	<b>Urgent Business</b> To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.	

## **Exempt Items**

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

**That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.**

### **11 Urgent Exempt Business**

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

## **Agenda item 1**

**Committee:** Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Joint Committee

**Enquiries to:** Matthew Waldie, Democratic Services Officer

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

#### **Recommendations:**

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

#### **Membership**

(Quorum: 4)

Moira Bruin (Essex Fire & Rescue)  
Chief Inspector Terry Balding  
Councillor Susan Barker  
Councillor Gavin Callaghan  
Councillor Colin Day  
Councillor Mark Durham  
Councillor Rob Gledhill  
Councillor Paul Honeywood  
Councillor Godfrey Isaacs  
Councillor Michael Lilley  
Councillor Keith Parker  
Councillor Wendy Schmitt  
Councillor Jannetta Sosin  
Councillor Mike Webb

---

**Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Joint Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Wednesday, 13 November 2019**

**Present:**

Cllr Godfrey Isaacs  
Cllr Colin Day  
Cllr Mark Durham  
Cllr Rob Gledhill  
Cllr Chris Hossack  
Cllr Wendy Schmitt  
Cllr Jannetta Sosin  
Moir Bruin

Castle Point District Council (Chairman)  
Uttlesford District Council  
Maldon District Council  
Thurrock Council  
Brentwood Borough Council  
Braintree District Council  
Chelmsford City Council  
Essex Fire & Rescue Service

**Also present:**

Steve Andrews  
Adrian Coggins  
Lisa Nicholls  
Colin Bachelor  
Donna Burnett  
Suzanne Harris  
Matthew Waldie

Essex County Council  
Essex County Council  
Essex County Council  
Braintree District Council  
Thurrock Council  
Office of the Police Fire & Crime Commissioner  
Essex County Council

**1 Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Susan Barker (Essex), Cllr Paul Honeywood (Tendring), Cllr Keith Parker (Brentwood), substituted by Cllr Hossack, Cllr Mike Webb (Rochford), substituted by Cllr Butcher, and CI Terry Balding (Essex Police).

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**3 Public speaking**

There were no public speakers.

**4 Finance update**

The Committee received a financial report from Lisa Nicholls, Finance Business Partner, ECC.

1. **2018/19 outturn position.** Based on the actuals at 30 September 2019, Members noted a £19,725 forecast surplus on net expenditure for the 2019/20 financial year, which was a favourable variance of £5,799 on the budget figure. It was noted that these figures were based on a 2% increase in fees from the districts/boroughs (as

agreed at the June 2019 meeting) and an extra £20,000 from the County Council.

2. **Budget for 2019/2020 and future years.** The budgeted surplus for 2019/20 was £13,925, and this would decrease to £11,170 in 2020/21 and £8,155 in 2021/22, at present membership rates.
3. **Membership fees.** A rise in membership fees was proposed. Members considered three options – 1% (actual increase £81), 2% (£163) or 2.8% (£228).

There was some debate on this matter. It was noted that the unpredictability of either what might be required of the Unit each year, or how much might be carried out in each district, made it hard to match funding precisely with actual expenditure in any forthcoming year. Although there was general agreement that the fees represented good value for money, in the package of activities undertaken by the Unit, and that at each meeting the Committee had received information on the Unit's activities, it was suggested that more financial information should be made available to Committee members. Consequently, it was **agreed** that each future report should include a breakdown of operating costs and how financial resources had been used.

Option 2, the preferred option, was proposed, seconded and agreed by Members. Each Member would have to have this raise ratified by their own authority.

4. **Balance Sheet – Reserves.** The potential impact of an agreed 2% increase in fees for 2020/21 on the reserves figures was noted – raising the surplus from £92,281 for 2019/20, to £103,451 (2020/21) to £111,606 (2021/22).

In response to some questioning of the level of the reserve, Members were reminded that the target level was three months' operating costs for the Unit (almost £100,000), and that the unforeseeable events of a very busy year could make enormous demands on the Unit's resources.

## 5 **High level risk assessment**

Mr Andrews drew Members' attention to the risk assessment, as circulated. He confirmed that he had downgraded the likelihood rating of both Risk 2, Insufficient funding to deliver service, and Risk 5, Insufficient partner buy in/funding to deliver service, to 1. Otherwise, the assessment values were as circulated.

The Committee noted the report.

## 6 **Membership status**

Mr Andrews confirmed there was no change in the membership of the Joint Committee, with all but three authorities (Epping Forest, Harlow and

Southend) signed up; and no change was expected in the foreseeable future.

Signed agreements were outstanding for three members: Basildon, Brentwood and Essex. It was hoped the processing of these could be expedited.

Members noted the situation.

7

### **Operations performance update - key issues**

The Committee received an update from Mr Andrews, as per the circulated report, and he responded to questions raised by Members.

Fire safety:

- 532 smoke alarms have been issued; these come from the Fire Service, free of charge. CO alarms would need to be purchased and are not issued at present. However, the Unit is looking into the possibility of purchasing these to issue; and residents are encouraged to acquire their own
- Mr Andrews agreed to produce some statistics relating to levels of risk that have been recorded during site visits
- It was noted that any representations to residents could only be made on an advisory basis, as the Fire Brigade had jurisdiction in respect of commercial premises but not domestic ones (unless in case of an actual fire)
- In response to a request, Mr Andrews **agreed** to send Cllr Gledhill details on the Unit's work in Thurrock in respect of Fire
- The Fire Safety performance figures were noted.

Public Health:

- As well as supporting the specific objectives listed in the report, there are several other issues that arise because officers are on site, such as those relating to mental health. The Unit also continues to facilitate joint visits by other agencies who might have difficulty getting access to the Traveller community
- Nearly doubling the number of events compared to 2018 has led to some new venues being visited. A particularly good outcome has been the response to a visit to the Hovefields Avenue site in Basildon. This had been considered a potentially challenging site but has resulted in positive response from a good number of adult males – historically a difficult group to engage with – and this has led to several being referred to GPs
- Funding has been secured for the SOS Bus, to visit the Hovefields and Oak Lane sites every two weeks for a year; it was hoped this will be extended to weekly for 3 years
- The first aid training was focused on the likely wounds that the Traveller community might encounter. These included some



techniques that could be extended to horses, which had drawn in several younger males

- With regard to funding, it was noted that a large percentage of it came from the public health line, which formed part of the County Council's contribution. Mr Andrews suggested that a lot of it was included in the staff costs, but Mr Coggins pointed out that the Unit's highly skilled and motivated staff covered a lot of areas, and it was important to strike a balance, utilising the skills of other agencies appropriately
- It was also noted that the Unit comprised 5 outreach officers, 3 office staff, some of whom also visit sites on occasion, plus Mr Andrews as manager.

#### Education:

- A good number of children have been helped in their education, by assisting them through the process of applications into school, from school to school and into further education
- The Chairman emphasised the importance of education and specifically praised the Unit for its work in this sphere.

#### Unauthorised encampments:

- The downward trend has continued, with a return to pre-2015 numbers. Mr Andrews could not suggest any particular reason for this but added that it was reflected across the Eastern region. He did point out that the arrival of one family travelling/staying in Essex can send the numbers up significantly
- It was noted that the Police Unit was now called the Rural Engagement Team, which had a broader brief than just dealing with the Traveller community. It was currently staffed by 7 officers but the aim, by the end of the financial year, was to raise this to 12, including two sergeants
- Public consultation on the Government's intended legislative changes to criminalise trespass or enhance Police powers on moving people on has now opened, with a closing date of March 2020. In response to the Chairman's request, Mr Andrews **agreed** to circulate the relevant documentation to Members, to assist them, should they wish to make representations.

#### Injunctions

- It was noted that Thurrock would decide on whether to proceed with a full application, depending on the result of the Bromley Appeal, which would be heard in early December
- Cllr Gledhill suggested that there might have been some reticence on the part of his local Police to enforce an injunction and he wished to ensure this was not repeated in future. The Chairman pointed out that this was an operational matter but it was **agreed** that this

concern should be channelled in the appropriate direction, through the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

**8 ECC/ECTU Review**

Mr Coggins provided an update.

Essex County Council has been looking to establish its best role in respect of all the parties involved. It acknowledged the work of the Unit on the ground, dealing with immediate issues, but a more strategic view of the issues was required, as long-term outcomes in the areas of health and education were much worse for the Traveller community.

There was a need to work with other agencies to improve these outcomes, eg with the NHS, Public Health England and other parts of the ECC, such as Schools Admissions.

Two questions that need to be addressed are

- What outcomes do we want?
- Who is best placed to deliver these?

The Leader has agreed that this process should involve engaging with the subscribing authorities at the highest level and Mr Coggins intends to visit each of these and meet with the CEO/relevant Cabinet Member. The County Council cannot take a unilateral view but must act in conjunction with all other stakeholders.

Mt Coggins expects to produce a report in the spring, when it will be submitted to the normal scrutiny, review and governance processes.

The Chairman echoed these views on how all stakeholders would have to work together. He added that should there was a need to be respectful to all parties.

**9 Dates of meetings in 2020**

The two meeting dates for next year would be circulated in due course. They were likely to be in either May or June and November.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.35 am

**Chairman**