
Essex County Council Meeting 9 July 2019

Answers to Written Questions

Agenda Item 12

1. By Councillor Beavis of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development

'I am impressed and value the Member Buddy Support Officer to advise County Councillors on Highway updates in their Divisions. Would the Cabinet Member consider a similar approach to give advice to County Councillors on development, community infrastructure, Garden Communities and Section 106 in their Divisions?'

Reply

'I would like to thank Councillor Beavis for the question, especially as in my new Cabinet Member role I am passionate about great place-making.

To implement a dedicated officer resource as you suggest, would be to provide a service for the five hundred plus strategic planning applications we are consulted on annually. This would have an additional cost impact on the Council to facilitate this, which would need to be considered as part of the normal budget setting process.

This said, my approach is one of having supportive relationships, and my Planning Officers are working very closely with the District Councils to assist them with the preparation of their Local Plans.

Additionally, through the Planning Portfolio Holder meetings, there are also a number of new steps to engage directly on some of the strategic issues facing Local Planning Authorities, some of which you note. The importance of this has been increasingly recognised and will now be moving to quarterly meetings.

This Council also supports the District Councils with the planning for, and delivery of, the Garden Communities; ensuring that there are even more great places to live, work, and play for residents and businesses across Essex.'

2. By Councillor Beavis of the Leader of the Council

‘How many Local Highways Panels in Essex have taken up the offer of additional match-funding offered by the Leader of Essex County Council?

Which Panels are they?

How is the Leader continuing to work with those Panels that did not take up the offer? Small schemes improve local communities and in some cases save lives.’

Reply

‘The following districts offer additional match funding – Basildon, Brentwood, Colchester, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Tendring and Uttlesford. We continue to encourage match funding for local schemes and will work with Parish Councils if they wish to invest in their local communities. A working group has been set up to see if we can tap into other funding sources to deliver those schemes which are of great importance in local areas.’

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

‘Holland Library cost only £27,933 to run in 2018/19. It issued 16,526 items and has 18,686 visitors – plus the thousands not picked up by the immature counting system. The budget for 2019/20 is £36,085. It has been identified for closure in the Library Strategy.

If the Council is trying to save money why has it wasted so much by installing WeWatt kiosks for charging electrical gadgets in Witham, Chelmsford and Harlow libraries?

A recent Freedom of Information Request has revealed that the alternatives to WeWatt, and others’ experience of WeWatt considered during the procurement by the Customer Services Director, under the scheme of financial delegation, to support the former Community Hubs Project are unknown. I am told that ‘The Council does not hold this information’. Also unknown are usage figures for these kiosks or any method of assessment of their value for money. What is known is that the three kiosks cost £26,206.56.

Does the Cabinet Member share my extreme disappointment at the apparent disregard for the public purse, lack of financial management and record keeping of usage for these WeWatt kiosks and does the Cabinet Member also share my concern that money is being spent in this way in times of limited financial resources and much valued community services are threatened with closure?’

Reply

'The community hubs project explored a number of ideas to improve the sustainability of the library service, to attract new audiences and develop new ways for customers to engage with the service. The WeWatt bikes were one of the initiatives that came out of this project and helped to demonstrate how organisations can become more sustainable.

Although we do not have usage figures for the WeWatt kiosk bikes, they are frequently seen to be in use in the locations you mention, particularly by young people.

The Community Hubs programme of work also included reviewing and updating the mobile library service to ensure it is fit for purpose, implementing charges for hire of meeting space to maximise usage, and delivering a public engagement exercise to help ECC develop its draft proposals for the future of library services in Essex.'

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

'In respect of each of the three park and ride operations in the county, would the Cabinet Member please state:

1. The number of passenger journeys on each service for every year since 2011-12;
2. The annual amount for each year since 2011-12 by which expenditure exceeded income;
3. The cumulative loss funded over that period by the taxpayers of Loughton on the basis of its population as a proportion of that of Essex,

and in relation to Essex National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) travel on these services:

4. The basis of calculation of the figure of the £447,000 cost of the ENCTS travel stated in the recent consultation;
5. as to whether this represents the extra income that would be obtained if every ENCTS journey paid the full adult fare or the ENCTS reimbursement paid over by ECC,

and in respect of the Colchester P&R operation:

6. what were the results of the 6-month survey promised of the extended hours at the end of February 2019, in the format of number of journeys made for each day?'

Reply

'I thank Cllr Pond for his question, and I will take each point in turn to provide a detailed answer:

1. The number of passenger journeys for each Park and Ride Scheme is shown below:

	Sandon	Chelmer Valley	Colchester
11/12	825,085	302,166	-
12/13	770,651	380,256	-
13/14	776,875	395,767	-
14/15	765,077	405,728	-
15/16	810,830	484,266	155,166
16/17	881,078	501,507	172,782
17/18	891,072	445,196	230,040
18/19	845,025	428,994	251,598

2. The table below details the net loss for Chelmsford and Colchester Park & Ride sites from 2015/16 to 2018/19. For technical reasons only the last 5 years of data can be provided.

Due to the cross-town services in Chelmsford, Chelmer Valley and Sandon expenditure is combined.

Sites	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	Cumulative loss since 2015/16 - 2018/19
Chelmsford	£ 138,868.92	£ 339,714.02	£ 143,651.20	£ 23,739.88	£ 645,974.02
Colchester	£ 607,764.19	£ 542,102.06	£ 686,847.32	£ 509,588.23	£ 2,346,301.80

3. With regards to how the costs fall on tax payers in Loughton, in the County context 'Tax Payer' would normally refer to council tax rather than those paying income tax, and those numbers are difficult to obtain

Therefore, this calculation uses the population of Loughton (according to the 2011 census) as 31,106 or 2.2% of the Essex overall population. Based on a total cumulative loss over the period of £2.992m, this comes to £65,830 per person or c.£16k per person per year over the 4 year period. Similarly, for concessionary fare payments of £1,536,525, 2.2% would give a figure of c.£33,800 per person or c£8k per person per year over 4 years.

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4. The £447k figure is the value of the concessionary fare reimbursement paid by the Countywide Concessionary fare scheme into the Park and Ride Scheme to compensate it for not charging pass holders. The County Council currently has a 'fixed pot' arrangement for the scheme, whereby the level of reimbursement is static.

To simplify a complex process, for each operator a 'Gross Revenue Foregone' figure is calculated by counting the number of concessionary passes transaction of all types on a service by service basis and multiplying that figure by the average fare paid by fare paying passengers on each service, these then being combined, first to an individual operator figure and then to an overall GRF figure for Essex.

The level of reimbursement paid to each operator is then calculated as the percentage of the total gross revenue foregone for all operators that is represented by the individual operator's gross revenue foregone. So, if an operator gets 5% of the total gross revenue foregone for Essex, the get 5% of the total fixed pot.

The reimbursement figure for Park and Ride Services figure does not distinguish between use by older persons pass holder and by holders of disability passes, as the system does not distinguish pass use at that level. Over all there are some 15,000 disability pass holders in Essex, approximately 5.48% of the total passes in circulation. Assuming this applied to a Park and Ride use, around 94.52% of the park and ride reimbursement would be generated by older person's pass use.

5. The consultation was made on the basis of ENCTS passengers paying £1.50 rather than the full adult fare. The £1.50 charge does in fact represent the percentage of the full fare that the Park and Ride Scheme receives from each concessionary pass use on the services, since the level of the fixed pot for the scheme is based on the 'Net Revenue Forgone' (NRF) by bus operators, which adjusts the GRF to allow for a significant level of 'generated travel' – i.e. travel which would not have occurred if the scheme had not existed. This is necessary to ensure that the concessionary fare scheme meets the statutory requirement that it should aim to leave the operator no better and no worse off than they would have been had the scheme not existed.

On this basis if all the current pass users continue to travel at their current level and pay the £1.50 then the revenue accrued income would approximate the same level of income as the current level of concessionary reimbursement provides. One of the aims of the consultation is to help identify what current users of bus passes on Park and Ride services would do if asked to pay the reduced charge in future. This should allow us to get a better understanding of the impact on revenue.

6. We will send the requested figures by email as this represents a large volume of data to include in this document.

5. By Councillor Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

‘What was the total number of Council subsidised bus services supporting routes in 2010 and how many is it to date

- (a) across the whole county and
- (b) within the Tendring District.’

Reply

‘Care should be taken in simply comparing numbers of supported local bus services between two years because of the dynamic nature of the bus network. Services change regularly, are commercialised or re-designed and re-numbered. It is therefore not possible to draw conclusions as to the overall level of service provision from these numbers. ECC has only withdrawn low performing services. Changes in number cannot therefore be attributed to any service withdrawal exercise.

- (a) across the whole county we currently have 161 contracts which gives 216 services across the County. In 2010, there were approx. 265 services under contract to ECC which also includes shopper bus services operated by Community Transport providers.
- (b) Within the Tendring district we have 17 contracts which gives 20 services (these include services to towns and villages outside the district). In 2010, there were 26 contracted local bus services in the Tendring district (these include services to towns and villages outside the district).

6. By Councillor Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families.

‘What was the total number of those employed on full time contracts working within the social services department designated to support families and children in 2010 and what is that number now?’

Reply

‘The current headcount in our Children’s Services department are as follows:

2010 Headcount – 1,549 FTEs – 1,368.7

2019 Headcount – 1,355 FTEs – 1,256.7

I would like to remind Cllr Henderson that staff numbers do not necessarily relate to better outcomes for children and families. This is reflected by Ofsted, who rated ECC’s Children Services as ‘Inadequate’ in 2010. Our Children’s services are currently rated ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted following an inspection in November 2018.’

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

‘In response to my last question about cycling, why is no cycling provision being provided in large capital works schemes, including Ipswich Road and St Botolph’s, despite you claiming we are a pro-cycling council?’

Reply

‘Cycling provision is being provided in large capital works schemes such as Ipswich Road/Harwich Road and St Botolph’s. With St Botolph’s, we are undertaking public engagement at this stage to find out what people think and to help inform the design going forward and would ask that you support us in urging users of Colchester’s network to engage with the scheme and have their say on the proposals put forward.

With regards to Ipswich Road/Harwich Road, the scheme upgrades and improves the existing zebra crossings on the A133 to signal controlled crossings. We are also installing a new formalised zebra crossing on Ipswich Road South where there is an existing informal crossing located at a poor location in terms of safety. We have also reviewed the length of the existing segregated and unsegregated shared cycle/footway making improvements to the widths where viable. In cases, where there are existing site constraints, which do allow the provision of segregated cycleways to an Acceptable Design Standard, we have provided shared facilities, as opposed to providing below standard segregated cycleways.

An east to west route runs alongside the A133 which is lightly used probably reflecting the fact that the corridor is used for longer distance movements. Most cycle routes or desire lines, whichever points of the compass they try to link up, would be better provided away from what will always be a heavily used traffic intersection. Overall, we feel we have the balance right at the junction. St Botolph’s is currently in consultation however there are proposed cycling Improvements for:

- Introduction of an shared use facility with improved surface condition and width throughout the junction (carriageway width has been taken to achieve this).
- Introduction of Toucan crossing to enable cyclists to cross carriageway lanes safely.
- Raised table across Britannia Way to enable a prioritised route into the town centre for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Review of existing cycle signage and implementation of improvements to ensure safe and efficient wayfinding.

Essex County Council takes the safety of cyclists in Essex very seriously. We have a Cycling Strategy which covers the whole county in its scope but which is of course very dependent upon ideas and suggestions that relate to important localities such as Colchester. If you look at the Essex Cycling Strategy ‘Safety’ is a very important

thread running through the entire document as is health and tackling congestion.

Essex County Council is also committed to fulfilling the other aims and objectives of its Cycling Strategy and Infrastructure and coherent networks are key components. To support our strategy we have also published draft cycle network plans for all District areas of Essex on our website. The Colchester Cycling Action Plan (CAP) highlights a strategic cycle network we would like to see built in Colchester. However, the CAPs are a draft document and we are continually looking to make improvements. To this end we are developing a list of emerging schemes in each District/Borough, we will therefore ensure that a link from Elmstead Market to the town is included for consideration in future reviews of the Essex Cycle Network.

We are currently working on a plan to identify a clear vision for Colchester which will include sustainable transport.

We need a strategic approach to help solve the issues that are currently in existence on Colchester's transport network. Looking to the future, we need to progress in a way that ensures that what we have in Colchester can be used and enjoyed for generations to come.'

8. By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate

'Considering that the County Council has highlighted isolation and mental health wellbeing in the Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy, how is closing libraries across Essex in line with this strategy?'

Reply

'We recognise the valuable role library services play in helping to reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing as part of a broad matrix of services, activities and support provided by the Council, other authorities and communities.

The service will continue to aid a reduction in social isolation through Council-run libraries, by supporting community-run libraries, delivering outreach activities and by adding extra mobile library stops where needed.

Essex Libraries will continue to offer a wide range of books on health and there are booklists on a number of health-related topics, including the four booklists from the Reading Well scheme. The Reading Well booklists include lists of self-help books for people with long term conditions, for mental health, for people with dementia and for young people. The titles are recommended by health professionals to help people manage their own health and wellbeing.

Increased outreach could mean for example that new mums can get together at a

baby and toddler Rhymetime in the local school or village hall. Knit and natter groups could meet in the community centre or code clubs could take place in a local youth centre or church hall.

Community-run libraries can do a lot to reduce social isolation by bringing communities together to run them, focusing on local needs and revitalising community venues where people can meet, socialise and help each other.'

9. By Councillor Davies of the Leader of the Council

'Free TV licences for over 75s are going to be scrapped by 2020 apart from where one person in the household receives pension credit benefit. Would the Leader consider a campaign with partners, local authorities and DWP to alert residents of their entitlement to pension credit? This could involve using ECC buildings including offices and libraries with a poster/general information promotion.'

Reply

'I certainly agree with the principle behind the question that ECC should help everyone should take advantage of entitlements where they are available. Although we do not administer TV Licences or Pension Credit Benefit, I will contact the relevant organisations to explore what can be done to encourage the awareness of the scheme.'

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

'In early June, rural roadside verges in Rivenhall Parish were cut, which I believe was on behalf of ECC. Areas of wildflowers were cut down including red campion and poppies. Whilst some of this cutting was at junctions, where it is accepted sight lines are important, most was not.

Can Cabinet Members please outline what the current policy is for rural verge cutting (and the use of chemicals around signs) and why it takes place in some areas so early in the season.

Does ECC support the work of Plantlife, which since 2013 has been urging authorities that a "cut less, cut later" approach could significantly improve the biodiversity of verges and potentially save money too.

As part of the devolution agenda, would ECC consider involving all parish councils in a scheme in which they could nominate verges to be managed as priority biodiversity verges which would include both a "cut less, cut later" approach and specific projects to seed verges with appropriate native wildflowers.'

Reply

‘Essex County Council has a long and proud record of identifying and maintaining Special Roadside Verges in Essex and around 63 km of road verge across Essex have already been designated as Special Roadside Verges. The designated Special Verges are marked on the ground with wooden posts at either end (and a central post for long verges). The posts have a white PVC plaque to warn contractors that the area within the posts is specially protected and no unauthorised management should occur. There is a cutting programme for the Special Verges, tailored to the species and habitat for which they are important.

Officers within the service are also currently looking to explore further opportunities across the range of partners that provide this service to see if our approach can be expanded to significantly improve the biodiversity of verges across the County and potentially save money too.’

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

‘The libraries consultation states that Tier 4 libraries are not required for a legally compliant service and that without being run by volunteers they will be closed. In written and verbal communications with me, the Cabinet Member has reconfirmed this in respect of the Tier 4 village libraries such as at Silver End in the division I represent.

Yet ECC repeatedly states that "no decisions have yet been made" on the future of libraries. If "no decisions" have yet been made, what other options exist for Tier 4 village libraries where there is no volunteer group to run the library? Or is the "no decisions" statement simply a technical comment on the fact that we are not quite yet at the point in time when Tier 4 closures are confirmed?’

Reply

‘The draft strategy was published for public consultation so that we could get people’s views on our proposals before making any decisions. We have been very clear that no decisions have been made nor will be made until the strategy comes back to Cabinet.’

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

‘If a congestion charge is forced onto any section of the A127, will the highway contractor (Ringway Jacobs) be paid to install and operate the A127 congestion charge?’

Reply

'I'm afraid Cllr Smith is mistaken in his understanding of the issue in this instance.

Basildon BC and Essex CC have been issued with a government direction concerning measures to mitigate identified air quality issues on and adjacent to the A127 in Basildon, as part of the national air quality plan. As part of this work it is proposed to implement a 50mph speed limit on the A127 itself which will reduce emission levels to satisfactory levels.

On the roads immediately adjacent to the A127 we have been asked to review the case for a chargeable clean air zone to benchmark our other proposed measures against – something we will undertake in partnership with DEFRA.

However, to be clear, there is neither any plan for congestion charging nor indeed the implementation of a chargeable clean air zone on the A127 itself.'

13. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Housing

'For the 2018/19 financial year (broken down by each individual Borough / City / District), how much do each of these lower tier local authorities hand over to Essex County Council in council tax and business rates?'

Reply

'As the billing authorities, the lower tier authorities in Essex have a statutory duty to collect council tax and business rates. This includes the council tax for the precepting bodies, which include Essex County Council and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner. The amount of council tax collected by the billing authority for Essex County Council is dependent on the Essex County Council precept. As part of a local share back agreement, Essex County Council also contributes £1.3m towards improving performance in collection of council tax, with a shareback of £4.5m being paid from Essex County Council to the billing authorities in 2018/19.

Business rates are distributed according to a nationally agreed formula, with 9% of rates collected locally being passported to Essex County Council.'

Authority	Council Tax £'000	Business Rates £'000
Basildon	73,470	7,203
Braintree	63,507	3,878
Brentwood	39,820	2,578
Castle Point	37,194	1,256
Chelmsford	80,018	7,019
Colchester	75,700	5,570
Epping Forest	65,440	3,093
Harlow	31,265	4,223
Maldon	29,558	1,194
Rochford	38,237	1,525
Tendring	57,104	2,314
Uttlesford	44,241	3,840
Total for ECC	635,553	43,693

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

‘With the National Grid forecasting that the number of plug in electric cars and vans could reach 9 million by 2030, what action is Essex County Council taking to ensure that there are more public access charging points installed across the County to meet the demand and how many charging points are the County Council proposing to install on County Council owned land over the next five years?’

Reply

‘Government has confirmed that it will end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040 as part of the plan to tackle air pollution and by 2050 the aim is that there will be zero emissions by vehicles in the UK. The council is aware that sales of diesel vehicles continue to decline, and the sale of alternative fuel vehicles is increasing. In particular that plug in hybrid electric vehicles and hybrid electric vehicles are currently the most popular alternatives to diesel or petrol only vehicles. However, it is highly likely that from the 2020s, take up of Electric Vehicles (EVs) will accelerate significantly.

To reflect this shift, the council is gearing up to support the implementation of EV infrastructure and recognise that it is desirable that planning applications to borough, city and district should include an 'electric vehicle charging scheme' for housing and business/commercial developments. As part of our commitment to support the transition, guidance has been provided to local authorities and developers through the refreshed Essex Design Guide, which was launched in 2018.

For residents who are purchasing an electric vehicle and who have access to off-street parking there are government schemes available to assist in the capital costs of installation of a charge point through the Electric Vehicle Home-charge Scheme. The Council expects that the majority of vehicle charging will occur overnight in a residential setting. However, it is appreciated that some EV owners will require a 'top up' charge during the day. To this end ECC has started to facilitate charge-points across Essex at several locations, which include two park and ride sites in Chelmsford; Sandon Park and Ride (CM2 7RU) and Chelmer Valley Park and Ride (CM3 3PR). Each park and ride site has two dual 7kW eVolt charge-points operated by Electric Blue.

Essex Housing, our in-house developer, also seeks to provide electric charging points at its housing sites across the county. We have recently installed charging points at our flagship scheme at Goldlay Gardens and are currently installing them at our Moulsham Lodge site in Chelmsford which completes in October, with many more in the pipeline.

In addition to this we are establishing electric car clubs out of those two sites so that all residents can take advantage of a more sustainable method of travel, even if they can't afford to purchase an electric car themselves. This is something we'll look to do in future developments too.

The council recognises the need in future to have a reliable and extensive public charging infrastructure to keep plug-in-electric vehicles moving, which is proportionate to the increase in take up of Electric Vehicles. That is why we have recently submitted a bid for an on-street charging pilot with the Office for Low Emission Vehicles; we have bid for an ultra-rapid charging station in Braintree with Innovate UK; and are exploring options for concession type arrangements including expanding the Plug in Suffolk network in to Essex. We will of course continue to work with government, businesses, and local councils to ensure that we are enabling EV charging infrastructure which meets future demand.'

15. By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

'If the County Council really is serious about trying to tackle climate change and air pollution by encouraging more residents to leave their cars at home and try other forms of transport, then why are budgets to ECC funded local bus services being cut?'

Reply

'To be clear, Essex County Council's subsidised services make up only 15% of the entire network, with the remaining 85% being run commercially. The services we fund are those which are not commercially viable and are funded by the Essex taxpayer. We at the council want to ensure that we deliver the best services at the best value to the taxpayer.'

Your question alludes to the recent consultation on our evening and Sunday services policy which would only support services after 10pm in the week, 11pm on Saturdays or after 7pm on a Sunday where there is an average of 6 or more people travelling on them. It is not good for CO₂ emissions, climate change or the Essex taxpayer for ECC to be subsidising buses that are running virtually empty. If these journeys are removed, it will have a very small impact on bus users across the county (only 0.07% of the total number of journeys across the county for withdrawn weekday services or 0.06% for Sunday). Our consultation was met with a balanced response with passengers interested in ECC looking more closely at shaping services to meet local needs and devolving some services. This is something we will explore further.

In terms of promoting public transport generally, we continue to invest around £9m in local bus and community transport in Essex annually. We also invest £18m in the network through the concessionary fares scheme; and £25m in transporting children to school. This scale of council taxpayer investment, which amounts to almost 9% of ECC's tax base, is significant and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to public transport.'

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

'There have been bouts of heavy rainfall in recent weeks, causing a lot of flooding here in Chelmsford.

The PR1 road leading up to the Army and Navy roundabout - Van Diemens Road flooded meaning pedestrians couldn't use the pelican crossing.

There are many heavily used underpasses which regularly flood, forcing pedestrians and cyclists off the underpass and onto ground level to cross some very busy roads. Here are just some examples:

- Under Parkway leading from Central Park to Victoria Road South, used by school children and commuters going to the station and those working close by, including our own staff.
- Under Waterhouse Lane which links West and Admirals Park with Central Park, used as a main route to schools by many children (with and without their parents), as well as commuters.
- Under Princes Road which links Longstomps Avenue with Vicarage Road and is the direct route for children attending the Moulsham Infant, Junior and High Schools, as well as shoppers at Tesco.

An occasional clean-out of the drains or waiting until enough people complain before any action is taken is no longer satisfactory. Investment in maintaining these vital arteries to our city is now needed. I am sure Members from across Essex can also cite instances of regular flooding in their areas too.

Will the Cabinet Member assure us this will not be ignored any longer, that action will be taken before we have another winter and yet more flooding?’

Reply

‘There are a number of subways along Parkway and other routes in the city and not all of them were designed with pumps when they were first constructed. We are aware that there are a number of flooding issues and along with the City Council we try to keep them and the drains as clear as possible. Officers have already been tasked with looking into this in more detail to see if there is anything they can suggest as a more permanent resolution.’

17. By Councillor Deakin of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘There is a narrow walkway linking Kings Road to Rainsford Road in Chelmsford which has woefully poor lighting and needs upgrading.

This pathway is extensively used by adults and school children as it gives quick access from the Boarded Barns and Melbourne housing estates to Admirals Park. It reduces the walk to school, into the city centre and Writtle.

As the evenings will be drawing in, many residents don't feel particularly safe using the walkway because it is so poorly lit.

Will the Cabinet Member please upgrade the lighting on this pathway to something more appropriate, which allows its users to feel safer?’

Reply

‘The County Council has an approved a business case that will see all existing street lights in Essex being upgraded to LED lanterns and it is anticipated that the project will be completed by the end of March 2023. To ensure that this upgrade is delivered in an efficient manner the service will be installing the upgrades on a district by district basis. These lights will be included within this upgrade and we will be publishing the programme information later this year.

In the meantime, any new lighting requests would need to be submitted as a possible scheme to be funded by the Local Highways Panel. However, I would anticipate that this would need substantial justification as the reduction in energy and maintenance costs and associated savings for ECC were the main aims of the approved business case. The local parish council can also look to provide street lighting on the highway as a public amenity, but this would be their asset entirely, not linked to the authority. The parish council would be solely responsible for all costs associated including installation, maintenance, repairs, testing and energy.’

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

‘Can the Cabinet Member give an update on what this Council's plans are for the future of the Essex Record Office?’

Reply

‘The Essex Record Office remains Essex's premier storehouse of over 1000 years of history. As the authority continues to review its property holdings to ensure that we use our buildings as efficiently as possible, and recognising the quantum of housing that is currently being built around the ERO building, we will continue to review the use of the parts of the ERO site that are not used to store, maintain or offer public access to their records.

Conference facilities and wedding hires are just two examples of how we are best making use of the ERO to gain income and ensure financial sustainability.’

19. By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

‘Given that the Adult Social Care green paper has been postponed six times what representations has this Council made to government to bring the publication forward in order that there be certainty of funding for the provision of care to our ever-growing elderly population.’

Reply

‘Essex County Council has made repeated representations – directly, through the LGA/CCN and through Essex MPs – as to the importance of the Green Paper. Equally, we recognise the complexity and sensitivity of the issues.

On 21 June 2019 I met with the Secretary of State Matt Hancock in company with the Health and Wellbeing Board Chairs from Suffolk and Norfolk. On their behalf I led a proposal seeking a 3-year financial settlement from 2020 thus reducing the urgency of, but not eliminating the need for, a Green Paper. At his request this was subsequently followed up in writing with the Secretary of State. Essex MPs have also been engaged, several indicating strong support for the approach.

Having said all this, we will continue to push, and support the LGA in their call for early publication.’