



Essex County Council

# Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee

11:00	Monday, 04 March 2024	Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
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**For information about the meeting please ask for:**

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Telephone:** 033301 34574

**Email:** democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

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## **Pages**

<b>**</b>	<b>Private Pre-Meeting for CPSC Members</b> Please note that there will be a virtual private pre-meeting for committee members on Friday 1 March at 4pm via Microsoft Teams.	
<b>1</b>	<b>Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest</b>	<b>4 - 4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes: 25 January 2024</b> To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024 and to consider the matters arising and further information received.	<b>5 - 29</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Questions from the public</b> A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting. No statement or question shall be longer than three minutes and speakers will be timed.  If you would like to ask a question at this meeting, please email <a href="#">Democratic Services</a> by 12 noon on <b>Friday 1 March</b> .	
<b>4</b>	<b>Performance discussion - July to September 2023-24 (CPSC/04/24)</b>	<b>30 - 59</b>

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|---|---|---------|
| 5 | <b>Member Enquiries Survey Results 2023 (CPSC/05/24)</b>  | 60 - 75 |
| 6 | <b>Work Programme and Communications Update (CPSC/06/24)</b>  | 76 - 79 |
| 7 | <b>Date of Next Meeting</b><br>To note that the next meeting of the Committee will take place at 10.00am on Thursday 28 March 2024 in Committee Room 1 at County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH.       |         |
| 8 | <b>Urgent Business</b><br>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.**

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| 9 | <b>Urgent Exempt Business</b><br>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. |
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## Agenda item 1

**Committee:** Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee

**Enquiries to:** Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

#### **CORPORATE POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (14)**

10 Con: 1 Lab: 1 LD: 2 NAG)

Councillor C Pond	Chairman
Councillor L Barber	
Councillor S Crow	
Councillor M Garnett	
Councillor I Henderson	
Councillor S Kane	
Councillor M Mackrory	Vice-Chairman
Councillor J McIvor	
Councillor A McQuiggan	
Councillor C Souter	
Councillor W Stamp	
Councillor M Steptoe	Vice-Chairman
Councillor M Vance	

#### **Recommendations:**

To note

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

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**Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10am on Thursday, 25 January 2024 in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford.**

**Present:**

*County Councillors:*

Mike Steptoe (Vice Chairman – Chairman of the meeting)

Lewis Barber

Susan Barker (substitute)

Ivan Henderson

Mike Mackrory (Vice Chairman)

Jaymey McIvor (from 11am)

Clive Souter

Wendy Stamp

Marshall Vance

*Members of the Committee joining remotely via Zoom:*

Simon Crow

Sam Kane

*Councillor from another scrutiny committee joining remotely via Zoom:*

Alan Goggin, Chairman - Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer, and Maise Riley, Democratic Services Officer, were also present.

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

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Simon Crow (who attended via Zoom), Mike Garnett, Sam Kane (who attended via Zoom), Anthony McQuiggan (for whom Councillor Susan Barker substituted), and Chris Pond.

**2 Minutes and Matters Arising**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman of the meeting.

**3 Questions from the public**

There were no questions from the public.

**4 2023/24 Financial Overview as at the Third Quarter and draft 2024/25 Everyone's Essex Annual Plan and Budget**

The Committee considered report CPSC/01/24 incorporating the 2023/24 Third Quarter Financial report, and the 2024/25 Everyone's Essex Annual Plan and Budget as presented to Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

The following joined the meeting for the duration of the item:

Councillor Chris Whitbread, The Chancellor of Essex  
Stephanie Mitchener - Director, Finance  
Adrian Osborne - Head of Strategic Finance & Insight  
Nicole Wood, Executive Director: Corporate Services

Key points raised during the introductory presentation and subsequent discussion included:

**A. 2023/24 Third Quarter Financial Report**

- (i) At the Third Quarter stage of the year there was a forecast over spend of £4.5m (0.4%), against a net revenue budget of £1.1bn. For the Capital Programme there was an under spend of £16.5m (5.1%) against a budget of £324m.
- (ii) £4.5m had been drawdown from reserves to support one-off expenditure relating to various projects and schemes. £2.7m had been appropriated to reserves, to help support anticipated future costs. ECC was continuing to hold reserves specifically for inflationary risk.
- (iii) Key drivers on the revenue overspend were Children's Services with higher levels of case complexity and cost of placements; Adult Social Care which, again, was partly complexity of case load together with some delays in care packages and overall increased demand; the delay in the organisation wide staffing review and increasing cost pressures on Home to School Transport.
- (iv) The escalating home to school transport costs was challenging for the Council. It was highlighted that whilst more school places had been created, further provision was needed in some areas. The Government had recognised the extra cost pressures being faced by Councils in Home to School Transport, Adult Social Care and Children's Services in particular, and some further limited one-off further funding had been announced the previous day. ECC had set up an internal working group to look at Home to School Transport costs, in particular, and what other local authorities were doing to mitigate some of the issues. The complexity of many of the cases was highlighted.

*Conclusion:*

The following was agreed:

- That councillors should be invited to join the Working Group looking at Home to School Transport issues.
- A private workshop be arranged to help further understand budgetary pressures, especially the component parts of the Home to School Transport budget and the specific pressures.
- More information be provided on footway maintenance and delays in the start of some projects which was contributing to the overall underspend in highways maintenance.

B. 2024/25 Everyone's Essex Annual Plan and Budget

- (i) The proposed 2024/25 revenue budget was £1,148m, with a capital programme of £320.1m, and would be taken to Full Council in February for approval.
- (ii) ECC were confident of £31m of additional Government funding announced for 2024/25 which excluded the Dedicated Schools Grant. However, to put that into context there was a budget pressure of over £100m in 2024/25 with over £80m of that pressure from Adult Social Care.
- (iii) The high needs block and SEND provision costs were increasing annually on average by 7%. There was 3% additional funding for this area so the failure to keep pace with costs meant a deficit by the end of 2025/26 was forecast. Forecasts had taken account of the number of new places thought to be needed.
- (iv) Opportunities to work with partners would be pursued as part of the future transformation of services.
- (v) ECC had met all local MPs to discuss budgetary pressures being faced by the Council and believed that many of them had then raised these concerns at national level. The Leader had also been vocal about budgetary pressures through his roles at the Local Government Association.
- (vi) The Chancellor of Essex stressed the importance of properly managing the balance sheet and highlighted that the erosion of the balance sheet was a common feature of struggling councils.
- (vii) ECC had an ambitious capital programme although it had taken a more prudent approach to capital strategy in the last three years. It was intended that debt levels should soon plateau and

- there were regular quarterly reviews of the capital programme with a clear focus on managing risk.
- (viii) Case complexity and demographics were driving the pressures on the Adult Social Care budget. There were some partial offsets from savings to be delivered during 2024/25. Provider failure and market sustainability were a key risk together with the market's expectations on moving to the Fair Cost of Care.
  - (ix) The proposed Children and Early Years Budget for 2024/25 was £145m net (£367m gross) which represented a 20% increase on 2023/24. In addition, £6.2m has been added to the Children's Risk Reserve and £4.6m in a Children's Sustainability Reserve for potential further pressures across services supporting young people. The main drivers of growth were demographic pressures mainly across placements, inflation, and ECC pay inflation.
  - (x) The Highways Revenue Budget was £122m (£1.2m /1% increase) and the Highways Capital Budget was £134m (£485m over four years). Difficult decisions sometimes had to be made on highways maintenance. Some members cautioned that poor road surfaces could lead to increased claims for damages to vehicles and this in turn could prevent vehicles being used by businesses and for travel to work.
  - (xi) One of the main drivers of growth in the Revenue Budget was Home to School Transport demand and price. The proposed budget of £50m would transport students to mainstream, SEND and post-16 provision based on eligibility – this represented a £15m increase year on year and was calculated using a mid-range scenario. Cost calculations had been exacerbated this time round as some contract awards had or were due to come back to the market for renewal during the period.
  - (xii) £32m of savings were programmed for 2024/25. The carried over savings being sought from the Staffing Review would be additional to the £32m.
  - (xiii) Key risks were the sustainability of collecting taxes at current rates, delivering savings, market failure and sufficiency in social care, children in care placements, uncertainty of levels of future government funding, inflation and interest rates.
  - (xiv) Notwithstanding a planned 4.99% increase in Council Tax for 2024/25 (including a 2% Social Care Levy) there still remained a significant challenge in the medium term with a forecast budget gap of £51m by 2027/28 although no further Council Tax increases had been modelled as part of that forecast.



- (xv) The presentation made at the meeting had not included the Government announcement of some extra local council funding the previous day, but it was thought likely to have tight criteria and restrictions attached to its use with further detail to follow. On the assumption that it was likely additional one-off funding then the settlement for ECC might be around £12m.
- (xvi) There had been some indications that the Household Support Grant from government would likely continue in some form but there was uncertainty on any actual funding level.
- (xvii) Members highlighted that cutting certain budgets, such as rural maintenance, could have an impact on health and wellbeing.

### Conclusion

It was agreed to provide the following:

- To detail how the Local Highways Panels budget was split across the 12 areas and whether increases or decreases on previous year.
- Historical data to support the Draft Revenue Budget (Net) 2024/25 slide.
- A separate detailed session on the Capital Programme be added to the Committee's work programme.
- A link to a further breakdown of the categories used in the Revenue Budget and their respective key areas of pressure.
- More information and breakdown on Government grants received which were 'flow throughs' and passported onto service providers and to distinguish between ECC net and gross position, particularly to include (i) education and schools and the Dedicated Schools Grant and (ii) in relation to Passenger Transport and the Bus Service Operators Grant.
- Information on any offset from Insurance claims/receipts for highways damage.

The meeting adjourned at 11.45am and reconvened at 11.54am

## **5. Essex Renewal Fund update**

The Committee considered report CPSC/02/24 which provided an update on progress with regard to the Essex Renewal Fund, together with the proposed next steps.

The following remained from the previous agenda item to introduce the update and respond to questions:

- Councillor Chris Whitbread, the Chancellor of Essex
- Stephanie Mitchener - Director, Finance

And they were joined by:

- Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet Member for Planning a Growing Economy
- Tina French – Head of Finance Commercial Insight
- Ricky Thakrar – Economic Infrastructure Manager

Key points raised, acknowledged and/or noted during the discussion included:

- (i) The Essex Renewal Fund supported land and property projects in Essex that the market would not deliver or may not deliver to such high standards. Projects would be prioritised based on their alignment to the Council's Everyone's Essex strategic aims.
- (ii) Net income and capital receipts would be reinvested to deliver further projects. The Fund would also leverage central government grant funding and private sector funding into Essex to deliver projects. Peak long-term debt would be expected to be kept to around or below £30m. ECC would also need to ensure that it did not become overly reliant on grant funding.
- (iii) The Fund may be able to empower other partners and facilitate de-risking a scheme for the private sector to participate in its further development. This could be how to recycle the ECC investment and make it go further. Examples of possible projects could be converting housing units to light industrial use or bringing a vacant retail unit back into use.
- (iv) All new projects were expected to be delivered to net zero carbon in operation.
- (v) The Fund had been paused during the last year as part of a review of the capital programme.
- (vi) It was anticipated there would be a maximum 2-3 projects at any one-time.
- (vii) Abortive costs would need to be covered by those projects proceeding.

### Conclusion

It was agreed that Cabinet Members and officers:

- (i) Should consult Essex Pension Fund officers to identify any investment opportunities and synergies.
- (ii) Should circulate the criteria basis for funding projects for each area as there were some differences across the County.
- (iii) Should prepare a further update with timing to be confirmed which should include evidence that the Fund had business and outside partner support.

The contributors were thanked by the Chairman for their attendance and then left the meeting.

**6. Work programme**

The Committee considered and noted report CPSC/03/24 which comprised the current work programme for the Committee. It was **agreed** to add the implications of the abolition of LEPs to the Work Programme whilst noting that this may need to be considered jointly with the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was currently scheduled for 29 February 2024. However, a new date would need to be found to accommodate witness availability.

**8. Urgent Business**

No items were raised.

The Chairman then closed the meeting at 12.27pm

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**Chairman**  
**4 March 2024**

**Corporate Policy and Scrutiny – Outstanding Matters Arising as at 4 March 2024:**

**APPENDIX 1**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>
25 January 2024	<b>2023/24 Third Quarter Financial Overview and draft 2024/25 Budget</b>	That councillors should be invited to join the Working Group looking at Home to School Transport issues.	TBC
		A private workshop be arranged to help further understand budgetary pressures, especially the component parts of the Home to School Transport budget and the specific pressures.	TBC
		More information be provided on footway maintenance and delays in the start of some projects which was contributing to the overall underspend in highways maintenance.	TBC
	<b>2024/25 Everyone’s Essex Annual Plan and Budget</b>	To detail how the Local Highways Panels budget was split across the 12 areas and whether increases or decreases on previous year.	TBC
		Historical data to support the Draft Revenue Budget (Net) 2024/25 slide.	TBC
		A separate detailed session on the Capital Programme be added to the Committee’s work programme	Completed
		A link to a further breakdown of the categories used in the Revenue Budget and their respective key areas of pressure	TBC
		More information and breakdown on Government grants received which were ‘flow throughs’ and passported onto service providers and to distinguish between ECC net and gross position, particularly to include (i) education and schools and the Dedicated Schools Grant and (ii) in relation to Passenger Transport and the Bus Service Operators Grant.	TBC
		Information on any offset from Insurance claims/receipts for highways damage.	TBC

<b>Date</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>
25 January 2024 cont.	<b>Essex Renewal Fund update</b>	Officers should consult Essex Pension Fund officers to identify any investment opportunities and synergies	Discussions on synergies are under way
		Circulate the criteria basis for funding projects for each area as there were some differences across the County.	Information attached
		A further update with timing to be confirmed which should include evidence that the Fund had business and outside partner support.	TBC
14 December	<b>2024/25 Budget Setting Process</b>	Further information on the tracker system used to maximise the use of s106 and s278 Developer Contributions collected and manage the financial risks of having to return contributions due to non-delivery of projects.	To be included in next update
		Analysis looking at the growth of Council Tax income from new housing against the increased costs of infrastructure and other support required for new developments.	To be included in next update
		To consider whether some of the financial information that came to Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee should be passported out to relevant service-based scrutiny committees for them to scrutinise instead.	Scrutiny Board to determine
7 November	<b>Performance discussion – April to August 2022-23</b>	Information on ECC's direct GHG emissions to include the extent of using more electric and hybrid vehicles as part of the vehicle fleet. The impact of the roll-out of LED street-lights programme should also be further clarified.	TBC
		The work of the Business Essex Board and support provided especially for apprenticeships and recruitment and where the support activities are based.	TBC
		The numbers waiting for more than 28 days for assessment.	TBC
27 April 2023	<b>Procurement update</b>	To check procurement rules for ECC's Country Parks and whether cafes and gift shops, for example, could only procure from a single source.	TBC
		Check whether information was also disseminated through Districts.	TBC
		Consideration be given to establishing a holistic monitoring and mentoring process for unsuccessful tenderers to provide feedback.	TBC
		Learning and collaborative working opportunities from the Strategic Supplier Collaboration Forum should also be shared with the unsuccessful tenderers.	TBC

<b>Date</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>
27 April 2023	<b>Procurement update continued..</b>	A further breakdown be provided on SME spend and trends.	TBC
		Clarification on how the aspiration that by 2050 Essex as whole county would be net zero was defined in terms of procurement and reach and influence.	TBC
23 March 2023	<b>Estates Transformation programme update</b>	(i) the advice and guidance issued to staff around checking their home insurance cover for home working and personal safety. (ii) levels of funding in the ERIF and specifically commentary on how that fund could be used, possibly in conjunction with Essex Housing, to facilitate repurposing some properties.	TBC
		(iii) Update on how the core estate is meeting climate targets.	TBC
		(iv) ECC approach to embodied carbon in its buildings	TBC



# Essex Renewal Fund (ERF)

An introduction for external stakeholders – July 2023

# Contents

1. What is the **Essex Renewal Fund**?
2. What kind of **projects** will be delivered?
3. How much **funding** is available?
4. **Next steps** and further information



# What is the Essex Renewal Fund?

# The Essex Renewal Fund...

Is a **revolving** investment fund for **land and property** projects

Supports Essex County Council's commitments to **good jobs, future growth and investment, green growth and levelling up the economy**

Is part of **ECC's £1.3bn Capital Programme** and sits alongside the activity of **Essex Housing**

# What are the potential benefits?

Over the next 20 years, the Fund aims to invest over £100m, supporting **1,500 jobs and bringing to market enough land to deliver 1,000 homes**

It will do this through **projects that the market wouldn't deliver** – or, may not deliver to such **high standards**

All new build projects will be expected to deliver **net zero carbon in operation**









It will have a catalytic impact beyond the projects that it supports directly, by building **confidence in Essex places and markets**, and providing **greater influence over quality** of placemaking and buildings

# What kind of projects will be delivered?

# High-level project requirements

- **Land and property projects** – Must include **refurbishment, development** or bringing **development land** to the market. Any direct residential development, social infrastructure or renewable energy infrastructure must be ancillary to commercial uses
- **Within Essex** – Must be delivered **within the administrative area of Essex County Council** (this excludes Southend and Thurrock)
- **Addressing evidenced market failure** – Must unlock, accelerate, or enhance benefits for Essex residents and businesses **beyond “business as usual”**
- **Direct investment** – Must contribute towards **ECC’s capital programme**, rather than providing development finance or non-recoverable grant funding to others. Can form partnerships to lever in external funding, or de-risk later phases of development for onward delivery by the private sector
- **Return on investment** – Must provide the required **return on investment** based on a **clear exit strategy**

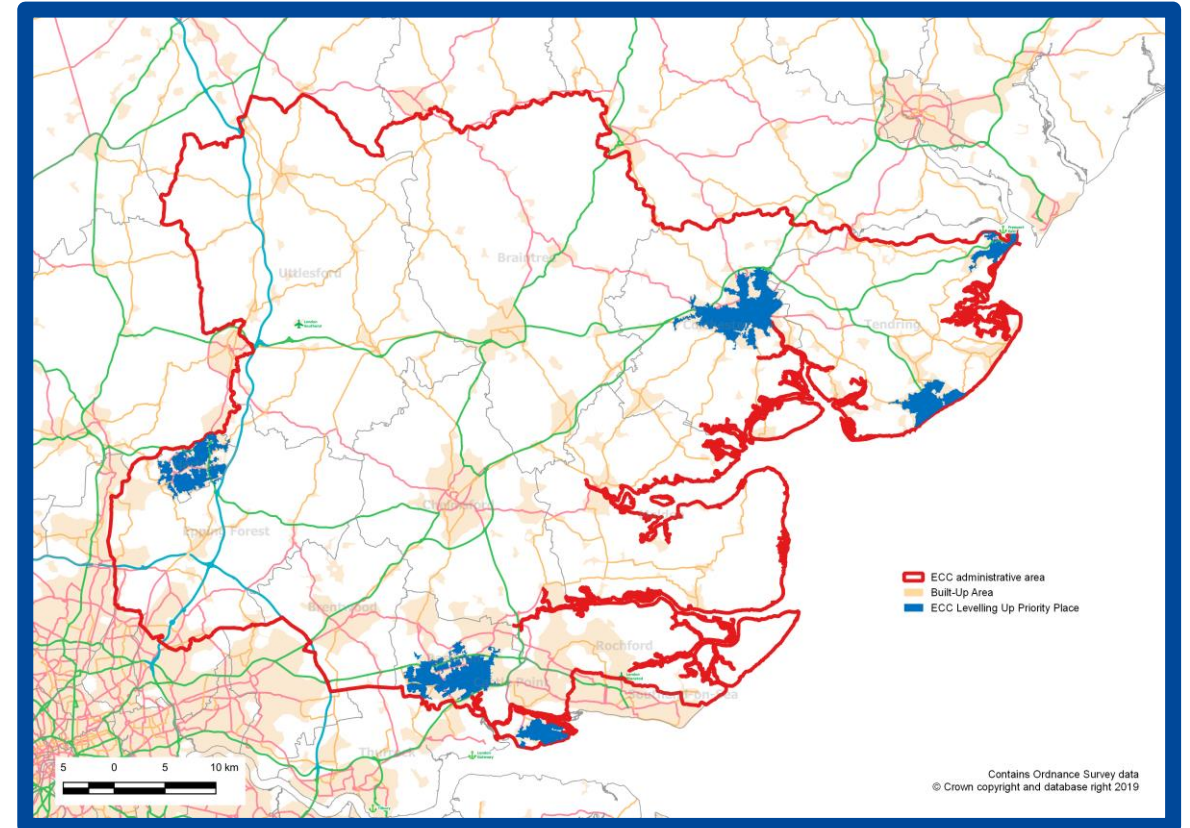
# Projects are prioritised based on their alignment with the following policy objectives...

Strong Inclusive & Sustainable ECONOMY		Good jobs	<b>Job creation and safeguarding</b>
		Levelling up the economy	Attract and retain <b>investment and talent</b> in strategic locations / least resilient areas
		Future growth and investment	Supporting <b>start-ups and high-potential firms</b>
		Green growth	Contribute to <b>green growth and climate resilience</b>
High Quality ENVIRONMENT		Transport and built environment	Keep momentum with / accelerate <b>major housing and economic growth projects</b>
HEALTH, wellbeing & Independence for All Ages		Healthy lifestyles	Encourage shift to <b>sustainable modes of transport</b>
A Great PLACE for Children & Families to Grow		Education outcomes	Provide opportunities for <b>re-skilling / up-skilling</b>
		Levelling up outcomes for families	Facilitate <b>higher productivity economic activity</b>

...as well as implementing the **ERF Net Zero policy**

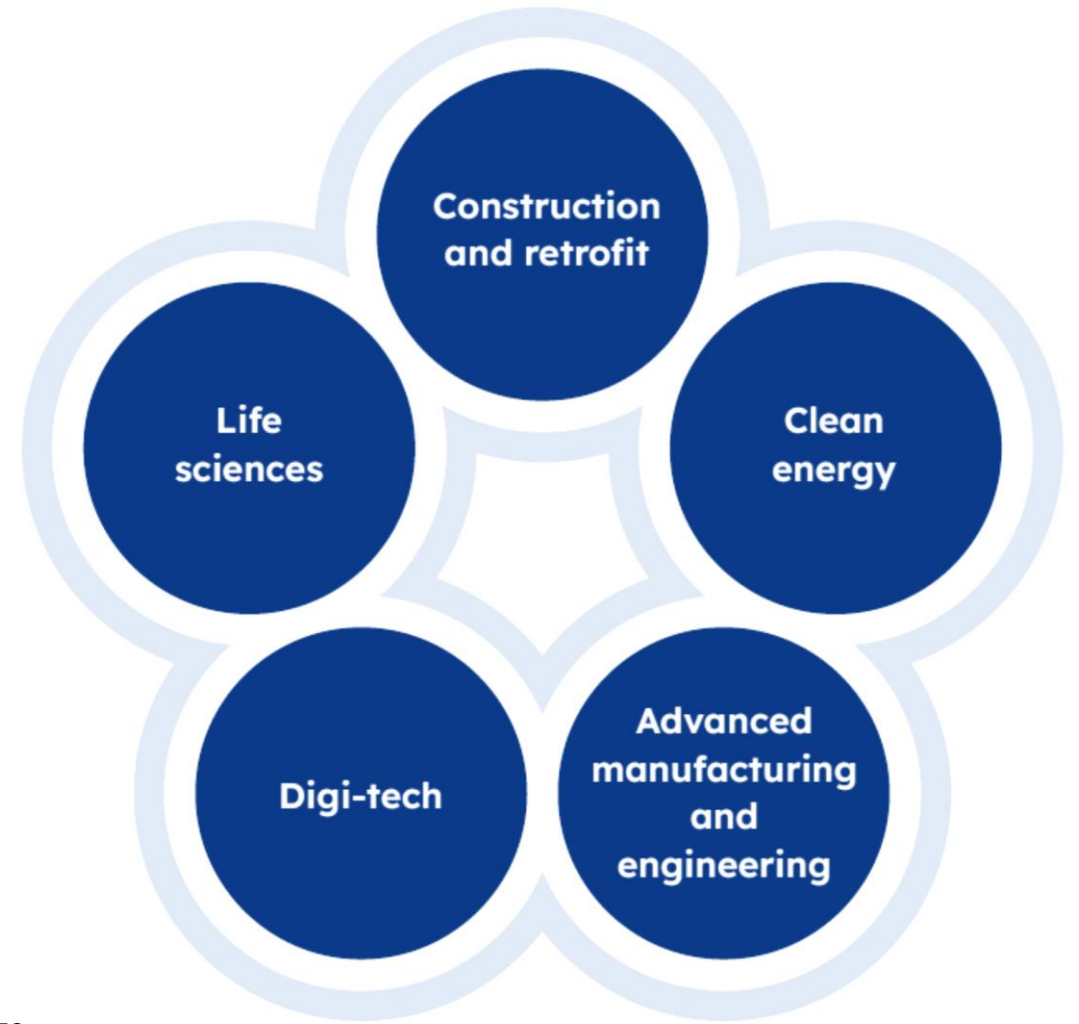
# Priority places

- To help [Level Up Essex](#), the Fund focuses on attracting and retaining investment and talent in and around our **priority places for Levelling Up** (see right)
- The Fund also seeks opportunities to support our new **Garden Communities**
- Strong projects **outside of our priority places** are also considered



# Priority sectors

- ERF nurtures **the five key growth sectors for Essex** identified in the [Essex Sector Development Strategy](#) (see right)
- The Fund also seeks opportunities to support **Essex town centres and high streets**
- Strong projects **outside of our priority sectors** are also considered





# How much funding is available?

# How much funding is available?

- To manage risk to ECC, investment by the Fund is limited to **£12.5m per project** (including any grant funding for which we are accountable)
- For larger projects, it will therefore be necessary to **share risk and reward with external partners** - either through a 'Master Developer' model or development partnerships
- To manage impacts on ECC's revenue budget, total **activity is anticipated to remain under £27.5m** at any one time. However, we aim to invest **at least £100m over the next 20 years**

# Next steps and further information

## Next steps

- ECC is in the process of recruiting and procuring the support required to deliver the Essex Renewal Fund, with **appointments expected in autumn 2023**
- Approval for **one or more acquisitions is expected by the end of 2023**

## Further information

If stakeholders have a **site, project or funding opportunity** that they would like to discuss with the Essex Renewal Fund team, they should contact [Ricky Thakrar](#)

**Reference number: CPSC/04/24**

<b>Report title: Performance discussion – July to September 2023-24</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Cllr Kevin Bentley, Leader of the Council Cllr Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader of the Council	
<b>Date:</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	<b>For:</b> Discussion
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Richard Puleston; Suzanne Barcz	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

## 1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides opportunities for corporate scrutiny to discuss:
1. The progress we are making against our KPIs – based on the Q2 performance report with some core updates up to December 2023.
  2. The wider operational landscape of Essex, including other factors affecting our residents.

## 2 Recommendations

It is recommended that Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Note and discuss the report and annexes.

## 3 Summary

- 3.1 The Everyone’s Essex performance framework was agreed by Full Council in October 2021, and outlines measures aligned with the strategic aims.
- 3.2 This report outlines the outturns for Q2 (July to September 2023), and some operational and wider societal measures up to December 2023. This allows Scrutiny to have sight of verified data (including data where we are reliant on third parties and reporting from our contracts) to be collected, collated and socialised with responsible directors and cabinet members.
- 3.3 The report presented is extensive. This recognises the need to have a view on the overall strategic performance of the authority and the delivery of Everyone’s Essex within the operating contextual constraints that might impact on performance. The report is structured into 4 sections:

Part 1: Operating Context – this section sets out key data about our operating context and flags potential implications for the services we provide.

Part 2: Key Strategic Priorities – this section covers the progress we are making on Climate action.

Part 3: Spotlight on OFLOG requirements.

Part 4: Strategic Indicators – this section sets out the current performance against the strategic indicators agreed to be monitored by Council, organised by strategic aim.

*Performance update for Quarter Two.*

3.4 Headlines from Q2 performance (report attached at Appendix 1), show that performance in most areas continues to be strong, areas to note include:

- MH services & paid employment: ECC already outperforms the national average based on the ASCOF measure and the work to improve recording will mean the significant outperformance which ECC achieves in this area will be fully reflected for the 23/24 national reporting.
- The highest grade has been awarded to Essex County Council again for its work on climate action with an 'A-Rating' by CDP, formerly known as the Carbon Disclosure Project. The environmental impact organisation, CDP, has recognised Essex as one of only 122 locations across the globe taking bold leadership on environmental action and transparency, despite the pressures of a challenging global economic situation. One of 19 UK local authority areas, Essex is the only county council in the UK to be awarded an A rating this year.
- Some of our preventative measures and positive outcomes in adult social care are performing well, with more people in receipt of care technology and reablement services. Our contract for care technology has yielded a £10.36M return in Social Value across employment, training, green project and reducing public service demand.
- Q2 saw 13,212 health checks completed for those eligible in Essex, this is 110% of the target needed for this quarter and is higher than the 12,854 completed within Q1. In terms of YTD, we have completed 26,066 health checks against a target of 24,000 – this represents delivery of nearly 109% in the year to date. In terms of health checks offered the cumulative total is 61,476 against our target in the YTD.

3.5 In this quarter, the report identifies four key areas of ECC performance that are below target (strategically or functionally) and represent a risk to the Council.

- The SHDF (Sustainable Housing Decarbonisation Fund) has now retrofitted 253 homes to an EPC rating of 'C'. This is 46% towards the target of 547 (with a new deadline of 31 Dec 23). The Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) programme budgets have been significantly reduced at the request of the government, which will impact on future delivery.

- The number of children subject to Child Protection plans was relatively stable during Q4 of last year, with numbers between 680 and 690. However, numbers have risen since March 2023, reaching 733 in June. This measure is rated as red as the rate of children on child protection plans continues to be slightly above the threshold range. Essex continues to have a lower proportion of children on child protection plans than similar authorities.
- The volume of successful intervention for Family Solutions between July 1st 2023 and September 30th 2023 is slightly below target at 84.9% but represents a significant improvement on the previous quarter ( 79.7%).
- Two of the coastal path 'part approved' stretches are pending Secretary of State approval (Harwich to Shotley Gate and Wallasea Island to Burnham). The Mersea Island stretch is dependent on the finalisation of a report from Natural England prior to submission to the Secretary of State for approval.

3.6 In addition to these metrics that have a direct impact on the council's services, ambitions and targets, we also draw attention to:

- The impact of **housing affordability** in the county – with more residents exposed to high loan to value ratios, making them more vulnerable when remortgaging. With rent also increasing, this leaves residents at risk of homelessness building on a growing trend that is causing challenges in a number of policy areas.
- **Cost of living** – while inflation is easing, the long term impacts are still felt for residents, including those on fixed incomes. This will have an impact on some of our services and more broadly on wellbeing.

#### 4. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Quarterly Performance report (Quarter 2)



# Corporate Performance Report

Quarter 2: July – September  
2023-24

Policy Unit

## The Essex Story

- [Spotlight for Quarter 2](#)

## Operating Context

- [Operating context for Everyone's Essex](#)
- [Society](#)
- [Risk: Inflation](#)
- [Essex: Issues Tracker](#)

## Strategic Priorities

- [Climate](#)

## Spotlight

- [Oflog](#)

## Strategic Indicators

- [Everyone's Essex: Achievements](#)
- [Measures to watch](#)
- [Performance Report Annex](#)
- [Oflog Measures: Annex](#)

## Spotlight for Quarter 2



### OFLOG

For this quarter, we draw attention to the measures included in the OFLOG measures, highlighting the measures which have been in place since July 2023 and drawing attention to the new areas of focus currently in consultation, and the future areas for performance reporting.

*Detail outlined on slides 9-11 ECC performance and benchmarking in the annex (slides 24-26)*

## THE ECONOMY



In Q2 inflation remained at 6.7% in September. (For January, inflation is now at 4.2% against the Bank of England's target of 2%).

High inflation rates also reflect rising living costs for residents – we project that by July 2024, 43,000+ households in Essex may have incomes below the level necessary to pay for food and essential bills. This creates considerable risk around future demand pressures and uncertainty around future council tax and business rate revenues.

In this reporting period the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 5.25%, after 14 consecutive increases. This will keep the cost of borrowing higher than recently experienced, with direct implications for the cost of financing ECC's capital programme.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING



Whilst the Essex health system remains under pressure, progress has been made on the length of time people wait for an intervention from Adult Social Care. Since 31<sup>st</sup> March there has been a 16% reduction in the number of adults awaiting a Care Act assessment.

A review was undertaken on how cases are prioritised and to ensure those with the highest priority get an appropriate response.

The 12 identified initiatives to address the overall number of people waiting are being progressed and ASC continue to look at all areas of prevention to reduce demand and promote independence.

Care Technology continues to prevent, reduce and delay demand coming into ASC and support the independence of over 8,000 adults across Essex.

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES



While the number of children in care has remained relatively stable during the last quarter, the number of children on a child protection plan continues to rise, increasing from 677 to 772 in the last 9 months. Essex continues to benchmark well.

While the number of Child Protection Plans are increasing, overall, the number of open cases has seen a slight decline, the result of a reduction in the number of children on a Child in Need Plan.

Attainment outcomes across all key stages within the primary phase increased in 2023 and continue to compare favourably with national averages. In addition, the span between the highest and lowest performing districts across Essex was lower than in 2022. Whilst many Levelling Up initiatives are still in their infancy, this bodes well for future years. The secondary phase key stages saw the anticipated reduction in performance as marking thresholds reverted to those used in 2019 (2022 made some allowances for post-pandemic effects). Reductions were also seen nationally but Essex performance continues to be lower than national averages in most KS4 measures. The performance of disadvantaged pupils remains a concern with those in Essex performing lower than their national peers across all age ranges.

## LEVELLING UP



A priority focus for the Levelling Up work continues to be mobilising delivery for the 4 Levelling Up Essex cohorts. The Levelling Up cohorts cover all districts in Essex and interventions will therefore include non-Levelling Up districts and boroughs.

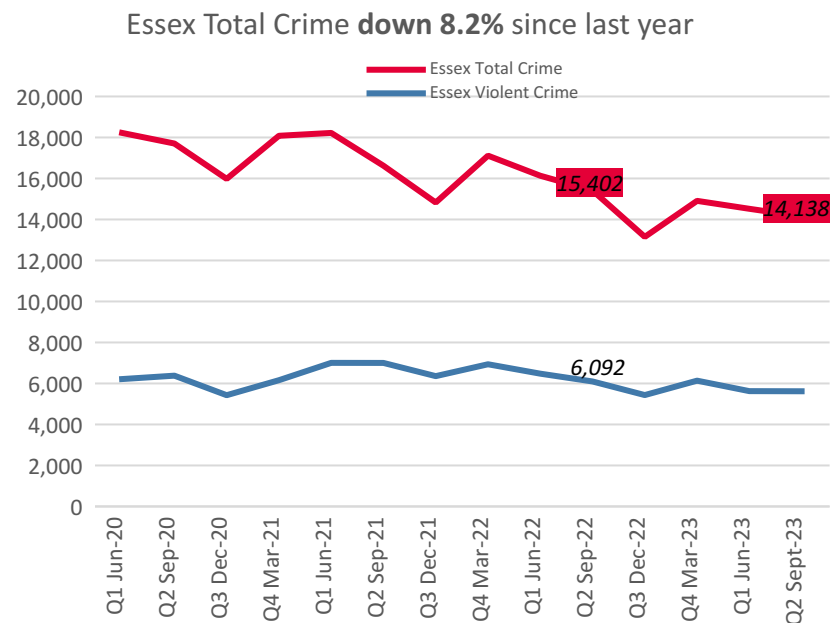
Following on from the plans developed for young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and Working Families, the focus is now on people with a learning disability, mental health need and children on free school meals, with a view to delivery plans for all cohorts being agreed by early 2024.

The large-scale community engagement project in Rural Braintree, and '100 days 100 families' project in Canvey Island are both shortly due to conclude, both of which have focused on identifying and learning what levelling up means for communities and families. This work will inform the ongoing development of the LU agenda in both places.



## Crime and feeling safe

Over a third of crime in Essex is categorised as Violent Crime, which is **down 7.8%** compared to the same period last year.



**61.4%**

Crime and fear of crime is a contributing factor to people's satisfaction with place, and with their own wellbeing.

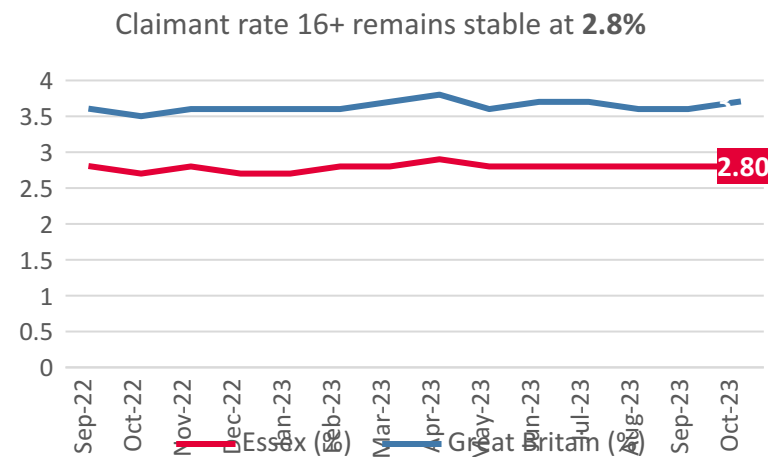
Economic factors could have a negative impact on crime

In September 2023, around 6 in 10 adults in Great Britain said they tend to be satisfied with the police in the UK.



## Employment

Unemployment rates have fallen to pre-coronavirus pandemic levels, following a rise during the pandemic.



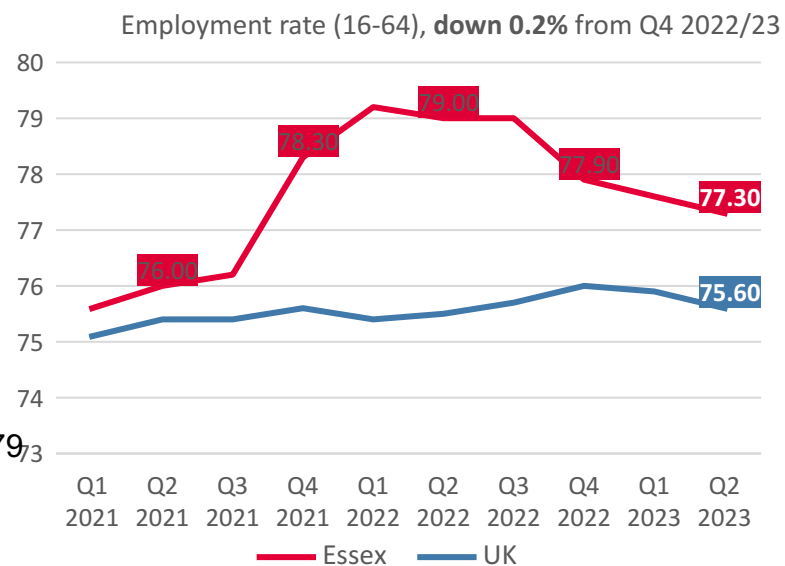
### Breakdown:

Number of people unemployed by Age Group:

**4.7K**  
aged between 16-24

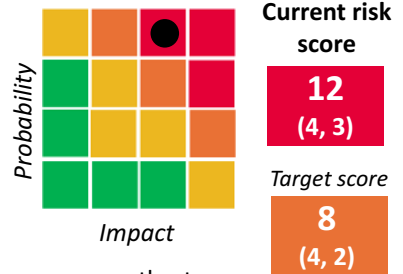
**15.3K**  
aged between 25-49

**5.9K**  
aged 50+



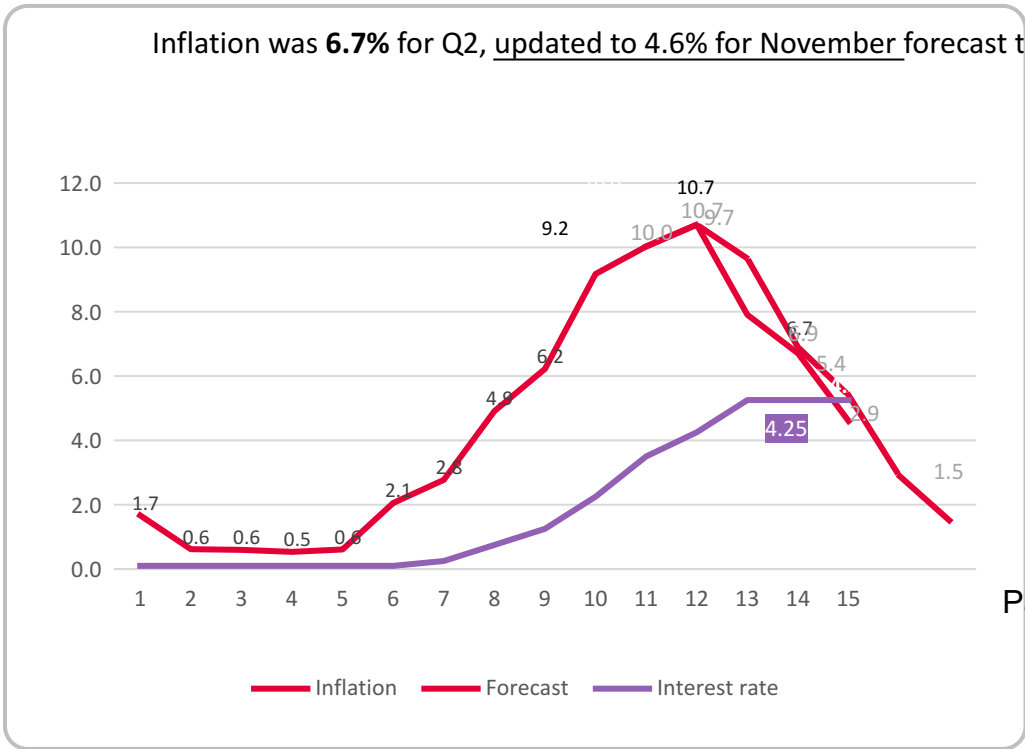
Essex continues to perform strongly in employment performance compared with the national picture. High employment rates will contribute to reduced demand and enhance council tax yield. However, the impact of the cost of living will still impact in-work families

# Strategic Risk



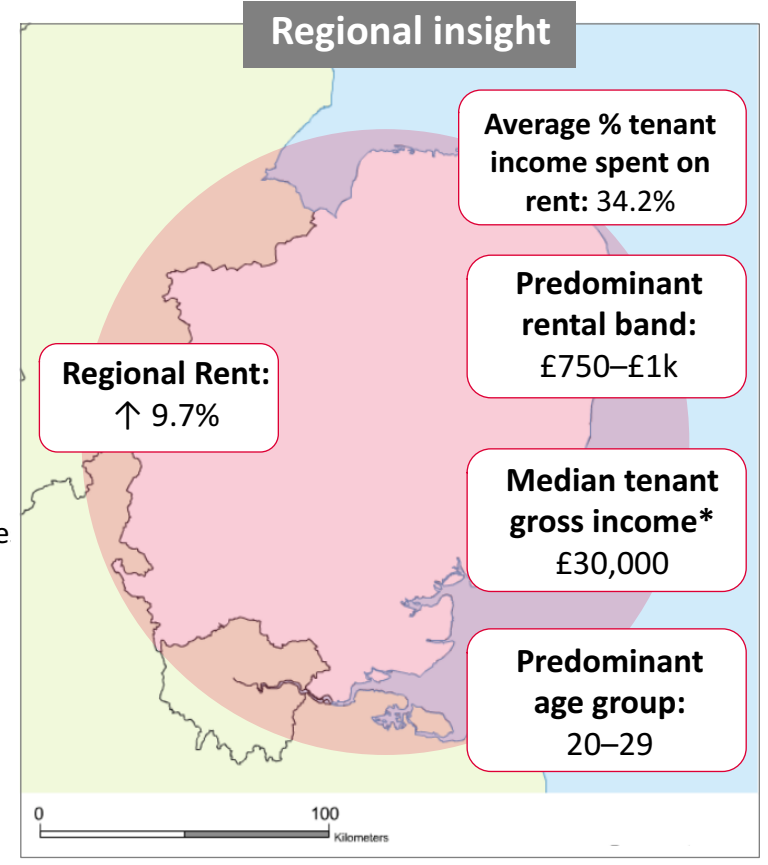
## ECC Strategic Risk (SRR0092): Inflation

Inflation has reduced since its peak in October 2022 at 11.1%, now currently at 4.6% for November (against the Bank of England's target of 2%). High inflation rates drive increasing costs for ECC and have increased pressure on ECC capital and revenue budgets and creates considerable risk around future demand pressures. The Bank of England raised interest rates on fourteen consecutive occasions, with the base rate remaining at 5.25% since August, driving up the cost of borrowing. We continue to monitor inflation pressures monthly; regular updates and potential impacts are reported to CLT and PLT.



# Rent & Mortgage risk in Essex

- Essex House prices falling by 0.7% in September compared to the same period last year
- Average monthly rents across the UK continue to rise in October, taking monthly rents to a new record high.
- The average rental value for new tenancies in the East of England is £1,216 per calendar month
- Rents in the East of England increased by 9.7% compared to same period last year (Oct 22 - Oct 23)
- Affordability: In the last year, affordability has weakened the most in London, the East of England and Scotland.



### National insight

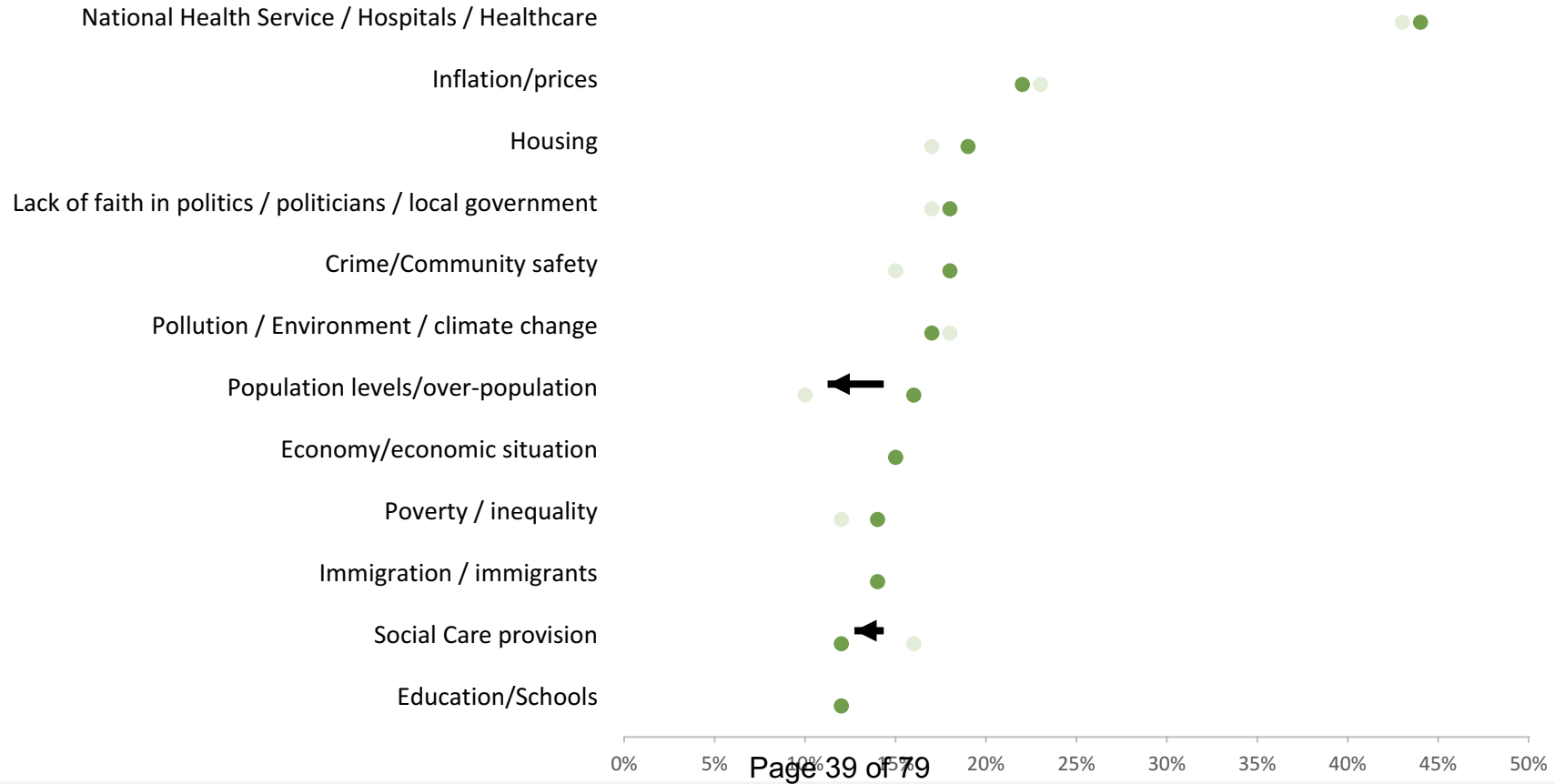
- The average UK house price was £291,000 in September 2023.
- Around 35% of adults in Great Britain paying rent or mortgage said they were finding the payments very or somewhat difficult to afford\*
- 40% said their payments had increased in the last six months\*
- The proportion of mortgage payments made by Direct Debit which failed because of insufficient funds last month was the highest since May 2023.

Essex Issues Tracker data is gathered from the ECC Residents panel, we asked residents: *'What would you say are the most important issues facing Essex today?'*

Previous quarter/ datapoint      Latest quarter/ datapoint

Latest data: October 2023

Comparison to Previous Position



Data gathered from Essex Residents Pulse survey April 2023 and October 2023. We asked 'What would you say are the most important issues facing Essex today? Respondents could select up to 3 responses. Base sizes: all respondents who answers in April 2023 = 489; October 2023 = 542 Chart shows top 12 responses



**243,373**

Trees planted by Essex Forest Initiative since 2020.  
New woodland contributes to delivering net zero carbon, nature recovery, reduces flooding, cooling city centres and provides protection against airborne pollution


**61.7 Hectares**

Planted (from 2021/22 – 22/23)

**13.8km**

Hedgerows planted (2022/23)

Percentage of land that is now green infrastructure

**14%**  **30%**  
2040 target



**Energy Efficiency – Net Zero Policy**



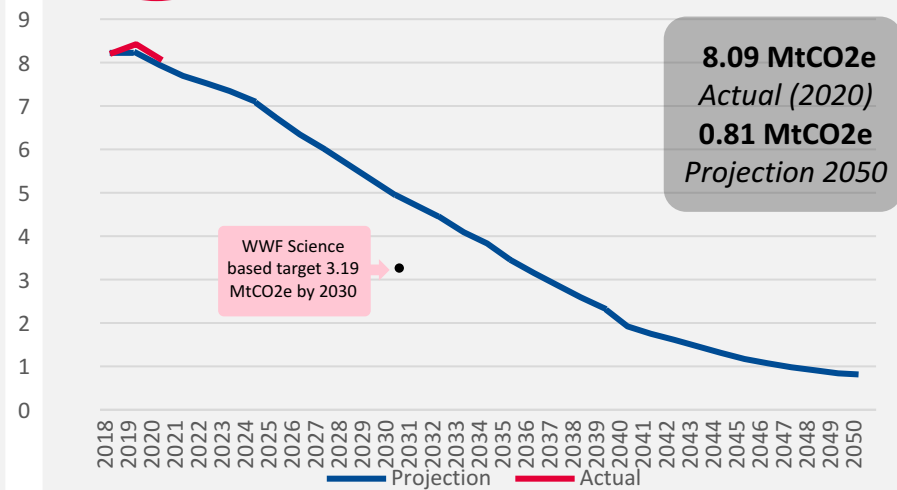
A turnaround on Energy Efficiency Standards for landlords could lead to costs of up to £325 per year for tenants on elevated energy costs



Heat pump installation is behind the curve with an estimated 13,000 qualified engineers needed in Essex to carry out installations and maintenance to meet Net Zero outcomes



**Essex GHG emissions MtCO2e**

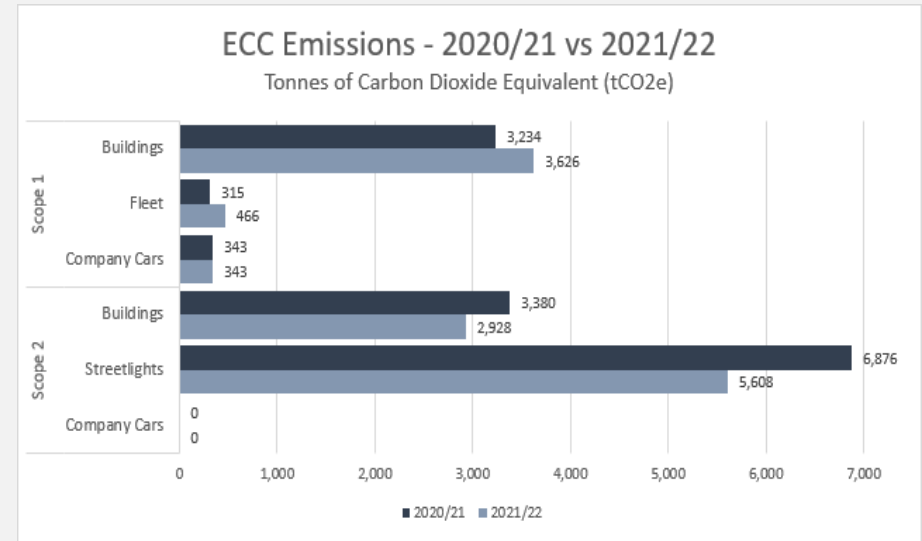


**ECC rating for Carbon Disclosure Project**

**A**

**457.8M**  
(Q2) Total Solar Energy Produced by ECC Sites (Wh)

**39%**  
(Q2) Total consumption Solar Energy Produced by ECC Sites Fed to Grid (Wh)



Year	Domestic Actual	Projections	I&C Actual	Projections	Industrial Actual	Projections	Transport Actual	Projections	Waste Actuals	Projections
2018	2.16	2.16	1.51	1.51	0.35	0.35	3.07	3.07	0.97	0.97
2019	2.17	2.09	1.54	1.41	0.36	0.33	3.25	2.98	0.89	0.89





## What are the Oflog Measures?

- Oflog confirmed the ‘launch’ metrics in July 2023, with the aim to provide accessible data, insight and analysis around the performance of local government, to be more transparent as well as to support service improvement.
- Oflog has focused on a small number of metrics, the four areas are: Waste management, Adult Social Care, Adult skills and **Finance**.
- These selected metrics have been made available on a new online tool, which will bring together a selection of existing measures across a subset of service areas, for data that is available at different levels of local authority, from Mayoral Combined Authority to District Council level.
- Oflog will periodically review the metrics under each service area and will continue to engage with local authorities.
- Further service areas will be added to the Oflog list, as well as existing service areas being expanded, as the metrics are developed and improved.
- Local authorities are invited to provide feedback on their experience and the ease of use of the new online tool.

[More information can be found here](#)

Initial areas with metrics delivered

<u>Waste Management</u>	<u>Adult Skills</u>	<u>Adult Social Care</u>	<u>Finance</u>
Household waste recycling rate (%)	19+ further education and skills achievements per 100,000 population	Requests resulting in a service	Non-ringfenced reserves as % of net revenue expenditure
Residual household waste (kg per household)	19+ further education and skills achievements per 100,000 population (excluding apprenticeships)	Workforce turnover rate	Non-ringfenced reserves as % of service spend
Recycling contamination rate (%)	Adults with a Level 3 or above qualification	People in adult social care, quality of life	Total core spending power per dwelling (£)
<p>ECC performance on these initial measures can be found in the <a href="#">Oflog Annex</a></p>		Carers of people in adult social care, quality of life	Level of Band D council tax rates (£)
		Short-term service provision	Social care spend as % of core spending power
		People who use services who found it east to find information	Debt servicing as % of core spending power
		Carers who found it easy to find information about services	Total debt as % of core spending power
	Page 41 of 79		

Work is underway to ensure these measures form part of future ECC performance management reporting

Currently reported	In development for reporting	Not reported
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Areas with metrics currently being shared for comment with local authorities:



**Business and Economic Growth**

Births of new enterprises *[upper tier, unitary authorities, MCAs]*  
 Deaths of enterprises *[upper tier, unitary authorities, MCAs]*  
 Number of high growth enterprises *[upper tier, unitary authorities, MCAs]*

Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked *[upper tier, unitary authorities, MCAs]*  
 Gross median weekly pay (£) *[upper tier, unitary authorities, MCAs]*  
 Employment rate for 16-64 years olds *[upper tier, unitary authorities, MCAs]*



**Corporate and Finance**

Percentage of Ombudsman complaints upheld *[all tiers]*  
 Number of upheld Ombudsman complaints per 10,000 population *[all tiers]*  
 Council tax collection rates *[lower tier, unitary authorities, London and metropolitan boroughs]*

Non-domestic rates collection rates *[lower tier, unitary authorities, London boroughs and metropolitan boroughs]*



**Planning**

Percentage of major planning applications decided on time *(district matters)*

Percentage of major planning applications decided on time *(County)*

Percentage of non-major planning applications decided on time *(district matters)*

Percentage of major planning applications overturned on appeal *(district matters)*

Percentage of major planning applications overturned on appeal *(county matters)*

Percentage of non-major planning applications overturned on appeal *(district)*

Date when a Local Plan was formally adopted by an authority *(lower tier)*



**Roads**

Percentage of local authority A roads considered for maintenance *[upper tier below MCAs, unitary authorities, London and metropolitan boroughs]*

Percentage of local authority B and C roads considered for maintenance *[upper tier below MCAs, unitary authorities, London and metropolitan boroughs]*

Number of casualties in reported road traffic collisions per billion vehicle miles *[upper tier below MCAs, unitary authorities, London and metropolitan boroughs]*



**Waste Management (fly-tipping)**

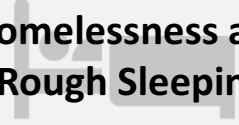
Fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 people  
 Fly-tipping fixed penalty notices issued per incident  
 Fly-tipping fixed penalty notices issued per 1,000 people  
 Fly-tipping fixed penalty notices percent paid  
 Fly-tipping fixed penalty notices paid per incidents  
 Fly-tipping enforcement actions per incident

Areas proposed for development next (subject to change), measures underneath each to be confirmed for each area

Childrens Social Care



Homelessness and  
Rough Sleeping



Public Health



Youth Justice &  
Accommodation



Future areas for development:

- Animal Welfare
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Asylum Services
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
- Early Years
- Employment Rate
- Environment
- Housing
- Neighbourhood Crime
- Parks and Green Spaces
- Public Transport
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Sport, Leisure & Recreational Services (inc. Libraries)
- Support Services for vulnerable people

# Performance Annex:

## *Quarter 2 performance data*

The Everyone's Essex Story  
Q1 2023/24

1,117 jobs directly created by ECC programmes

47% people achieving their health weight outcomes

Successful Family Solutions an increase on Q4 (77.5%) to 79.7% for Q1 2023-24

12,854 NHS Health Checks delivered in Q1 2023-24; this is above the target uptake of 12,000.

7.9% of adults known to secondary mental health services in paid employment

3-4-year-old Childcare Funding; Essex is ranked third highest against statistical neighbours at 95.2%

215 properties benefiting from reduced surface water flood risk

Quarter 2 progress 2023/24

Replacement LED streetlight work continues, saving 6,500 tonnes of carbon per year

532,398 miles have been driven with low or zero emission vehicles, which equates to 66% progress towards committed units.

MH services & paid employment: ECC already outperforms the national average based on the ASCOF measure and the work to improve recording will mean the significant outperformance

Q3 2023/24

Social Value: 1,425 FTE jobs created, The largest numbers coming from Employment or retention from Local people and NEET.

100,243 miles have been saved due to cycle to work programmes, public transport and carpooling programmes.

The Sustainable Housing Decarbonisation Fund) has now retrofitted 253 homes to an EPC rating of 'C'





Off Target, Out of Range, and Worsening

Measure	Trend	Value	Target
Sections of coastal paths completed		0	5
The number of children subject to child protection plans per 10,000		24.6	17.3 – 20.5



Off Target but Stable or Improving

Measure	Trend	Value	Target
Percentage of families with successful intervention (Family Solutions)		84.90%	85%
Retrofit in low-income households		253	547

Measure	RAG	Value	Target
Number of people benefitting from ECC skills and employability programmes	↓	1,078	6,825 (academic year)
Jobs created directly through ECC programmes	↑	338	815

**Skills, employability and jobs:**

This is a new target of 6,825 for this academic year (23/34). The current value of 1,078 is for September only due to this being the start of the academic year. It is important to note due to the type of courses on offer these do not all start in September and are spread out throughout the year. These include Multiply, Apprenticeships and entry level up to Level 5 qualifications.

**Jobs created directly:**

Jobs directly created through ECC programmes has increased by 40 jobs to 338 (Apr 23-Sept 23). This includes:

- 216 entry level jobs in ECC
- 122 jobs created and safeguarded by the Business Support contract

Measure	RAG	Value	Target
Retrofit in low-income households	↑	253	547
Replacing streetlights (mainly residential roads) in Essex with new LED lights	↑	16,509	32,476
Sections of coastal paths completed	↑	0	5
Number of properties where risk has been reduced as a result of Flood Management Schemes	↔	0	215

**Streetlights:** 2023/24 sees the third and final year of Phase 4 of the LED Replacement Programme. This final year should see ECC finalise converting all of our remaining old-style street lighting stock from lamps into LED's. Last year the upgrade programme was significantly impacted by the global shortage of components for the telecells that are used to control the streetlights. While we were able to recover a lot of lost ground in the final quarter of 22/23, this leaves the final year with a stretching target of 32,476 replacements. It should be noted that this is over 10% larger than the programmes delivered in Year 1 and Year 2 (27,131 and 28,439 replacements respectively).

**Flood Management:** There are 8 Priority Projects scheduled for 2023/24, providing a reduced surface water flood risk to at least 215 properties. Four schemes are already in construction, and all eight are expected to be achieved by Mar 24. The estimated cost of delivery exceeds the capital programme budget of £4m. The difference will need to be made up of external grants or efficiency savings. In this reporting period £441,500 has been received in grant funding.

**Retrofit in low-income households:** The SHDF (Sustainable Housing Decarbonisation Fund) has now retrofitted 253 homes to an EPC rating of 'C'. This is 46% towards the target of 547 (with a new deadline of 31 Dec 23). The Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) Programme budgets have unfortunately been significantly reduced at the request of the government.

**Coastal Paths:** We are still waiting for approval from the Secretary of State for the two 'part approved' stretches (Harwich to Shotley Gate and Wallasea Island to Burnham). Furthermore, Natural England are still to finalise their report for Mersea Island in order that it can be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. Funding has now been secured for the open stretches for last year's maintenance, and costs have been reimbursed for the initial work. We are currently waiting to hear about our application for this year's maintenance on those stretches. Whilst approval has been granted for the route north of Salcott, the path itself is being revisited to ensure that all the local arrangements are intact.



Measure	RAG	Value	Target
ECC rating for CDP ( Carbon Disclosure Project)		A	B
Number of trees planted from Essex Forest Initiative		0	100,000

**CDP Rating:** Essex has been rated as one of the best places in the world when it comes to tackling global warming. Top marks have been given to Essex County Council for its work on climate action by being awarded an ‘A-Rating’ by CDP, formerly known as the Carbon Disclosure Project. The environmental impact organisation, CDP, has recognised Essex as one of only 122 locations across the globe taking bold leadership on environmental action and transparency, despite the pressures of a challenging global economic situation. One of 19 UK local authority areas, Essex is the only county council in the UK to be awarded an A rating this year.

**Trees:** In 2022/23, the target of 75,000 trees was significantly exceeded, with an estimated total of 100,600 trees being planted throughout Essex. The target of 100,000 (40 hectares) in 2023/24 is expected to be achieved; however, the planting season does not start until November, so the progress indicators will show 0 for the early part of the Financial Year. These plantings contribute to achieving our targets for Natural Infrastructure

- External funding has been secured, as follows:
- Up to **£2.1m** over 3 years from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (Forestry Commission)
  - Up to **£300k** over 3 years from the Local Authority Treescape Fund (Forestry Commission) to support four landowners with their England Woodland Creation Offer applications.
  - Up to **£32k** from the Tree Production Capital Grant (Forestry Commission) for the creation of 2 community tree nurseries.
  - £381k from National Highways' Designated Funds for 30 years of improved woodland management across the unstaffed woodland estate.

In addition, we are waiting to hear back from a collaborative bid for the Coronation Living Heritage Fund for the planting of up to nine new orchards.

*Measures reported annually are included on rotation where there are updated figures.*

Measure	RAG	Value	Target
Number of adult social care users in receipt of care technology	↑	8,049	4,195
% of adults with a learning disability that transition into adult social care in residential care	↓	7.7%	N/A
Percentage of adults known to secondary mental health services in paid employment	↑	8.2%	7.0%

**Care technology:** There are a total of 8,049 service users in the service at end of Sept 23. New installs since July 2022 is 5,350. Care Technology is delivering avoidable savings of ~£573,000 against the 2023/24 MTRS target. The monitoring and response service has attended 3,299 response visits and picked up 1,559 fallers since go live which has saved an additional £1,626,600 avoidable NHS costs due to ambulance call outs and days in hospital. We've trained 1,626 internal and external individuals to prescribe care technology across Essex, 33% external. Across the contract, we've seen ~£10.36M return in Social Value across employment, training, green project and reducing public service demand.

**Mental Health services & paid employment:** Further work is underway by EPUT to improve the recording in this area. ECC already outperforms the national average based on the ASCOF measure and the work to improve recording will mean the significant outperformance which ECC achieves in this area will be fully reflected for the 23/24 national reporting.

**LD Trans to Res:** 13 adults with Learning Disabilities transitioned across to Adult Social Care during the last quarter. 1 of those adults was in residential care at the point they were transitioned into adult social care.

Measure	RAG	Value	Target
The proportion of adults in contact with secondary mental health services (services generally requiring referral by a GP) living independently, with or without support	↓	17.7%	15.8%
Percentage of adults who are self-caring post reablement on discharge from hospital	↑	<i>Q1 value: 50.9%</i> Q2: TBC*	52%
Number of total population aged 40-74 receiving an NHS Health Check	↑	26,066	48,000

**NHS Health Check:** Q2 saw 13,212 health checks completed for those eligible in Essex, this is 110% of the target needed for this quarter and is higher than the 12,854 completed within Q1. In terms of YTD, we have completed 26,066 health checks against a target of 24,000 – this represents delivery of nearly 109% so far this year. In terms of health checks offered the cumulative total is 61,476 against our target in the YTD.

**Mental Health:** Data validation exercise underway at EPUT which includes some changes to their case management system and additional training for staff. Preview of October data suggests they are starting to see genuine improvements from this work.

\*Q2 data for 'Reablement' is to be confirmed once the data is validated.

Measure	RAG	Value	Target
Percentage of families with successful intervention (Family Solutions)	↑	84.9	85%

**Family Solution interventions:** The Volume of successful intervention for Family Solutions between July 1st 2023 and September 30th 2023 is 84.9% this is 7.9% points above the previous quarters 79.7% successful interventions.

Family Solutions closed 440 families in the last quarter, 212 of these cases were closed after an extended intervention, the remaining cases were closed as 'Decision not to proceed' or 'Family Solutions not required'.

Measure	RAG	Value	Target
The number of children known to social care per 10,000	↓	183.3	190 – 210 (Target range)
The number of children subject to Children in Need plans per 10,000	↑	49.1	47.3 - 63.1 (Target range)
The number of children subject to child protection plans per 10,000	↑	24.6	17.3 - 20.5 (Target range)

**Children known to social Care:**

The number of children open to social care has decreased from 191.7 per 10,000 to 183.29 in September 2023, similar to rates seen in 2022.

During the last 2 years North has consistently had the greatest number of children open to social care and the highest rate per 10,000. Due to the number of SMC in West, they have seen an increase in the number of children open to social care from 1329 (152.7 per 10,000) in September 2021 to a peak of 1600 (183.9 per 10,000) in June 2023. In September 2023, although North and West have a similar number of children open to social care (1532 and 1530 respectively), North has the highest rate per 10,000 of all the quadrants at 225.26, but West has seen a dip in their rate and has the least at 150.68 per 10,000.

We have also included the numbers of children open to social care for additional context.

**Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection plans:**

The number of children on child in need plans in Essex has fluctuated over the last 12 months, reaching a peak of 1661 in March 2023, falling to 1556 in September, in line with levels seen last October. The main cause for this is the number of mainstream CIN volumes dropping to their lowest number of 812 in September, with CWD and Case Managed plans remaining relatively stable.

The rate of children in need has increased from 46.2 and 46.4 per 10,000 in 2022, to rates between 48.7 and 50.1 in 2023, although higher are still in the expected range. North continues to have the highest rate per 10,000 and has seen an increase to 62.2 in September, significantly higher than the other quadrants, whose rates are between 43.4 and 48.9.

**Child Protection Plans:** The number of children subject to Child Protection plans was relatively stable during Q4 of last year, with numbers between 680 and 690. However, numbers have risen since March 2023, reaching 733 in June. This measure is rated as red as the rate of children on child protection plans continues to be slightly above the threshold range, however as noted previously – Essex continues to have a lower proportions of children on child protection plans than similar authorities. At a quadrant level, the rate per 10,000 varies significantly, with notably more children on a child protection plan in North than the other three quadrants. Rates have risen from 32.8 to 36.6, while the other quadrants generally see rates between 15 and 22.

Measure	RAG	Value	Target
Number of looked after children per 10,000	↓	36.5	34.7 - 39.4 (Target range)
Review representation of Ethnically Diverse CYP across the statutory social care system: Open to social care	↑	23.3%	N/A
Review representation of Ethnically Diverse CYP across the statutory social care system: Children in Care	↑	26.9%	N/A
Review representation of Ethnically Diverse CYP across the statutory social care system: Child protection	↑	14.3%	N/A

**Looked After Children:** The number of children in care rose during 2022 and continues to see higher numbers. Following a peak in November, volumes have been more consistent, fluctuating between 1150 and 1170, currently sitting at 1160 in June. Despite the increases that have been seen over time, the number of children looked after by the council remains in our expected range.  
 At a quadrant level, North continues to see significantly higher rates of children in care per 10,000 but has seen rates fall from 50.6 in June 2022 to 46.6 by June 2023. West has also seen rates rise, heavily impacted by the rising number of SMC during qu4 of 2022/23.

**Children from an ethnically diverse group:** The proportion of children open to social care from an ethnically diverse group has grown gradually over time, and currently sits at 23.2%, slightly more than last quarter (21.9%).  
 The increase is mainly reflected in the children in care numbers, where a higher number of separated migrant children is seen; 68.5% of SMC in care being of other ethnic groups for example. The proportion of children in care from Global Majority backgrounds falls from 26.2% to 15.6% when SMC are excluded, which is much closer to the Essex school census rate of 14.3%.

Measure	RAG	Value	Target
Collection rate of Council Tax achieved for the year	↓	96.6%	98%
Deliver social value through procurement and practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SV % Delivered</li> <li>• SV Committed (£)</li> <li>• SV Delivered (£)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38.0%</li> <li>• £97,510,914</li> <li>• £36,931,323</li> </ul>	N/A

**Council Tax collection:** The 2023/24 Q2 forecast for the in-year collection rate is 96.6%, which is 0.5% less than reported at Q1.

Currently, districts are forecasting over £14.5m of council tax income collection this financial year relating to prior years, which is the equivalent of about a 1.5% increase in the collection rate.

So, if we apply this on top of the current 96.6% average collection rate that we have in-year, the overall collection of council tax remains on target and on budget, which is why the billing authorities are forecasting a collection fund surplus, which ECC will benefit from in 2024/25.

**Social Value:** Within the theme of ‘A Strong Inclusive Sustainable Economy’ there has been a delivery of 1,425 FTE jobs. This is 78% progress towards committed units. The largest numbers coming from Employment or retention from Local people and NEET.

There has been a total of 106 tonnes of CO2 emission savings which equates to 50% progress on delivery of units committed, from either renewable energy measures or Savings in CO2e emissions on contract achieved through de-carbonisation.

A total of 100,243 miles have been saved due to cycle to work programmes, public transport and carpooling programmes.

A total of 532,398 miles have been driven with low or zero emission vehicles, which equates to 66% progress towards committed units.

The overall committed value toward the strategic aim of Health Wellbeing and independence of people in Essex has 42% progress towards the committed value. This is inclusive of £468,616 worth of initiatives taken & staff time invested with £148,517 focussed on mental health for adults & children initiatives.

# Oflog measures

2021/22 performance data



**Oflog Measure**

**Latest data available (2021/22)**



<b>Household waste recycling rate (%)</b>	<b>Essex 49.70</b> (can be broken down further for districts) Mean for all English county local authorities: 46.81
<b>Residual household waste (kg per household)</b>	<b>Essex: 534.70kg</b> can be broken down further for Essex districts/authorities
<b>Recycling contamination rate (%)</b> (estimated rejects)	<b>Essex: 4.13</b> Mean for all English county local authorities: 6.14



<b>Requests resulting in a service</b>	<b>Essex: 1,310 per 100,000 population</b> Median of Essex's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours: 1,512 per 100,000 England Median: 1,708 per 100,00 population
<b>Workforce turnover rate</b>	<b>Essex: 30%</b> Median of Essex's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours: 30.8% England Median: 28.9%
<b>People in adult social care, quality of life</b>	<b>Essex: 0.427</b> (value range -0.8 to 1.0) Median of Essex's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours: 0.410 England Median: 0.409
<b>Carers of people in adult social care, quality of life</b>	<b>Essex: 7.6</b> (value range 0 to 12) Median of Essex's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours: 7.1 England Median: 7.2
<b>Short-term service provision</b>	<b>Essex: 71.5%</b> Median of Essex's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours: 84.8% England Median: 76.4%
<b>People who use services who found it east to find information</b>	<b>Essex: 63.1%</b> Median of Essex's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours: 63.2% England Median: 65.2%
<b>Carers who found it easy to find information about services</b>	<b>Essex: 58.0%</b> Median of Essex's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours: 60.9% England Median: 57.3%



19+ further education and skills achievements per 100,000 population	<b>Essex: 2,371</b> Mean for all English Counties: 2,620
19+ further education and skills achievements per 100,000 population (excluding apprenticeships)	<b>Essex: 1,984</b> Mean for all English Counties: 2,196
Adults with a Level 3 or above qualification	<b>Essex: 53.5%</b> Median for English Counties: 60.3%



Non-ringfenced reserves as % of net revenue expenditure	<b>Essex: 61.7%</b> Median for Essex's CIPFA nearest neighbours: 50.0% Median for English Counties: 47.3%
Non-ringfenced reserves as % of service spend	<b>Essex: 50.3%</b> Median for Essex CIPFA nearest neighbours: 40.8% Median for English Counties: 40.5%
Total core spending power per dwelling (£)	<b>Essex: £1,535.55</b> Median for Essex CIPFA nearest neighbours: 1,530.68 Median for English Counties: £1,542.55
Level of Band D council tax rates (£) (excluding parishes)	<b>Essex: £1,340.91</b> Median for Essex CIPFA nearest neighbours: £1,410.00 Median for English Counties: £1,414.91
Social care spend as % of core spending power	<b>Essex: 73.1%</b> Median for Essex CIPFA nearest neighbours: 73.8% Median for English Counties: 72.0%
Debt servicing as % of core spending power	<b>Essex: 5.2%</b> Median for Essex CIPFA nearest neighbours: 6.5% Median for English Counties: 6.3%
Total debt as % of core spending power	<b>Essex: 101.9%</b> Median for Essex CIPFA nearest neighbours: 99.1% Median for English Counties: 103.0%

This information is issued by:  
Essex County Council

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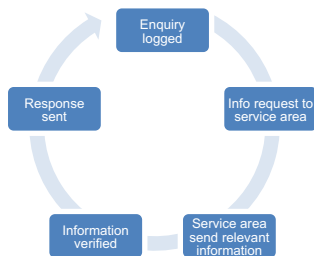
<b>Report title:</b> Member Enquiries Survey Results 2023	
<b>Report to:</b> Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager	
<b>Date:</b> 4 March 2024	<b>For:</b> Discussion
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager ( <a href="mailto:richard.buttress3@essex.gov.uk">richard.buttress3@essex.gov.uk</a> )	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> Not applicable	

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to share with the committee the results of the 2023 Member Enquiries survey, as well as background into the team itself.
- 1.2 The survey is sent out annually and allows us to find out Members experiences of the Member Enquiries team and allows to review comments and suggestions of how we may be able to improve the service.
- 1.3 In previous years, Members have told us that they value the service, but we know that support cannot be taken for granted.
- 1.4 Members were given six weeks to complete the survey, of which 32 responses were received.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The team are the single point of access for all County Councillor and Members of Parliament enquiries and have a maximum of 10 working days to respond to enquiries. To answer enquiries, the team contact both internal and external service areas to seek the information needed to respond to enquiries.
- 2.2 The team answer around 35% of enquiries without needing to contact a service area. Information for these enquiries is obtained using access to internal systems and a detailed knowledge centre created using OneNote.
- 2.3 For those enquiries that a service area is needed to be contacted, the cycle of an enquiry is shown below:



**3. Resource**

- 3.1 The Member Enquiries team transferred to Democracy and Transparency in April 2017 and as part of that process, five FTE moved across. Current breakdown of resource is set out below:

<b>Member Enquiries Officer</b>	<b>FTE</b>
Officer 1	1.0
Officer 2	1.0
Officer 3	1.0
Officer 4	0.6
Officer 5	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.4</b>

#### **4. 2022/23 position**

- 4.1 In 2022/23, the team received just under 10,500 enquiries.
- 4.2 The average time taken to respond to enquiries was 5.3 working days.
- 4.3 Most enquiries (80%) are highways related and throughout the year we see peaks and troughs, due to several factors including the weather, policy decisions and local and national politics.
- 4.4 Over the years, the team has received an enquiry relating to nearly all Essex County Council (ECC) service areas, although as mentioned above, highways make up most of the volume followed by Education (7%) and Social Care (6%).

#### **5. 2023/24 position**

- 5.1 So far in 2023/24, 8536 enquiries have been received, with a response provided within an average of 4.6 working days.
- 5.2 As with 2022/23, most enquiries (82%) relate to highways.

#### **6. Looking ahead**

- 6.1 Along with colleagues in Information Governance and Compliance and Complaints (who share the same CRM), we are currently in the process of procuring a new system that enquiries are recorded on.
- 6.2 As part of this, the aim is to find a system that has better capability and functionality such as online integration with automated logging and hopefully a function that will allow members to track the progress of their enquiries that have been submitted to Member Enquiries.

#### **7. List of Appendices**

App A: Member Enquiries Survey Results 2023

# Member Enquiries Survey Results - 2023

Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager

March 2024

# Summary



**94%** of members rated the Member Enquiries team as excellent/good



**97%** of members were satisfied with the outcome of their enquiries



**43%** of members completed the survey

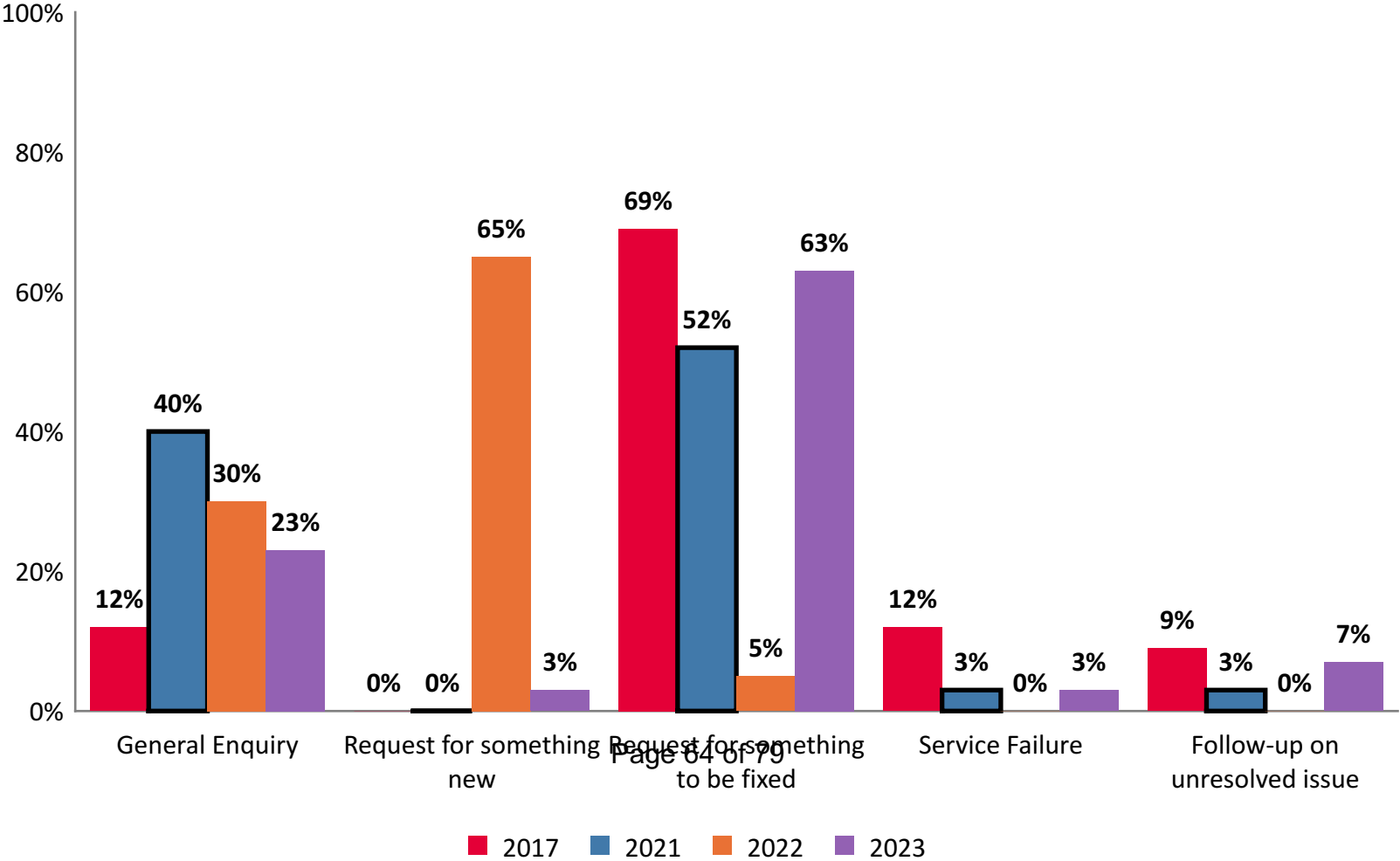


**59%** of members felt that the 10-working day SLA was fast enough



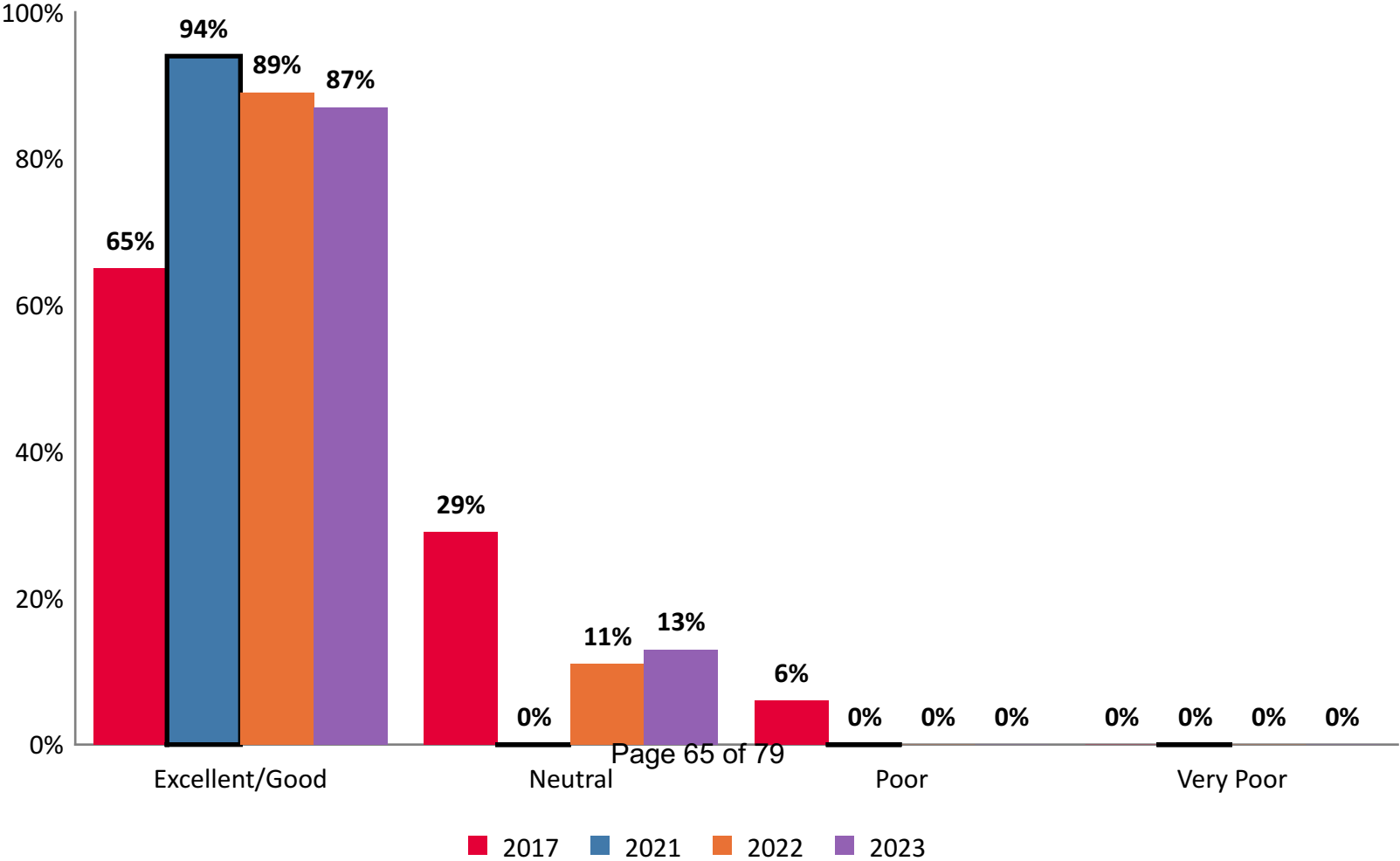
**87%** of members felt Member Enquiries supported them effectively to undertake their role as a County Councillor.

# Which of the categories best describe the type of enquiries you submit to Member Enquiries?

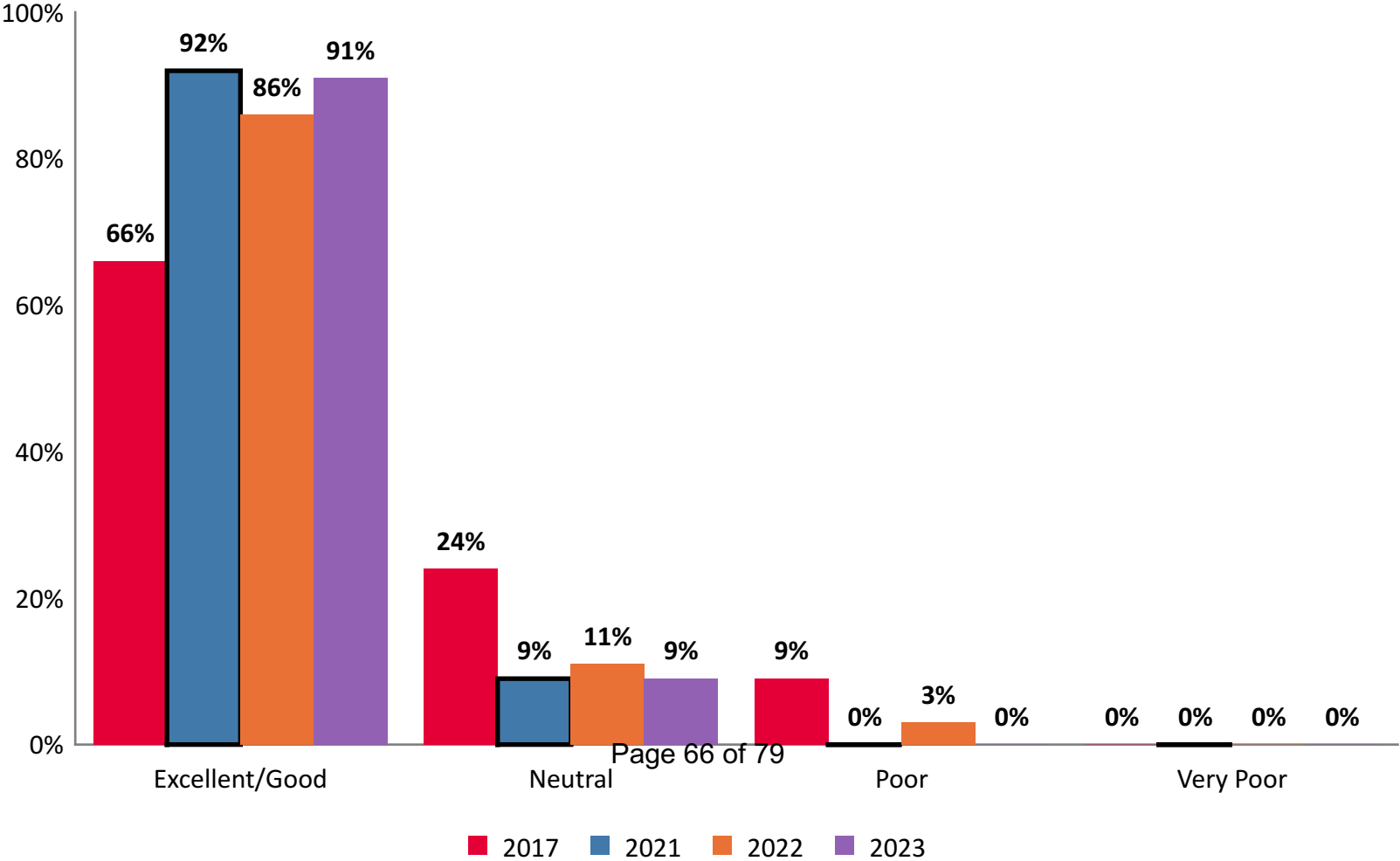




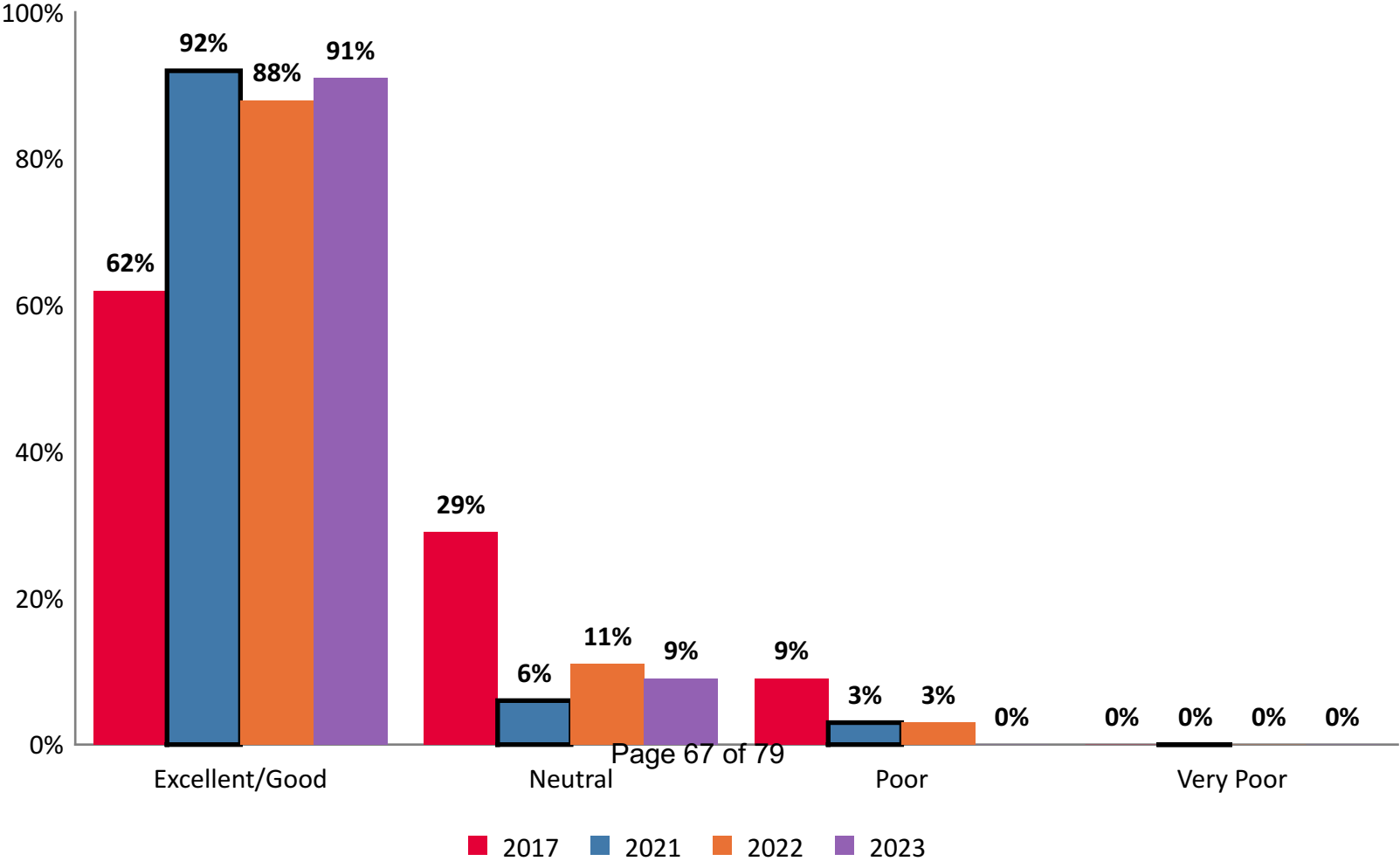
# With regard to the response you receive from Member Enquiries, how would you describe the quality of the response in terms of style?



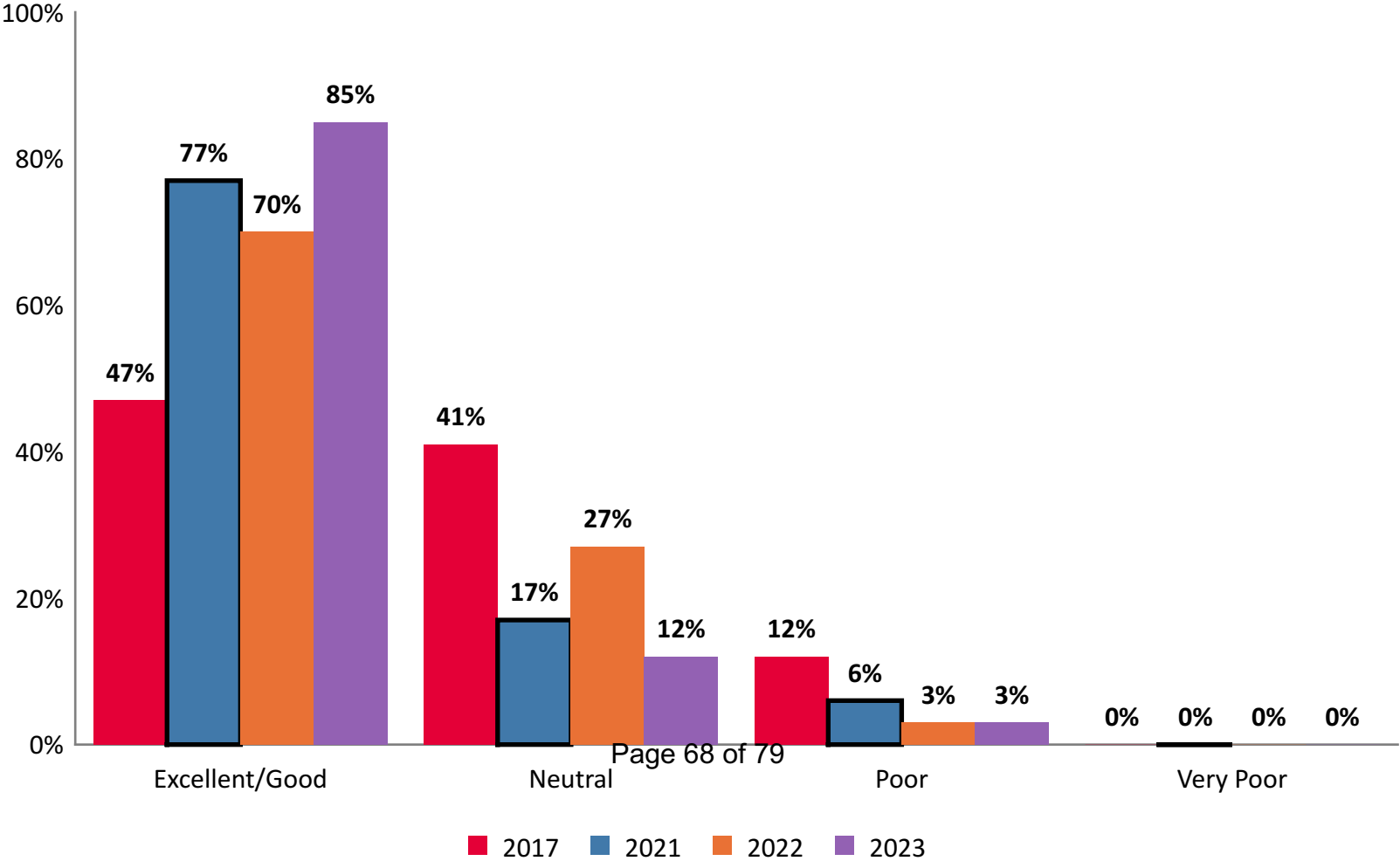
# With regard to the response you receive from Member Enquiries, how would you describe the accuracy of information?



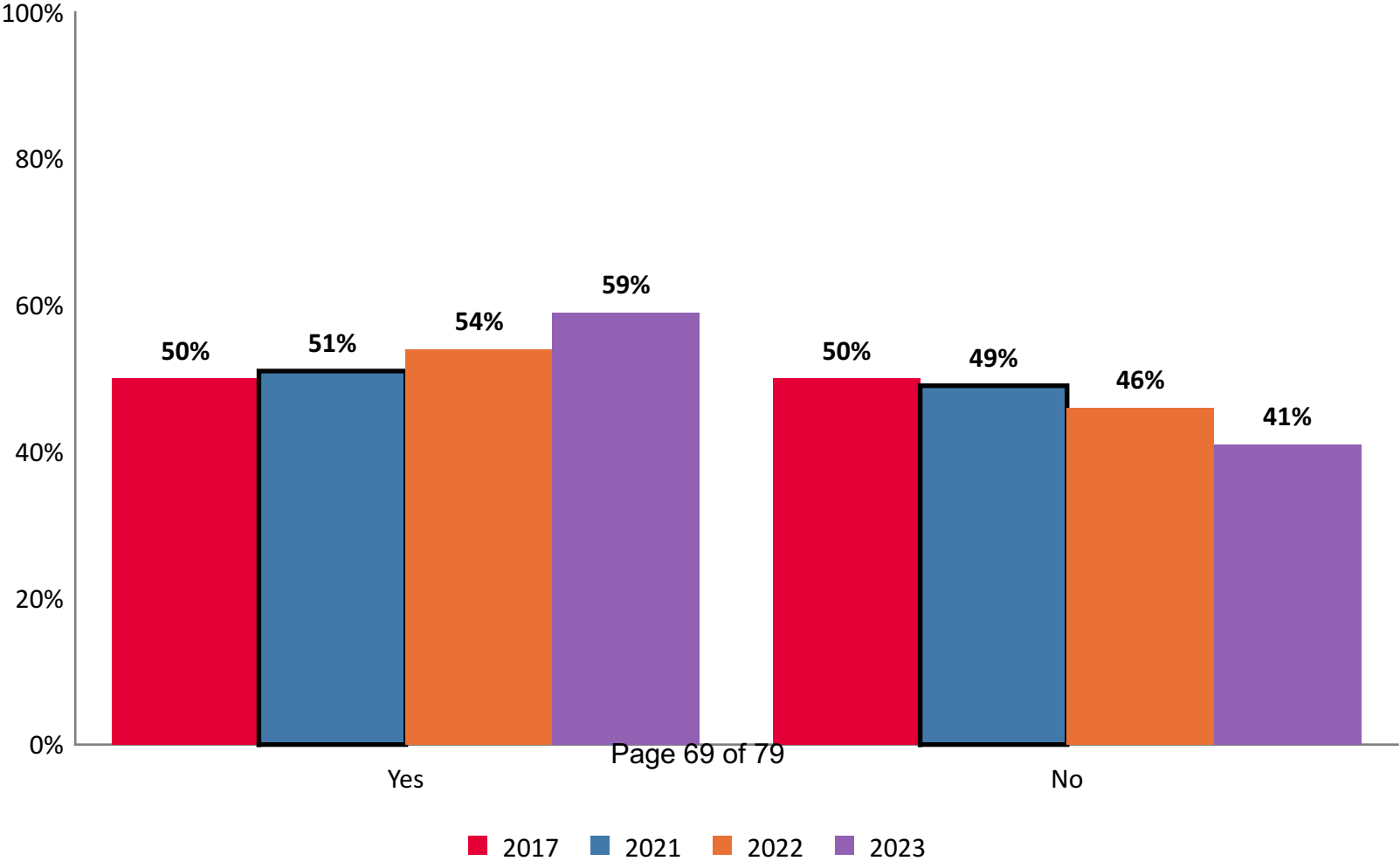
# With regard to the response you receive from Member Enquiries, how would you describe the helpfulness of information?



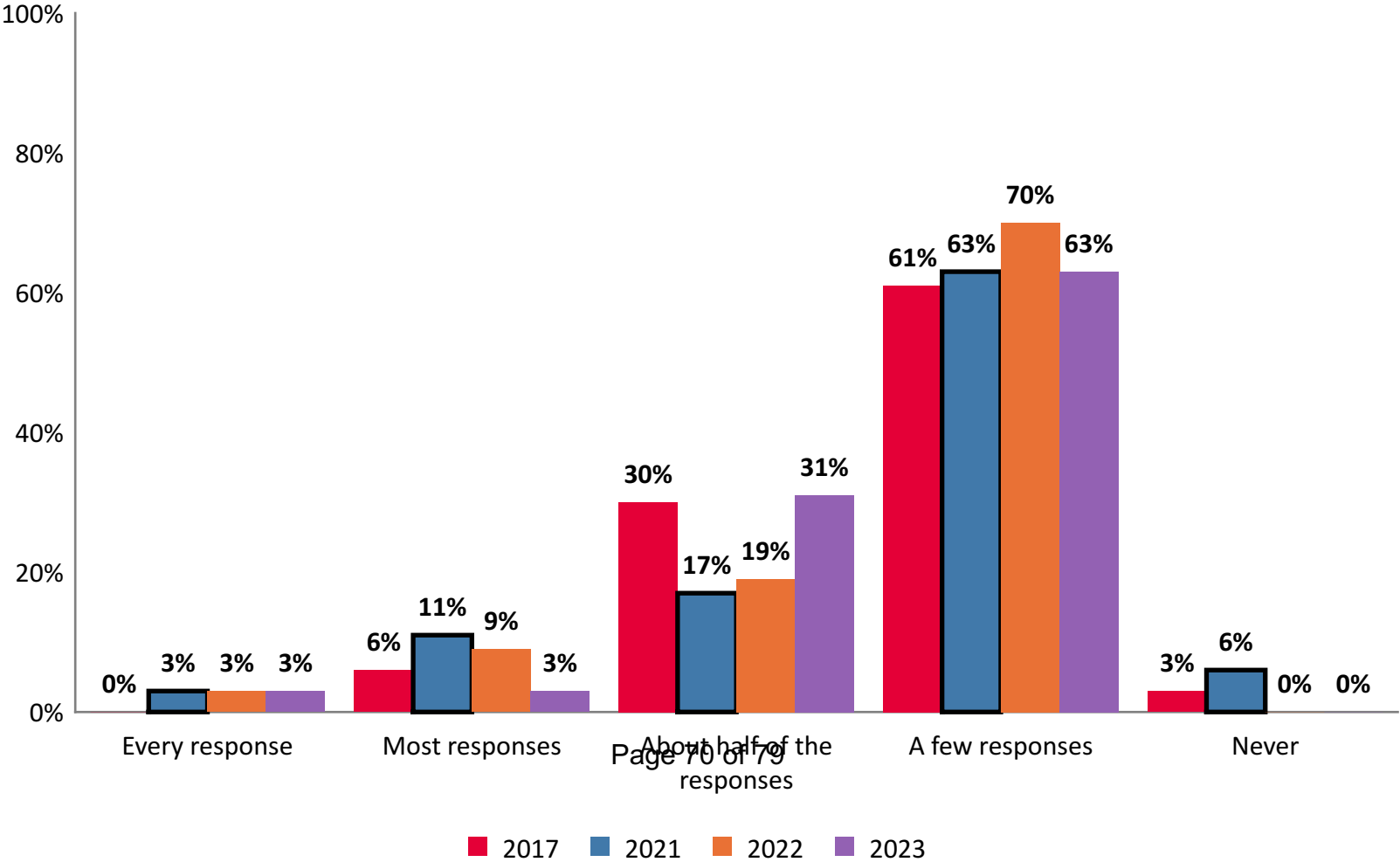
# With regard to the response you receive from Member Enquiries, how would you describe the completeness of information?



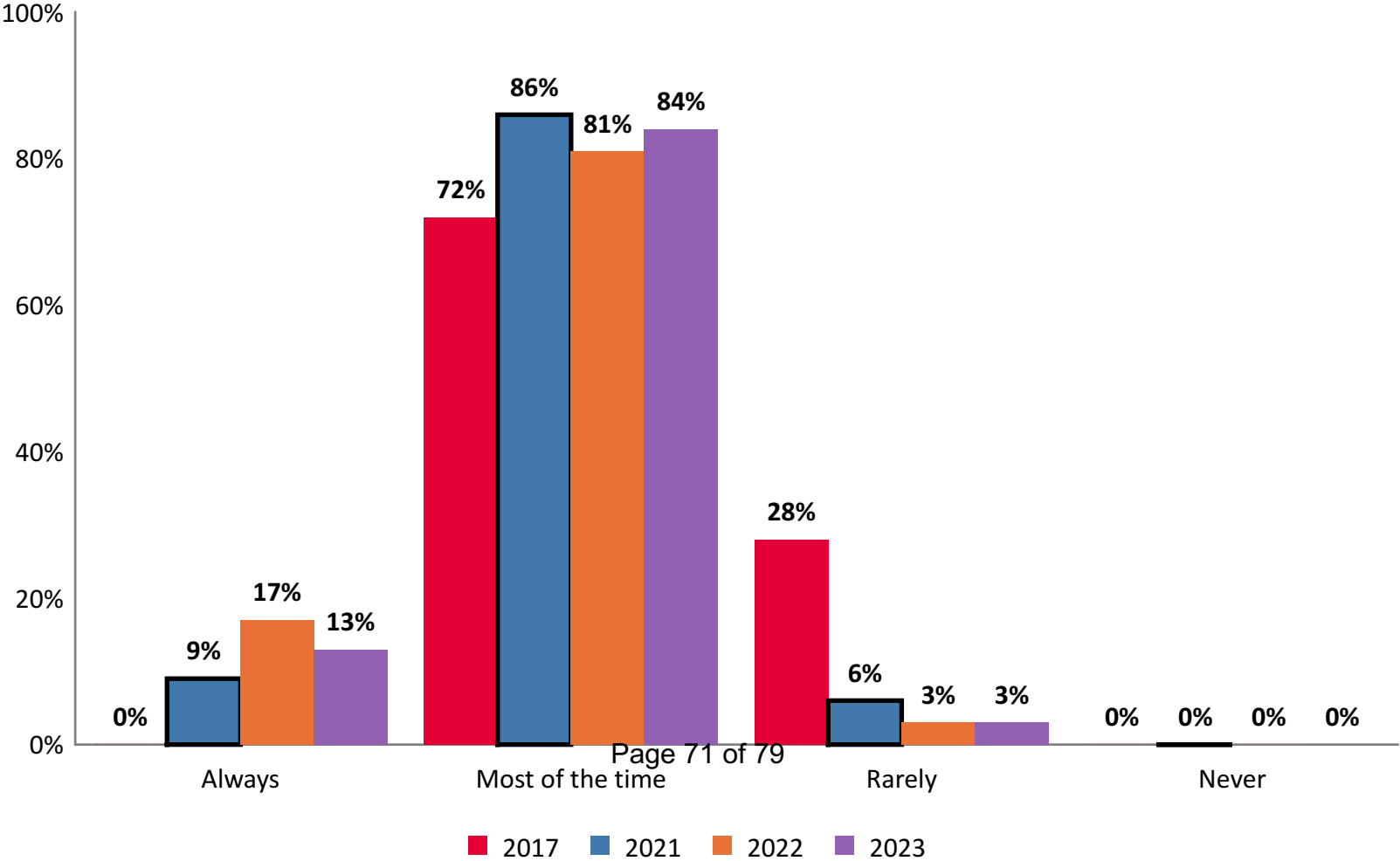
# Member Enquiries has a 10-working day target for responding to enquiries. Is this fast enough?



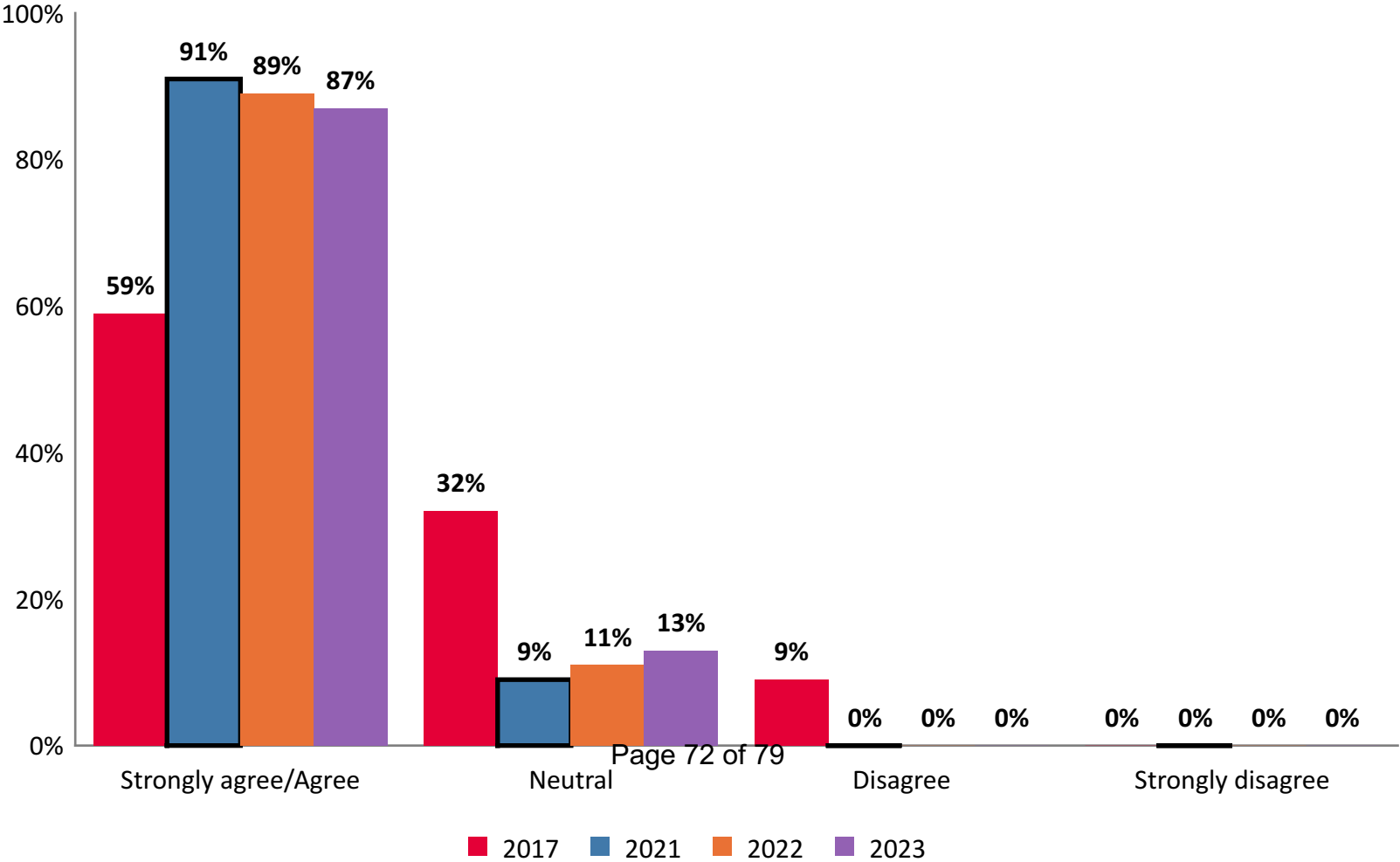
# How often do you seek (or feel you want to seek) clarification on a response that Member Enquiries have provided to you?



# How often are you satisfied with the overall outcome of your enquiry?

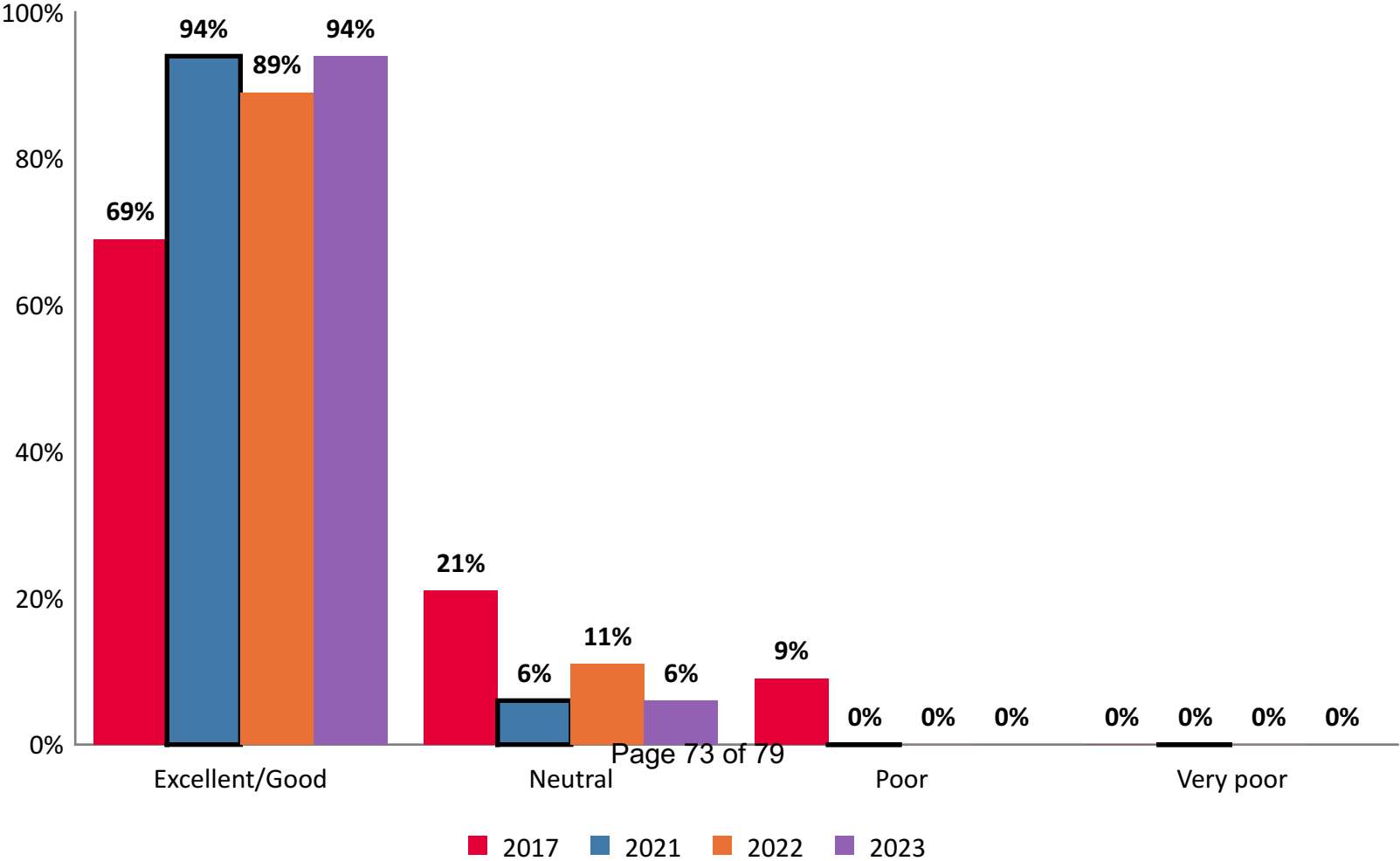


# Based on your experience to date, do Member Enquiries support you effectively to undertake your job as a County Councillor?





# Overall, how would you rate the Member Enquiries service?



# Comments – Member Enquiries

Member Enquiries team try their best, getting info from service sometimes is slower than the team would like

Member Enquiries are very helpful

Always found responses to be most useful

This service is helpful, polite, patient and first class. Thank you. Please do not make any financial cuts to the service as it would be of great detriment to the public.

Well done to very good officers in ME

In my experience I cannot fault the service provided

In my opinion it is excellent - don't change it.  
Thank you

The Members Enquires team is fantastic and grateful to them all for the effort they go to find out answers to the questions we have received

This information is issued by:  
Essex County Council

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**Reference number: CPSC/06/24**

<b>Report title:</b> Work Programme and Communications Review	
<b>Report to:</b> Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 4 March 2024	<b>For:</b> Discussion and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> Not applicable	

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The work programme is a standard agenda item. The work programme for the Committee continues to be developed and the current position is outlined below.

## 2. Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider this report and issues under consideration in the Appendix and any further development or amendments.
- 2.2 The Scrutiny Board has asked scrutiny committees to also give consideration as to which work programme items may benefit from communications activity in order to promote the work of the scrutiny function both internally and externally. Members are asked to consider this when reviewing the Appendix.

## 3. Background

### 3.1 Developing a work programme

Work has continued on identifying priorities and future agenda items. This has included discussions with Committee Members, Cabinet Members and Officers as well as the other Policy and Scrutiny Committees via the Scrutiny Board.

This work has reflected the adoption of the *Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025* strategy at Council on 12 October 2021.

The current work programme is attached in the **Appendix**.

## 4. Everyone's Essex

The Committee should take account of the *Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025* strategy when considering the work programme and future items.

Particular attention should be paid to the strategic ambitions (and associated commitments and performance measures) most relevant to the work of the Committee. Reflecting the corporate focus of the committee, this could be more looking at the How We Will Deliver section and include scrutiny of effectiveness and efficiency, value for money, and the managing and prioritising of resources, so that investment can be made in the priorities set out in the strategy. It could also include scrutinising the People Plan in the strategy which aims to ensure that the County Council has the capability to meet the demands ahead.

**5. Update and Next Steps**

See Appendix.

**6. Appendix**

Current Work Programme.

**Corporate Policy and Scrutiny - Work Programme – 4 March 2024**

<b>Provisional Date</b>	<b>Topic Title</b>	<b>Lead Contact</b>	<b>Purpose and Target Outcomes</b>	<b>Relevance to Scrutiny Theme</b>	<b>Cross-Committee</b>
4 March 2024	Leader's Update/ Everyone's Essex Strategy	Leader/Deputy Leader/ Director, Policy and the Head of Performance & Business Intelligence	To consider the latest quarterly performance update to monitor progress.	Scrutiny of the Everyone's Essex Strategy	Scrutiny Chairmen and VCs invited
4 March 2024	Member Enquiries Service	Deputy Leader, cabinet Member for Levelling Up, and the Economy	To consider an update including feedback from the recent member survey	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Not applicable
28 March 2024	Levelling Up	Deputy Leader/ Head of Levelling Up Co-ordination	To consider the latest Annual Report	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Scrutiny Chairmen and VCs invited
Spring 2024 TBC	Property Strategy update	Chancellor of Essex/Director: Property and Investment & Delivery	Further update to include how the core estate is meeting climate targets	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	TBC
Spring 2024 TBC	Facilities Management contract review	Chancellor of Essex/ Director: Property and Investment & Delivery	Annual performance review, identifying savings, and social value	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Not applicable
Spring 2024 TBC	Insurance	Chancellor of Essex/Risk and Insurance Manager	To consider (i) policies to cover highways damage (ii) approach towards risk and insurance and spend	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Not applicable
April/May 2024 TBC	Council owned 'for profit' organisations	Chancellor of Essex/ Director Finance	To understand investments and current approach and performance (to align with Annual Report)	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Not applicable

<b>Provisional date</b>	<b>Topic Title</b>	<b>Lead Contact</b>	<b>Purpose and Target Outcomes</b>	<b>Relevance to Scrutiny Theme</b>	<b>Cross-Committee</b>
Spring 2024 TBC	Capital Programme	Chancellor of Essex/ Director Finance	To consider preparation and ongoing management of the Capital Programme	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Yes - TBC
TBC	Local Enterprise Partnerships	Leader/ Cabinet Member for Planning a Growing Economy	Consider the implications of the abolition	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Yes - PSEG
TBC	Essex Renewal Fund	Chancellor of Essex/ Director Finance	Follow-up to include evidence of business and outside partner support	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Yes - PSEG
TBC	Infrastructure Funding / developer contributions	Cabinet Member, Planning a Growing Economy/ Lead Infrastructure Planning and Finance Manager	To consider the latest IFS annual report and further information on developer contributions	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Yes – TBC
Quarterly – dates in 2024 TBC	Everyone's Essex Strategy	Leader/Deputy Leader/ Director, Policy and the Head of Performance & Business Intelligence	To consider latest update to monitor progress.	Scrutiny of the Everyone's Essex Strategy	Scrutiny Chairmen and VCs invited
Quarterly – dates in 2024 TBC	Financial Updates	Chancellor of Essex/ Director Finance	To consider latest update to monitor progress and challenges being faced.	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Scrutiny Chairmen and VCs invited
TBC	Essex Archive Services	Cabinet Member Devolution, Arts, Heritage and Culture	Future approach including use of digitalisation.	Ability to deliver Everyone's Essex Strategy	Not applicable

### Workshop

The Committee has requested that a private workshop be arranged to help further understand budgetary pressures, especially the component parts of the Home to School Transport budget and the specific pressures. Date TBC