

Motions under Standing Order

16.11.2

1. Academy Schools

Moved by Councillor Julie Young and seconded by Councillor Dave Harris.

This authority values and recognises the hard work that teachers, support staff and governors contribute on a daily basis across the County and their devotion to maintaining the highest standards of learning. We do however; have concerns that governance structures in Essex academies are not fit for purpose. More needs to be done to ensure that the performance of academies is properly scrutinised and that the institutions are meeting the needs of the communities they serve.

The Labour Group is committed to the concept of community driven schools that provide high quality learning environments irrespective of economic background or ability. Education is a fundamental right and every child should have the best start in life, without being subject to a postcode lottery. The future of Essex children should be left to choice, not chance. Opportunity, not availability.

In the spirit of local decision making, Essex should act as a pilot authority to reinstate democratic accountability for local academy schools.

Therefore, this authority commits to:

- Challenge current government plans to force academisation upon Essex families.
- Further lobby the Secretary of State to review governance and financial accountability structures in the existing Essex academies programme to ensure that the importance of scrutiny and due process is recognised at every level.
- Review the permanent exclusions system, as well as the admissions process, to ensure that vulnerable pupils are not being targeted in the interests of performance.
- Value and commit to protect the wealth of experience and local knowledge that comes from LEA appointed governors and elected parent governors to maintain their good work on governing bodies across the County.
- Commit to supporting teachers and governors in their efforts to raise attainment in Essex schools.

2. EU Referendum

Moved by Councillor Stephen Canning and seconded by Councillor Malcolm Buckley

‘This Council welcomes the fact that the Government is providing the people of Essex with the opportunity to participate in an In/Out Referendum on the EU, in line with its pre-election promise.

It resolves accordingly that this be left to the judgement of the people rather than the County Council itself expressing a corporate view on the issue.’

3. European Union (EU) Referendum

Moved by Councillor Nigel le Gresley and seconded by Councillor Jamie Huntman

‘Given the massive additional costs to this Council and Essex residents of having to comply with such EU legislation as the Procurement Rules, Agency Working Time Directive, the Energy Efficiency Directive, Waste Framework Directive and several other EU laws that impact directly on local people;

Given the likely sanction cost to this Council for any failure in complying with such EU legislation;

Given also the potentially crippling impact on various public services provided by local authorities that may result from the proposed EU/USA 'Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership' (TTIP) and highlighted by both the LGA and UNISON, among many others;

This Council believes that the removal of such burdens would significantly enhance its ability to fulfil its obligations to Essex residents, thereby improving services to them, and accepts that this would only be possible if Britain was outside of the European Union and regained control of its laws.’

4. Delivering First Class Services

Moved by Councillor John Spence and seconded by Councillor Kevin Bentley

‘Delivering cost effective, first class services to the people of Essex is the cornerstone of the work of this County Council with particular concern for children, the elderly and the vulnerable. This will require us to continually adapt our services for the needs of the modern world and fast changing technologies. It also requires us to work creatively and imaginatively with communities and other partners.

We invite all parties to join us in committing to innovation; bringing forward new ideas that enable us to preserve the best traditional services, adapt them to meet modern demands and offer the best value to the taxpayers of Essex.'

5. Concerns Regarding the Education White paper

Moved by Councillor Mike Mackrory and seconded by Councillor Jon Whitehouse

'This Council meeting notes:

- the high quality of schools in Essex, where 82% of schools are now good or outstanding;
- the excellent relationship between the Council and schools, all focused on delivering the best education possible so that each of the young people of Essex can attain their full potential;
- the invaluable role of elected parent governors and local authority governors, acting as "critical friends" to both support head teachers and hold them to account; and
- the relatively small number of Primary/Junior/Infant schools in Essex that have thus far chosen to become an academy.

This Council therefore notes with great concern the recently published Education White Paper "Educational Excellence Everywhere", including proposals which will:

- force all schools to become academies, irrespective of each school's wishes;
- transfer the land and buildings of such schools from being owned by local residents through their local authority to central ownership by the Secretary of State;
- remove the requirement for schools to elect parent governors;
- leave local authorities with the responsibility for various aspects of the education system, including provision of sufficient school places, whilst apparently "freeing schools from local authority control"; and
- allow head teachers more flexibility in relation to using unqualified teachers.

This Council believes that the Education White Paper is fundamentally flawed, seeking to force onto schools the choices which Central Government believes are best for them but which they are not choosing to take for themselves, disguised as promoting choice and freedom, when there is no evidence that academy status always helps schools to deliver better education outcomes.

This Council further believes that forcing schools to become academies against their wishes is undemocratic and should be left to local people and local councillors to decide, and that the resulting education system will become ever more polarised and unsustainable, harming the life chances of a generation of young people.

This Council also notes that the Leaders of all the political groups at the Local Government Association have written to the Secretary of State expressing their serious concerns over these proposals.

This Council therefore resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to also write to the Secretary of State, as have other counties such as Hampshire, Oxfordshire and West Sussex, asking her to:

- think again about forcing schools to become academies, instead designing a system which allows academy and non-academy schools to co-exist in a sustainable way, to ensure school places and education quality can be delivered for all our young people;
- think again about allowing schools to remove elected parents from their governing bodies when we should be encouraging them in their role and influence in school management;
- think again about all of the other measures which collectively put at risk the quality of teaching and education outcomes.

This Council further resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to all Essex MPs and Working Peers requesting their response to the White Paper and, for those who support the White Paper, asking them to demonstrate how the proposals will improve educational outcomes in Essex.'