
Essex County Council Meeting 12 December 2017

Answers to Written Questions

Agenda Item 11

1. By Councillor Blackwell of the Cabinet Member for Highways

'Could the Cabinet Member advise if the policy on highway trees is not to maintain but to remove them as highway trees on Canvey Island are being removed.'

Reply

'We aspire to maintain highway trees where possible; however across a network covering more than 5000 miles of road, with more than 1,500 structures and 127,000 street lights, safety needs to be our priority.

If trees are assessed as being dangerous they are removed and are unlikely to be replaced.'

2. By Councillor Hillier of the Cabinet Member for Highways

'I congratulate the Cabinet Member for Highways and his predecessors for the progress made in improving the condition of the priority roads in the County over recent years. Could the Cabinet Member inform me and Council what progress can be made towards achieving similar improvements to the local road and footway network in future years?'

Reply

'In previous years we have invested considerable amounts in priority routes and local roads, with more than half of our £66m investment into carriageways going into improving the condition of local roads. On top of this is a further £9m for maintaining footways across the county.

Our budget for next and future years is not yet ratified, and still subject to change, but as ever a balance must be struck between maintaining the excellent condition of our priority routes and continuing to spend on local roads and footways in line with limited resources.

Essex Highways is constantly doing more with less, exploring new methods of

surfacing, new materials and techniques, aiming to save us money and help our roads and footways last even longer than they already do. We will continue to explore innovation and the development of new solutions, one of the many reasons Essex County Council won the National Transport Award for Local Transport Authority of the Year 2017.'

3. By Councillor Aspinell of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Skills, Infrastructure and the Digital Economy

'As the local development plan for all authorities is being rolled out, the information for local members regarding potential development sites, is that road access and transport movements has to be evidence based, before the potential sites can be rejected.

What is the Essex County Council doing in assisting the Local Districts in determining their sites?

Furthermore it is apparent that local districts are employing or commissioning outside agency consultants to deliver a model to demonstrate the viability or not of these sites. However, it is my understanding from our highways department that County Highways have to assess that model, test it and either agree or not with it. Would it not, therefore, be sensible and more cost effective for us, the County Council, to undertake this work in the first place for every district, after all, it is our road network.'

Reply

'Local Planning Authorities have to undertake detailed evidence work to support the development of a compliant local plan. Essex County Council is fully supportive to District/Borough and City Councils in the development of their local plans at all stages including attendance alongside the planning authority at Examination with the Planning Inspectorate as well as providing support in specific evidence base preparation.

Some of the evidence work is very specialised meaning that outside assistance is often required in the form of consultancy firms. It is a decision for the Local Planning Authority on how they procure this outside assistance. With highways and transportation evidence base building our preference would be that, where capacity allows to meet Planning Authorities timescales, a planning authority undertakes this work with the County Council's specialist advisers given that it is the Highways Authority who will need to be comfortable with the evidence work being provided so that it can support the planning authority through to Examination. At present nine of the twelve districts/borough/city councils adopt this principle and three have decided to commission separate transportation consultants to prepare the evidence base. However, whichever approach is taken the Highways Authority still need to review and be comfortable with the evidence being provided and the county council will work closely with those who use their own consultants through agreement of methodology and formulas used.

The viability work referenced in the question is a separate and broader piece of activity looking at all aspects of development viability, distinct from the transport evidence that we undertake. Both are required to secure a successful plan through the examination process.'

4. By Councillor Aspinell of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

'The Government has changed planning legislation and local authorities now no longer decide upon sewerage or drainage issues within a planning application. The Local Water and Sewerage operators, i.e. Essex and Suffolk Water and Anglia, have written to me denying any responsibility at planning stage. The Environment Agency say they have no decision making powers either and are just used as consultees during the application procedure.

Local building control are side-lined on this matter when the NHBC (National House Building Council) are involved and we have now developments going ahead that have no sewerage or drainage plans submitted and no need for the local authority to consider whether or not the application site is sufficient in size to take any septic tanks when the application site is not connected to mains sewerage or drainage. I have at least 3 examples of this in my own division. What is the County's role within this and how can this be enforced so that run-off's of raw sewerage do not permeate into surrounding water courses.

In a time when all authorities are looking at delivering a local development plan which includes so many extra homes, this issue needs to be resolved.'

Reply

'Planning policy guidance and legislation change constantly. However, there has been no change to the status of the Environment Agency, or the Water and Sewerage operators who remain consultees on both Local Plans and planning applications in order to ensure the necessary infrastructure requirements are properly accounted for and addressed. It is then for the Local planning Authority to determine the application before them based on the advice and evidence received, and in accordance with their Local Plan policies and any national planning policy guidance.

Essex County Council is a strategic consultee engaged in formulating and informing Local Plans, both policies and site allocations, as we are looking for the best sites and most sustainable sites to come forward, including sites that are not at risk of flooding. We are also looking for Local Plans to properly address their infrastructure needs. Since April 2015 Essex County Council as the Lead Local flood Authority provides advice on sustainable drainage on all planning applications for sites of 10 or more homes. This Council is also a statutory consultee on planning applications in relation to SuDs (Sustainable Drainage Systems), as the Highway Authority, Education Authority and in our Public Health function.

The building control process is a separate process to that of securing a planning permission. This process can either be dealt with by the Local Planning Authorities building inspectors or Approved Building Inspectors. This process generally follows once the developer has secured a planning permission.

Whilst the determination of planning applications and building control approval are not matters which county councils have responsibility for, if you provide me with details of the examples referenced in your question I will ask officers to confirm that ECC have done all that we can to support the responsible bodies in making their decision.'

5. By Councillor Sargeant of the Cabinet Member for Education

'The bus is the main form of public transport and has enormous potential to play an even greater role.

Effective bus operations: connect communities; improve productivity; reduce congestion for all road users by taking car traffic off the road; make the most efficient use of road space; give the jobless access to jobs; provide young people with access to education and opportunity; give access to health care and contribute to improved public health; and crucially, in these times, are the fastest way of providing additional public transport capacity to new housing and business developments.

The benefits of a reliable and innovative bus service are clear. But we need more people to benefit from them.

The Bus Services Act 2017 gives local authorities the wonderful opportunity to

- Strengthen arrangements for partnership working,
- Utilise bus Franchising powers.
- Introduce modernised ticketing
- Obtain data from service providers (such as timetables, fares, bus patronage and bus service performance statistics). – Previously, there was no statutory right of access to this information.
- Obtain information from service providers on commercial operations
- And vehicle specification and branding (indeed, would not it be wonderful for the three seaxes to adorn every bus vehicle operating in Essex?)

The package within the Act if implemented will improve social value by: Better Journeys, Better Places, Better Value.

New enhanced partnership and advanced quality partnership powers provide a framework for local authorities to work side by side with operators to set a shared vision for bus services in our county.

However, powers in legislation do not help anyone unless they are put into practice.

Please can you kindly provide details of how Essex County Council plans to adopt the opportunities afforded to it by the Bus Services Act of 2017?’

Reply

‘The County Council welcomes the new powers for local authorities set out in the Bus Services Act 2017. Guidance from the Department for Transport to local authorities on how these powers might be used was released on 27 November 2017. The County Council is currently examining this guidance and considering how to make best use of the opportunities it offers.’

[Guidance on bus franchising creation, new powers and opportunities and enhanced partnership creation can be found online.](#)

6. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Education

‘Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on finding a new operator to operate the 104 and 106 bus services?’

Reply

‘Following the decision by Regal Busways Ltd to cease trading from 27th December 2017, these services have been novated to Nelsons Independent Buses Ltd (NIBs). The contract is due to expire on 25/07/2020 and is at no extra cost to Essex County Council. NIBs is a well-respected local operator with a long term involvement in the Basildon area. It has a good track record for running reliable bus services. It is expected that they will bring this experience to their operation of the 104/106 service.’

7. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Education

‘Will the Cabinet Member consider increasing the frequency of the bus service through London Road (Vange) from the Five Bells to the Clay Hill Road junction of London Road?’

Reply

‘No, there is no intention to extend the service at this time.’

8. By Councillor Sargeant of the Cabinet Member for Highways

'I have submitted 18 Traffic Regulation Order requests in 20 months for my Division. However I have been advised that the number of TROs put forward is usually just six schemes a year per district. Eight ECC Divisions cover the Tendring District footprint.

What can the Cabinet Member do to sort out the inertia of the North Essex Parking Partnership and district councils for ensuring proper protection of road junctions on ECC's highway by double yellow lines etc.?'

Reply

'The development and delivery of new parking schemes through the TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) process have been delegated to NEPP and SEPP via the Joint Committee Agreements. Both NEPP and SEPP have taken a similar approach in managing the volume of requests and work, given the limited staff resource they have.

In both NEPP and SEPP each member (borough, city or district council) is "allocated" up to 6 requests for new schemes each year; this balances the workload for the partnership and ensures an equitable approach is taken. The schemes are recommended/put forward to the Joint Committee meeting via the borough/city/district member.

Should a borough/city/district wish to put forward additional schemes, they can do so, but this needs to be accompanied by funding to meet the additional resource costs.'

9. By Councillor Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Highways

'Will the Cabinet Member provide a figure for the Council's expected total spend on temporary repairs of footpaths and highways for this financial year, and what was the total in 2014/15 and 2015/16?'

Reply

'We do not capture expenditure down to that detailed level; the spend for temporary repairs sits within a wider revenue budget. However based on the crews resourced to deal with this area we approximate that we spend roughly £700,000 per year on temporary make-safe repairs. This type of temporary is often an immediate emergency fix to a dangerous defect before a more permanent repair can be made.

On top of this, our 17/18 capital programme of highways and footways maintenance is £66m for roads and £9m for footways. This is the budget for surface dressing or

full resurfacing of roads and footways.’

10. By Councillor Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

‘In relation to the 2017/18 Financial Overview as at the Half Year stage, as presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2017. It was noted that the Waste Reserve now totals £90.8m and will have an Estimated Closing Balance of £100.8m. Will the Cabinet Member provide the total amount held in the Waste Reserve for the annual budgets of 2014/15 and 2015/16?’

Reply

‘The waste reserve was set up some time ago, anticipating the increasing costs of waste disposal due to both volume and landfill tax increases. The idea is to smooth the year on year increases in cost to the tax payer with net contributions to the reserve in early years being balanced out by withdrawals later.

The balance on the reserve for the last five years is as follows:

	Closing Balance £000
2012/13	61,803
2013/14	60,984
2014/15	57,611
2015/16	79,620
2016/17	90,890

11. By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Highways

‘Will the Cabinet Member please confirm the current Local Highways Panels budget per District?’

Reply

District	2017/18 capital budget	District contribution	ECC match funding	Revenue budget	Total budget
BASILDON	500,000			97,247	597,247
BRAINTREE	408,000			97,247	505,247
BRENTWOOD	225,000			97,247	322,247

CASTLE POINT	228,500			97,247	325,747
CHELMSFORD	500,000			97,247	597,247
COLCHESTER	500,000			97,247	597,247
EPPING FOREST	350,000	50,000	50,000	97,247	547,247
HARLOW	243,500			97,247	340,747
MALDON	200,000			97,247	297,247
ROCHFORD	214,000			97,247	311,247
TENDRING	395,000	50,000*	50,000	97,247	592,247
UTTLESFORD	236,000	50,000**	50,000	97,247	433,247
TOTAL	£4,000,000	£150,000	£150,000	£1,116,964	£5,416,964

* Tendring £50k contribution has been confirmed as revenue funding although ECC match will be added to capital programme

** Subject to approval by ECC Q3 Cabinet report'

12. By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Education

'Almost all ECC supported evening and Sunday services contracts are finishing in April 2018. Will the Cabinet Member confirm when a consultation will be held about this or information provided?'

Reply

'To clarify, the contracts finish in July 2018. Any consultation on evening and Sunday bus services funded by Essex County Council will be carried out in good time to allow the public to be involved in the process and for their views to be taken into account before a final decision is reached.

Funding for all discretionary services, including that supporting non-commercial local bus services, is under increasing pressure. However the 2018/19 budget has not yet been finalised. No decision has been taken in regard to ECC support for bus services.'

13. By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Highways

'Halo beacon lights are only used at a very small number of pedestrian crossings in Essex because of the very strict criteria. Would the Cabinet Member support a review of these criteria to try and improve pedestrian safety particularly at crossings with poor street lighting?'

Reply

'Our policy is to use halo beacons at zebra crossings in very specific circumstances; specifically when visibility of the crossing is considered to be particularly difficult for drivers. The halo beacons make the crossing stand out more, primarily because of how distinctive they are, therefore making drivers more quickly aware of the crossing and likely to slow down.

If we introduced halo beacons at more zebra crossings their impact would be lessened, because people would be more familiar with them and less likely to slow down. They also have an increased maintenance liability, with replacement beacons being much more expensive.

14. By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Skills, Infrastructure and the Digital Economy

'In the recent major statement by Chris Grayling MP about rail services, he spoke about the possibility of reopening old railway lines across the UK. With this in mind will the Cabinet Member for Highways be instructing his officers to undertake a full review of the old railway lines in Essex to see what opportunities exist in our county?'

Reply

'Essex County Council's underlying vision for rail services in Essex is for improved connectivity for passengers and freight; improving services between all stations, not just to London, in terms of overall journey times and improved passenger experience, backed up by improved integration with other forms of transport. The development of an updated Rail Strategy for Essex, to replace the existing 10 year old strategy is underway and we will be looking to consult on this in due course.

There are a number of closed railway lines across Essex. However, in all cases the cost of re-opening would be very high and there would need to be a clear business case for doing so based on the growth that this would enable and that there were not alternative sustainable transport solutions that could meet the need and offered better value for money. If through the Local Plan process a District, City, or Borough highlight that the level and location of future growth made the re-opening of a disused line a viable option Essex County Council will work with them and Network Rail to develop the business case.'

15. By Councillor Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

‘With the recent launch of ‘Let’s Talk Dementia’, what percentage of the Council’s public-facing staff have received Dementia Awareness training?’

Reply

‘There is currently no requirement for ECC staff members to undertake dementia training but the Council has been promoting *Dementia Friends* training which is delivered by the Alzheimer’s Society. The options for becoming a Dementia Friend include either accessing a video on their website or attending a face to face dementia information session. There is no requirement for staff to provide information about their role or functional or physical location – thus it is not possible to determine how many staff may be Dementia Friends. The Council has also commissioned the following training:

- 477 staff have completed Dementia e-learning (2015 to date)
- 650 staff have completed the Virtual Dementia Tour across ECC
- 325 ASC staff completed Advanced Dementia training (from November 2014 to October 2017) ‘

16 By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Highways

‘Will the Cabinet Member confirm what are the future plans for safer cycling routes in Colchester and what is the budget for this compared to 2016?’

Reply

‘This work is wrapped up in the Essex Cycling Strategy, which is being implemented through a programme of work overseen by the Cycling Steering Group, including representatives from boroughs and district authorities and cycling groups. The initial focus has been on developing Coherent Cycle Networks by producing area Cycling Action Plans, for Colchester the plan is quite advanced.

We have also recently been successful in securing Department for Transport consultancy support to develop Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP), the LCWIPs are accompanied by a suite of tools and methodology and will help us to plan and prioritise future investment decisions. By using DfT methodology we will be well placed for future funding rounds for government investment.

We are also looking at priority investment requirements in Colchester as part of a new transport strategy for the town which we are actively discussing with the Borough Council. This is being led by my Cabinet colleague Kevin Bentley in his role overseeing new Infrastructure.

Colchester has been prioritised in the programme due to its growth and cycling potential, building upon the legacy of the Cycle Towns programme (2008-2011) and investment already made through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). The LCWIP work will show which routes have a higher propensity for cycling within Colchester, this is likely to include both on and off carriageway routes and will commence in 2018. Once this has been completed, prioritised schemes would then be considered for future funding.

There isn't a budget for a specific scheme programme in Colchester at this stage, the level of funding will be subject to a full business case process once we have the list of priority schemes. However any capital investment by ECC would be matched either by bids to Government or SELEP funding streams and/or local contributions through S106 as part of our commitment to supporting the development of the Colchester cycle network.'

17. By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Education

'Is the Cabinet Member aware of how many schools are still waiting on repairs and maintenance and how many schools still have single-glazed windows? What is the budget for school repairs since 2010?

Reply

'Since 2010/11 ECC has completed 514 maintenance projects in schools with a budget of £60.95 million. ECC's robust asset management process ensures that issues that would pose significant threat to health and safety or school operation are dealt with first. Surveyors are sent to assess the maintenance need of schools that bring issues with single glazing to our attention and we will be replacing glazing in 4 ECC maintained schools in 2017/18.'

18. By Councillor Turrell of the Cabinet Member for Highways

'I am sure that the Cabinet Member for Highways is aware of the Highways Act 1980 and the New Roads and Street Act 1991.

Therefore can the Cabinet Member please explain why a certain utility company keeps shutting a major road in my division, Turner Road, without notifying residents? On Turner Road is Colchester's Walk in Centre and the General Hospital as well as being a densely populated area with schools etc. Turner Road is a Priority 2 Road near North Station Junction, Main Line Station and NAR2 and it is one of the busiest and most congested areas in Colchester yet the utility company keeps shutting Turner Road during peak periods.

Can the Cabinet Member please explain why this is being allowed to continue?'

Reply

'The closure by Anglian Water on Turner Road was for emergency works to deal with a burst water main. In the case of emergency works, we do not have the powers to prevent the utility company from undertaking the repairs required. The legislation allows the utility company 2 hours to inform the Streetworks section of Essex County Council. Once Streetworks are informed, the utility will be granted a permit for the emergency works and at this point, the works will appear on Roadworks.org.

Roadworks.org has the facility for anyone to identify an area of interest (such as a member ward) and set up a request for an alert as and when new works are identified. This option was set up, offered and explained to all members earlier this year. This is an ideal way for the public, members and others to ensure they get the most up to date information automatically.

In the instance of emergency road closures, our inspection team can monitor the closure to make sure diversions and signage are correct, however we are not able to make residents and members aware. We do encourage utility companies to fulfil their responsibility for this where possible.'

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

'Could the Cabinet Member provide the total increase in income received from changes to Fees and Charges implemented in the 2017 budget'.

Reply

'I understand that this question refers specifically to ASC fee and charges.

At this stage of the financial year it is not possible to say what the final income received from the non-residential charging changes will be. Last year we received income from both residential and non-residential charging, of £77.8m this year we are currently forecasting an income outturn from charging of £89.8m, an increase of £12m, of which some £10.3 m is estimated to result from the non-residential charging changes. This is some 4.7% of the forecasted non-residential spend.

These figures also take account of bad debt.

Officers confirm that our charging approach is compliant with the relevant regulatory frameworks.'

20. By Councillor Abbott of the Cabinet Member for Highways

‘As the Cabinet Member for Highways is aware, there is a long history of problems with HGVs accessing the narrow Oak Road in Rivenhall End and despite a number of measures introduced by ECC following local requests, the problems unfortunately continue to get worse.

Will the Cabinet Member agree to investigate urgent solutions and in doing so meet with local representatives ?

Does the Cabinet Member agree that as soon as the A12 routing has been announced, and depending on the implications, that ECC needs to deal with the long-standing Braintree LHP request for a new section of 7.5T weight restriction to reduce the number of HGVs running down the pavements in Oak Road and to prevent the repeated damage caused to street furniture?

Will the Cabinet Member look urgently at solutions to the repeated cases where HGV drivers breach the existing section of 7.5T weight limit in Oak Road and ignore the height restriction at the mainline railway bridge ? The frequency of over-height HGVs getting stuck at the railway bridge is increasing. It can take several hours for an HGV to reverse back to Rivenhall village. This can cause traffic chaos including queuing on the A12. It can lead to bridge strikes which require the suspension of rail services on the main line in order for inspections to take place. It has caused damage to private property and danger to residents as HGVs attempt to turn in the narrow road.

Solutions to these serious problems are long overdue. Does ECC recognise that calls for action are now coming from residents, the parish council, district councillors, myself as county councillor, the MP for Witham and the police?’

Reply

‘I met with you earlier this year to discuss the proposed weight restrictions on Oak Road, Rivenhall. We discussed the consultation that ran between December 2015 and January 2016 into this issue and some of the objections raised. We also discussed the forthcoming Highways England A12 improvements, which is to include this stretch of the A12, and the possibility that this project may supersede the need for a weight restriction on Oak Road.

It has been agreed that we would wait until the A12 announcement was made before a decision on the weight restriction was taken. Once this decision has been taken I’ll happily meet with you again to talk through next steps.

We anticipate that the A12 announcement will usher in a lot of questions about how the local and strategic roads interface and I am keen that we view the likely consequences in the round rather than introduce measures in a piecemeal way.’

21. By Councillor Abbott of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

‘Despite alternative models being put to it, ECC embarked on a centralised model for the handling and treatment of municipal waste based on road haulage to transfer stations and then road haulage to the Basildon plant which would handle all "black bag" waste from the ECC area, to be processed by MBT technology with the end output being "Solid Recovered Fuel" (SRF).

This SRF would then need further road haulage to a final destination(s) for incineration or landfill, either of which would be at further cost to taxpayers.

Is the Cabinet Member aware that in the last full financial year 2016/17, over 127,000 tonnes of municipal waste was sent to landfill rather than the Basildon plant for processing. Is he further aware that of the material sent to Basildon, over 223,000 tonnes, only 8.7% was recycled.

In what way does the Basildon plant meet its description as the Tovi "Eco Park" given this performance?

Given poor performance against initial claims, the legal dispute over the plant and the extraordinary "waste miles" generated by the centralised model, does ECC acknowledge that it made a mistake?’

Reply

‘During the current commissioning phase of the project, the operator of the facility, UBB, requests the volumes of waste it requires to test and commission it. As a result, the volumes requested weekly and monthly are variable. Waste which is surplus to the operator’s requirements during the commissioning period is sent to landfill.

However, over the last three years, the amount of waste the facility has processed (and therefore diverted from landfill) has increased year on year. This indicates that the MBT facility is enabling us to divert considerable waste from landfill.

Road haulage for the delivery of waste to the Basildon facility is kept to a minimum by ensuring that waste collection authorities deliver waste to their nearest transfer station or indeed directly to the facility by those WCAs which are closest to it (Basildon, Brentwood, Rochford and Castle Point). Waste delivered to the transfer stations by the Refuse Collection Vehicles is then loaded onto HGV ‘bulkiers’ which can carry three times more waste than RCVs and transport the waste in bulk to the Basildon facility, thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the roads and ‘waste miles’.

The majority of SRF which is removed from the plant is taken over a relatively short distance to the ports of Tilbury or Chatham from where it is shipped to the continent,

a more environmentally-friendly method of transportation than by road.

The SRF is then used by certain types of Energy from Waste (EfW) plants to generate low carbon electricity and, in some cases, also heat for businesses and/or homes.

Using this waste product as a fuel rather than sending it to landfill means that it can provide further valuable resource.

This is in line with residents' wishes - in the 2008 Waste Strategy Consultation, 87.7% of Essex residents who took part said they would prefer it if part of the material from the MBT process was used to produce a fuel for energy rather than sending it to landfill.'

22. By Councillor Davies of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families

'After an extremely disappointing Autumn Budget from the Chancellor with no additional funding for children's services, what is the Council's current funding gap for Children's services in Essex?'

Reply

'Latest estimates project an overspend across Children and Families of £4.9M.'

23. By Councillor Davies of the Cabinet Member for Highways

'Could the Cabinet Member explain what steps the Council is taking to tackle the ever growing critical issue of too many parked cars on local roads, which can lead to dangerous parking or residents having to park several streets away?'

Reply

'We have delegated the function to NEPP and SEPP who enforce existing restrictions and who both have processes to implement new schemes to manage parking on local roads through implementing restrictions, residents permit schemes, on street pay and display etc.

More information on the [Parking Partnerships website](#)'

24. By Councillor Baker of the Leader of the Council

‘Could the Leader assure members that, with regard to the UK leaving the European Union following the triggering of Article 50, all possible implications (both positive and negative) affecting Essex are regularly reviewed and reported to Full Council, in particular as it affects:

1. The work of Essex County Council;
2. Businesses across Essex;
3. Significant organisations such as hospitals, universities and colleges of further education situated in Essex;
4. Sea ports and airports;
5. EU citizens living within the boundaries of ECC and UK citizens from Essex living in other EU countries.’

Reply

‘Brexit negotiations are ongoing and we, like other bodies, are monitoring national and international developments closely as well as monitoring trends locally. As you will be aware Councillor Bentley has been appointed the LGA’s Brexit lead. We will update Council periodically on implications as they become clearer, at the moment implications are unclear.

25. By Councillor Baker of the Cabinet Member for Education

‘According to figures published by the House of Commons Library, Essex schools on average face a real terms cut per pupil of £12 per annum. As a consequence of this cut in government funding on top of seven years of no real terms increase in school budgets – according to the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) – funding for education is currently at ‘breaking point’.

Could the Cabinet Member confirm that everything possible is being done to support those schools in Essex which are the responsibility of Essex County Council in relation to:

- Schools in deficit; and
- Schools with challenges with regard to the recruitment and retention of key and other staff.’

Reply

‘The financial climate for schools, as with all areas of the public sector, remains a challenge. Whilst school funding has been protected in terms of the overall budget nationally, with the increase in costs for national insurance and pensions etc., I do

accept there has been a real terms reduction in schools budgets and the challenge of this for schools is raised regularly with me at the Essex Schools Forum.

In terms of support for schools with a deficit budget, the Schools Finance Team works closely with schools that are facing financial difficulties now and into the future. Officers have particularly been working with small schools (those with less than 120 pupils) to support their long term viability both in terms of budget and pupil numbers.

With regard to recruitment and retention, the local authority, in partnership with the Headteacher Associations, has put in place a recruitment and retention strategic group for the county. Officers will be working closely with this group in 2018 to ensure that this support is available to schools across the county. Outcomes from this group include an arrangement with two teaching supply agencies in Australia and New Zealand for the provision of teachers and a reduced cost to the school, a successful return to teaching programme, support to establish a school-led agency in NE Essex and a support programme for teachers in their 2nd year of teaching.'

26. By Councillor Turrell of the Cabinet Member for Resources

'Whilst I appreciate the cost reduction for having paperless agendas, has Essex County Council considered the implications of not being able to recycle all the hardware needed to follow this? Trees are sustainable and aid the atmosphere, metal and plastics are not.'

Reply

'There has been no increase in the amount of hardware used by moving to paperless agendas as councillors are already required to own/use hardware for their work at the council (i.e. correspondence via email with residents). In addition, we have sustainable disposal in place.'

27. By Councillor Mackrory of the Leader of the Council

'Will the Leader join with other Council Leaders of all parties, to lobby government to address the critical funding gap in Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Public Health in the forthcoming Local Government Finance Settlement?'

Reply

'I, my Cabinet and senior officers continue to engage with Government directly and with other cross party groups such as CCN and LGA on what is needed not only from the forthcoming Local Government Finance Settlement. But also in the medium term, we are feeding in to the national debate on the Fair Funding Review and the Business Rate Retention project.'

28. By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Skills, Infrastructure and the Digital Economy

‘Please provide the current level of grants and sources of funding coming into Essex from the European Union for this year and for the last four years.’

Reply

‘Over the last four years i.e. since 2014, we estimate that the current annual level of grants from the European Union into Essex is c. £11 million.’

29. By Councillor Reid of the Cabinet Member for Education

‘In view of the recent report on Period Poverty it is stated that 1 in 10 girls are unable to afford sanitary products. This causes embarrassment and possible loss of education as the young person is unable to attend school or college because the family are on a low income and have to make choices how to manage their income.’

‘Could the Cabinet Member look at the possibility of schools and colleges providing sanitary products free of charge to prevent this very sensitive situation.’

Reply

‘Thank you for raising this matter. Child Poverty overall is an important matter for the council and one that sits under the remit of the Children and Young People’s Partnership Board and therefore I will ask this board to consider this request as well as referring matter to the chair of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee. It should be recognised, however, that schools are accountable for their budgets and spending decisions so whilst the council may wish to raise this matter as a high priority ultimately it would be a decision of schools to use their budget in this way.’