

Mr Chairman.

Congratulations to you and Cllr. Johnson on your election as the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council.

Fellow Councillors, members of the public and officers of the Council, it is a great honour for me to return here as Leader and I speak for my Deputy Leader, Cllr. Kevin Bentley as well. We are both proud and privileged to serve in these roles.

In the past year we have continued to make great progress and brought new thinking and ideas to tackle the challenges that face not just Essex but the whole of the country.

Notable successes include:

- **94% of Essex schools judged good or outstanding** - three points higher than the national average and we've created over **2,500 additional school places**
- **Reduced the amount of household waste** over the last **12 months by 32kg per household**
- We have **the third lowest rate of children subject to a child protection plan** in the country.
- **Resurfaced over 400 miles of roads** – nearly 4 times around the M25 – and filled in **5,000 potholes**.
- Helped **1,330 young people** not in education, employment or training to move into employment or learning

However, we know that we have much more to do for, and with, Essex to:

- enable inclusive growth;
- help people to get the best start in life and age well;
- create great places to live and work and;
- transform the council to achieve more with less.

And, as we approach 2020 when this Council will no longer receive any central government support we must continue to build on our successes and strive for innovation.

With all this in mind I have made some changes to the Cabinet, as I am sure you are all aware current Cabinet Members remain in place until the end of this meeting and I know they are all keen and eager to answer your questions!

I am now proud to introduce the new look Cabinet to meet the challenges ahead:

Cllr Kevin Bentley will continue to support me as Deputy Leader and will take on the whole of the **Infrastructure portfolio including highways**. This will result in a whole system approach to addressing strategic infrastructure needs, enable inclusive growth and creating great places to live and work. This year alone we will

invest over **£129m into major road schemes and maintenance and £14m in broadband.**

Cllr Dick Madden will remain responsible for Children and Families.

Cllr John Spence –will retain Health and Adult Social Care

Cllr Ray Gooding will continue his responsibilities for **Education and take on skills**, bringing a collaborative and systems view to improve levels of attainment and developing the workforce of the future. This year alone we will invest **£87m into mainstream schools and £17m into special schools bringing an additional 2,750 places.**

Cllr Simon Walsh will continue in his role as Environment and Waste portfolio holder.

Cllr Louise McKinlay will continue as portfolio holder for finance and gain traded and commercial services.

Cllr Susan Barker, will retain the Customer portfolio and gain corporate services.

Cllr Sue Lissimore will take on the Culture and Communities portfolio.

Finally, I welcome **Cllr Gagan Mohindra**, who will take on the new portfolio of Economic Development. Working closely with Cllr Bentley and Cllr Gooding Gagan will renew our focus on economic growth, ensuring we know what skills businesses need and that we have commercial space for them to develop.

We know that Essex needs more homes over the next 20 years, Gagan will work with partners across Essex to facilitate housing growth in such a way that the characteristics of the county we cherish are protected and enhanced. We are not just building new homes, we are building communities.

The team I have selected will bring knowledge and experience to continue the hard work and good results of the Council, and I know they are eager to meet the challenges ahead.

As I have said before: local government finances are constrained, and by 2020 this Council will no longer receive any central government support.

But, we have been preparing for this. We have delivered £350m of savings in the last 4 years by driving out inefficiency, innovating, generating income and reducing costs. This year we will deliver an additional £59m of savings.

Thanks to this financial prudence I am pleased to announce additional funding for our highways that have been badly affected by the severe weather earlier this year:

- **£2.5m** for pothole repair

- I am making **£1.2m** of match funding available for LHPs to allow more schemes to be delivered where district councils are also willing to contribute.
- **£1m** will be set aside to support our aspiration for devolving works to as local a level as possible, building on the work of the Place Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and;
- **£200k** for keeping Essex tidy – improving the appearance of highways and verges.

We will not relax in our quest to deliver lean, efficient and effective public services.

Mr Chairman, this Administration is the only one capable of providing the strong and stable leadership necessary to:

- enable inclusive growth;
- help people to get the best start in life and age well;
- create great places to live and work and;
- transform the council to achieve more with less.

And that is what we will do!