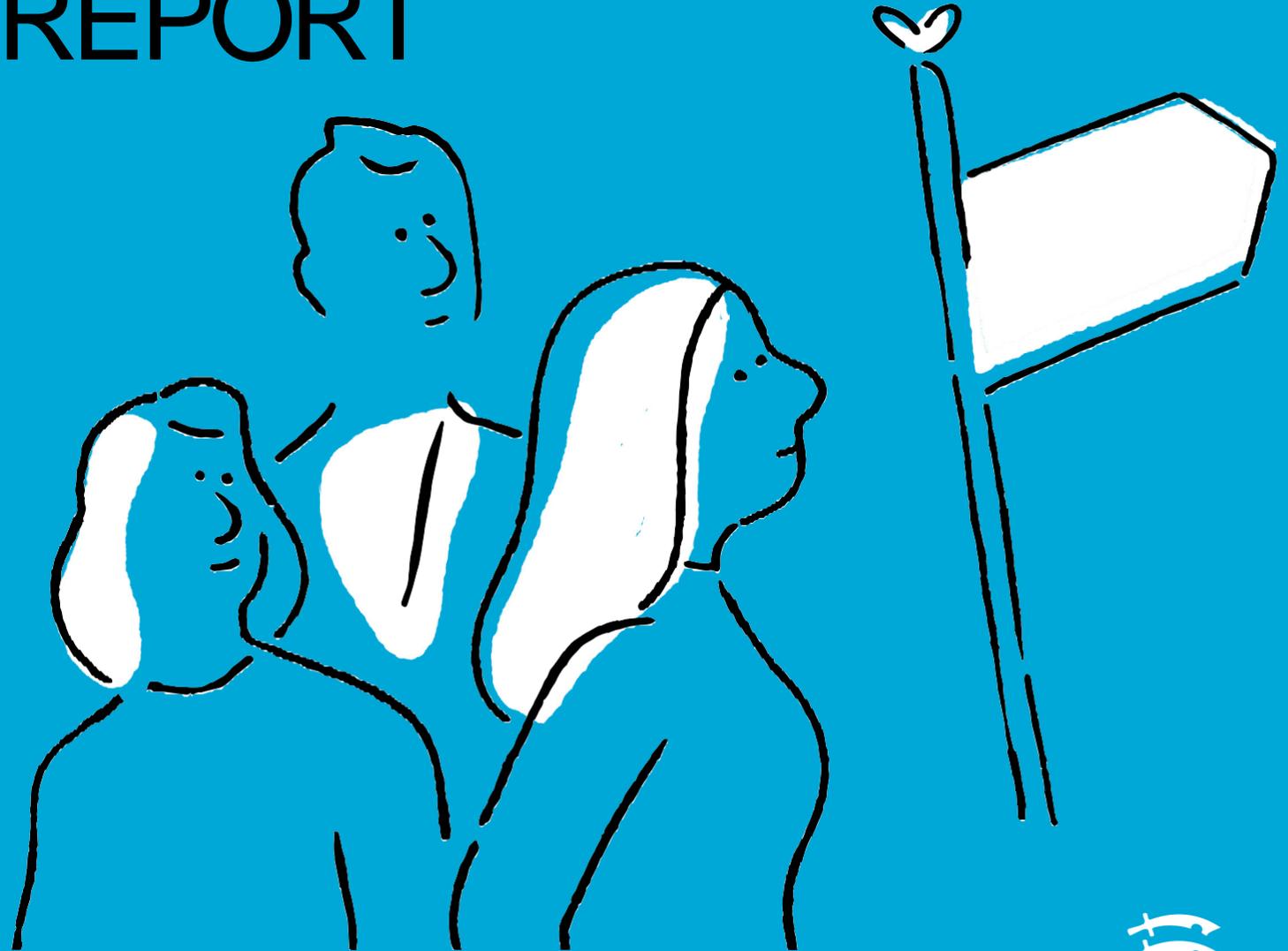


ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT



2018/19



Essex County Council

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FOREWORD

FROM THE LEADER

Our Annual Report for 2018/19 shares the progress we have made in delivering the aims set out in our 2017- 21 [Organisation Strategy](#). It sets out our key achievements, our impact for residents and communities and detailed information on our performance against our end of year targets.

We are proud of the progress we have made over the past year.

We have undertaken our largest ever consultation, exploring the future of libraries with Essex residents. Over seventy organisations have already come forward to express an interest in running community library services. We have secured a game-changing investment of £10.7m from Sport England to help increase physical activity.

We have invested in our county's infrastructure, delivering an ambitious programme of road repairs, over 3,000 new school places and working with government to submit a £546m bid to support transformational road and rail investments.

But we are particularly proud having secured an 'Outstanding' rating from Ofsted for our work in children's social care. This rating marks the culmination in a long but rewarding journey. It reflects our investment in our staff and in improving practice. We must now work to sustain our performance, placing the drive to improve the lives of our vulnerable children and families at the heart of what we do.

These achievements have been made possible because our staff and partners have shown passion and commitment in the face of challenging financial pressures. To offset reductions in government funding, we must constantly manage demand, reshape and reimagine services and look for opportunities to generate income. We must work tirelessly to bring investment into the county so that we can help make Essex an even better place to live and work.

We have high aspirations for Essex – and we are thinking hard about how to achieve these.

The digital revolution has opened up new opportunities for how services are delivered and how residents can access information and make choices. Increasingly, our job is to create opportunities for people and communities to choose and act for themselves, rather than to simply deliver services over which the public has no say.

We are at the midpoint of our administration. There is no doubt that, given our circumstances, we are having to make some tough choices. We also know that there is still a great deal more to achieve to deliver our Organisation Strategy. However, although significant change is likely to be the norm for many years to come, the chance to do things differently and involve our communities in our journey means we are also looking forward to an exciting future for the Council, but, most importantly, for the people of Essex and the communities we serve.



Cllr David Finch
Leader,
Essex County Council



STRATEGIC AIMS AND PRIORITIES

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

ENABLE INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH



HELP PEOPLE GET THE BEST START AND AGE WELL



HELP CREATE GREAT PLACES TO GROW UP, LIVE AND WORK



TRANSFORM THE COUNCIL TO ACHIEVE MORE WITH LESS



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- » Help people in Essex prosper by increasing their skills
- » Enable Essex to attract and grow large firms in high growth industries
- » Target economic development to areas of opportunity

- » Help keep vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfil their potential
- » Enable more vulnerable adults to live independent of social care
- » Improve the health of people in Essex

- » Help to secure stronger, safer and more neighbourly communities
- » Help secure sustainable development and protect the environment
- » Facilitate growing communities and new homes

- » Limit cost and drive growth in revenue
- » Develop the capability, performance and engagement of our people
- » Re-imagine how residents' needs can be met in a digital world

EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

We will tackle the causes of disadvantage, ensuring that all Essex residents can access good jobs and an excellent education, regardless of their background.

We will remove the obstacles that hold Essex residents back, tackling inequalities between children and supporting older people to live independently with dignity.

We will help make it easier for people to travel across Essex, bringing communities together and connecting people to services, employment and learning opportunities.

We will employ a diverse workforce, drawing on the different values and experiences that reflect the communities we serve.

2018/19 ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

ENABLE INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH



- We have overseen sustained growth in the Essex economy – growth in output, employment and jobs has exceeded national benchmarks.
- We have secured inward investment supporting 1,200 jobs.
- We have continued to deliver our Superfast Broadband programme, we have now enabled more than 120,000 homes and businesses to access superfast services through this programme.
- We have created more than 3,000 new school places, accepting almost 32,000 students into Essex primary and secondary schools.
- We have enhanced further education provision in Essex - working with colleges to establish Stansted Airport College, the Centre for Health and Development (Colchester) and to deliver the second phase of the STEM Innovation Campus in Braintree.
- We have made the case for transformational investment in key road and rail links – working with local partners and government agencies to bid for investment.
- We have cut the number of pot holes on our main roads by more than half and treated over 642 miles of road to prevent new potholes forming.

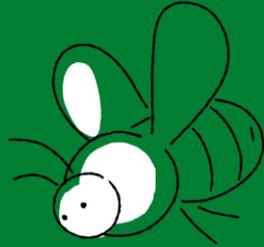
HELP PEOPLE GET THE BEST START IN LIFE AND AGE WELL



- We have been recognised by Ofsted as providing ‘Outstanding’ Children’s services and by HMIP as providing an ‘Outstanding’ Youth Offending Service
- We have established specialist provision, within our Youth Offending Service, to support young people to leave gangs
- We have been awarded the Social Worker Employer of the Year
- We have continued to reduce the number of permanent admissions to residential care
- We have reduced delays associated with transfers of care from hospitals to social care – helping to reducing pressures on the NHS
- We have helped ensure that more than eight out of ten care providers in Essex are rated ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’
- We have launched a major initiative to improve physical activity in the population and won £10.7m from Sport England.
- We have delivered a new community-focused approach to weight management and have redesigned local alcohol treatment services.

2018/19 ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

HELP CREATE GREAT PLACES TO GROW UP, LIVE AND WORK



- We have invested in flood protection, reducing surface water flood risk to 383 homes.
- We have worked with district councils and government to develop a strong partnership approach to support emerging Garden Communities.
- We have worked with district councils and the development industry to enable the delivery of over 6,000 net new homes.
- We have worked with district councils to help secure investment in local infrastructure from private developers.
- We have published the award-winning Essex Design Guide, including new content on digital, the ageing population, and Garden Communities, to improve new housing development.
- We have successfully limited waste growth enabling Essex residents to reuse, recycle and compost over 55% of all household waste, and making Essex one of the top performing county areas.

TRANSFORM THE COUNCIL TO ACHIEVE MORE WITH LESS



- We have delivered savings of £64 million against our budget, by developing more innovative approaches to the way we work
- We have completed the construction of two residential development schemes in 2018/19 (38 units) and established a pipeline of over 600 new homes to follow. Gross sales revenue in 2018/19 was £5.7m, delivering a net surplus of £1.1m.
- We have completed the majority of our organisational redesign making staff savings of £19m over two years and driving up productivity, most notably across support services.
- Developed a new, fairer pay and grading scheme for employees, including an investment of £3.3m.

RESOURCES

We continue to face significant financial challenges. We face tough decisions on where to focus our resources to best meet the needs of our residents and communities now and in the future.

We know that securing the best outcomes for Essex means maximising the impact of the resources we have. We do this by continually seeking value for money for the taxpayer: reviewing our services regularly to ensure they are modern and fit for purpose; reducing costs; increasing efficiency and generating new income.

We have an outstanding track record, having delivered £311 million of savings in the last 4 years. That equates to a saving £1.5m per week, every week, for the last four years. We have done this while delivering outstanding children's and youth offending services, cutting the number of pot holes on our main roads by half, and supporting our schools to be amongst the best in the country.

OUR SPENDING

Over the past year, we have spent over £2bn on making Essex a better place to live and work. Of this, around £1.85bn was our day to day spending on the services we deliver to residents and communities.

We fund services which support some of our county's most vulnerable people. For example, we spent over £650m on health and adult social care services last year. This includes spending on public health

programmes and on the support we provide to older people, those with mental health problems, and those with physical, sensory and learning disabilities. We provided support to more than 24,000 vulnerable adults.

We also spent over £116 million on services to support children and families. This includes services which helped us safeguard, protect and secure positive outcomes for vulnerable children. It includes supporting children in care and providing fostering and adoption services across the county.

As well as supporting and protecting vulnerable people, we fund key services that enable our county to function – services which we all take for granted, but which we cannot operate without. For example, we spent almost £90m last year on environmental and waste management services. This includes running recycling centres and managing over 1,000 kg of waste per household, recycling 55%.

We also use our money to fund services which contribute to our residents quality of life, such as libraries and country parks, and provide funding for local initiatives.

Last year, over half of this spending was funded by grants, (including from government), and from income we generated through fees and charges. Local taxes paid by local businesses and residents accounted for the balance: business rates funded 9% of our

spending while council tax funded 34%.

OUR INVESTMENTS

In addition to our day-to-day spending on services, we invested £255m through our Capital Investment Programme last year. Through this programme we:

Invest to Grow – making investments in infrastructure to enable, and respond to, economic and demographic growth.

In 2018/19 our investments have, for example:

- enabled 8,905 household and business premises to access Superfast broadband for the first time and some 3,240 to access broadband speeds of over 300mb;
- created c.3,000 new school places;
- through school expansions and the construction of new schools at Beaulieu Park Chelmsford and Newhall Primary in Harlow; and
- enabled the expansion of further education provision through Stansted Airport College, the Centre for Health and Development (Colchester) and to deliver the second phase of the STEM Innovation Campus in Braintree.

Invest to Maintain – maintaining or extending the life of current assets. In 2018/19 our investments have, for example:

- enabled us to treat over 642 miles of road across the county, rectifying carriageway and structural defects;
- reduced the risk of surface water flooding to 383 residential properties.

Invest to save/ generate financial return - in 2018/19 we have:

- supported the roll-out of LED street-lighting, reducing ECC's energy bill and carbon footprint;
- sold the first properties built through the Essex Housing Programme – providing award winning market housing and specialist provision for vulnerable people. In 2018/19 this programme generated sales revenue of £5.7m and a net surplus of £1.1m.

NEXT YEAR

We will continue to face financial pressures in 2019/20 (and beyond) and, in this year alone, will need to deliver a challenging portfolio of savings projects to save a further £60m.

Nevertheless, we will continue to seek value for money and invest in Essex. We will use all resources at our disposal to ensure we meet the needs of our residents and communities and that Essex continues to be a great place to grow up, live and work.

2018/19 ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE

This section summarises our key activities and performance for each key area of our four strategic aims, outlined in our Organisation Strategy:

Detailed information on our performance measures and targets is provided in the Appendix.

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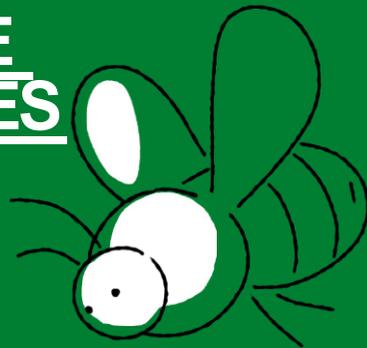
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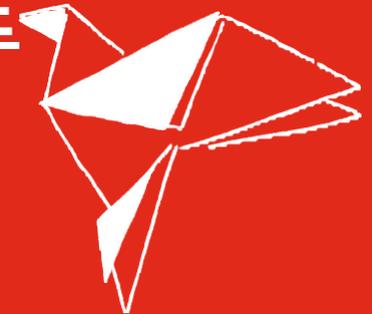
HELP
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TRANSFORM THE
COUNCIL TO
ACHIEVE MORE
WITH LESS



HELP PEOPLE IN ESSEX PROSPER BY INCREASING THEIR SKILLS

We know that the number of well qualified people in Essex has continued to increase, but that the workforce remains less well qualified than similar areas in the south east and the UK as a whole. Just under half (49%) of Essex residents aged 16 to 64 had Level 3 or above qualifications in 2018 - below the UK average of 58%.

Certain groups in Essex are significantly less skilled and, as a result, can face other barriers to economic success.

Over the past year we have continued to focus our efforts on improving skills levels within Essex – working with schools; improving careers advice and influencing education and training provision to better reflect the needs of both current employers and the growing technology sector.

ENSURING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

We have continued our work to increase the capacity and quality of schools and colleges in Essex.

We have delivered more than 3,000 new school places. We have reformed our approach to school support based on clusters of schools and started a review of learning provision in each district for people

0-19 years old.

We have enhanced further education provision in Essex - working with colleges to establish Stansted Airport College, the Centre for Health and Development (Colchester) and to deliver the second phase of the STEM Innovation Campus in Braintree.

90% of pupils in the county now attend a good or outstanding school, compared to 85% nationally, and in 2018, 63.5% of pupils achieved at least a level 4 pass (Grade C in the old system) in GCSE English and Maths.

IMPROVING CAREERS ADVICE

Essex County Council has continued to support schools and college Careers professionals through the Essex Network Careers and weekly bulletins that include information that will enable the establishments to progress their Careers Education and Information, Advice and Guidance Programmes.

We have also improved young people's understanding of career opportunities through the continued development of the Enterprise Advisor Network. This network provides a link between businesses and

schools, and there are now 37 Enterprise Advisers working across the county with a further nine to be matched with schools.

In addition to this, our 'Give an Hour' Campaign has identified, within its first two months, a further 26 people from a range of business sectors wishing to support school events that promote and improve young people's understanding of opportunities in the world of work. We will continue this campaign, building on these early results.

DEVELOPING SKILLS TO SUPPORT GROWTH SECTORS

We have continued the Education and Industry STEM Programme, supporting secondary schools to increase student uptake and continued learning in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Through this we have provided students with the opportunities to participate in industry led events, challenges and competitions.

We have played a direct role in linking employers in growing sectors with learners. We have created a health and social care hub to promote health and social care

careers to further education students. We have also expanded the Apprenticeship Promotion and Brokerage Hub – linking employers in growth sectors with new learners. 403 school leavers secured an Apprenticeship last year. This is a 25% increase on the previous year – bucking the national trend which saw a decline Apprenticeship starts.

WHAT NEXT?

In the year ahead, we plan to deliver 1,066 new primary school places and 2,198 new secondary school places. We will increase the number of apprenticeships delivered through Adult Community Learning.

Building on the success of our ACL provision, we will review our future skills focus and release a new Skills Strategy and Action Plan. This will focus on the importance of all age skills development and working increasingly with employers across Essex to understand their needs and the support they can offer their employees, whilst continuing to work closely with our further and higher education partners.

ENABLE ESSEX TO ATTRACT AND GROW LARGE FIRMS IN HIGH GROWTH INDUSTRIES

We know that Essex needs to attract large firms and improve the productivity of existing businesses to bridge the productivity gap that exists between Essex and its peers in the UK and overseas.

Through the Industrial Strategy, the UK government aims to boost productivity by backing businesses to create good jobs and increase the earning power of people throughout the UK. Our strategy is to ensure that Essex has a business environment that allows productive and knowledge-based industries to thrive.

PROMOTING ESSEX AS THE PLACE TO LOCATE

Through Invest Essex we are working to attract new businesses to the high-quality commercial spaces Essex has to offer, targeting national and international industry networks and targeted exhibitions, conferences and network events.

The Invest Essex service supported 61 Essex Inward Investment projects in 2018/19, leading to the relocation of 8 new businesses into Essex, including 3 large employers, and the creation of 1247 new jobs.

We have also overseen an increase in the number of Foreign Direct Investment opportunities that have been successfully secured in Essex, bucking a national trend.

Through the Invest Essex service we have also supported smaller businesses to develop and grow. This programme has supported 40 Essex SMEs to grow and has led to the creation of over 60 new jobs.

DEVELOPING SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Superfast Programme is working with OpenReach and Gigaclear to upgrade as many homes and businesses across Essex to access Superfast Broadband with the deployment of fibre to help increase economic growth opportunities.

In 2018/19 Superfast Essex has enabled more than 20,500 homes and businesses to access superfast fibre broadband. Meaning that over 120,000 homes and businesses are now enabled to access superfast broadband.

Superfast Essex has also secured a £5m DEFRA Grant to help rural businesses access full fibre broadband.

We have been supporting the development of strategic commercial space across the county. This includes the new University of Essex Knowledge Gateway Innovation Centre in Colchester which was completed in December 2018 and ARU's ARISE Harlow Innovation Centre on Harlow Science Park, which will open later in 2019.

Ongoing work is taking place in planning upgrades to the major road networks across Essex including the new Lower Thames Crossing, J7a on M11, A12 and A120 upgrades and improvements.

We have also secured over £3.6m from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to support the development of a new digital skills campus in Basildon and the expansion of commercial space in Epping Forest district.

WHAT NEXT?

2020 will be an important year for Essex businesses as the Essex 2020 Festival and British Science Week are hosted in the County, coinciding with the 100th Anniversary of Marconi's First radio broadcast. In addition, 2020 will see the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower and 200th

anniversary of the Beagle. It is envisaged that these opportunities will come together to showcase Essex and its businesses on a global scale, attracting greater investment and growth into the economy of Essex.

In 2019 ECC will be consulting upon and developing the Essex Local Industrial Strategy, feeding into the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Industrial Strategy which is due to be published early in 2020, setting out the key drivers for future economic growth in Essex and what ECC and our partners will do to support that growth to happen.

Alongside this work, we will also be preparing for the delivery of major infrastructure projects that will be coming to Essex in the coming years, including the new Lower Thames Crossing and a potential new nuclear power station at Bradwell in Maldon. Working with partners we will be planning to ensure that these major infrastructure projects will benefit the economy, residents and communities of Essex.

TARGET ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

We know that Essex has significant untapped economic potential compared to the rest of the South East. We are focusing our work to unlock economic growth on those areas with the most significant development opportunities, building on the inherent strengths of these places to unlock inclusive housing and economic growth whilst addressing the deprivation, disadvantage and inequality that exists in some communities.

INVESTING IN OUR KEY LOCATIONS

Over the past year we have worked with partners to better understand the potential for inclusive growth in four areas of opportunity: Basildon, Colchester, Harlow and Tendring. We have begun to develop a bespoke programme of work for each of these areas, based around a set of interventions that will secure long-term, positive impact.

As part of this, we are working in partnership to develop town centre regeneration plans focused on improving the vibrancy and attractiveness of key towns – success in this area will provide a catalyst to new housing, employment and leisure opportunities for residents.

In Harlow we have established a partnership to transform its town centre through better use of public sector assets. We are working with partners to secure investment to improve public spaces, develop new homes and business units, and redesign the transport network for the town, building sustainable transport infrastructure, allowing a better choice of travel and better connectivity.

We are enabling new growth as well as regeneration, developing new approaches to housing growth, focused on creating new, sustainable and attractive garden communities that will be accessible for current and future residents of Essex:

- In North Essex we are working closely with district authorities to develop plans to build 40,000 homes in Colchester, Tendring and Braintree and attract thousands of new, high quality jobs to the area.
- In Harlow we are supporting Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, to build around 16,000 new homes up to 2033, in East Herts, Harlow and Epping Forest, attracting good jobs, infrastructure and building quality places.

- In Chelmsford and Uttlesford we are offering support to four new garden settlements.

In each of these areas we have worked with partners to secure ongoing financial support from government.

We are also working to address issues in some of the county's most challenged areas. In Jaywick Sands we are working with partners across the public, private and third sectors, using our collective resources to enhance the existing housing stock and develop new, bespoke approaches to tackling deprivation and addressing disadvantage.

INVESTING IN ECONOMIC GROWTH

We have invested in the construction of the Stansted Airport College, providing practical courses in aviation-related careers, business services, engineering, and hospitality, retail and events. The college officially opened in November 2018, and was inundated with applications, over recruiting against its targets, with 279 fulltime learners and 17 apprentices.

Year 2 applications have been strong with 371 fulltime applications and 12 new

apprentice applications. The college anticipate further strong progression into apprenticeships.

The College has experienced overwhelming interest from organisations associated with the airport, receiving donations inclusive of a jet, equipment and training aids.

Harlow college is currently in discussions with Stansted Airport Ltd with a view to further develop training resources to include more airport related equipment and technology built into programmes.

WHAT NEXT?

Over the next twelve months we will lead work with the North Essex authorities of Colchester, Tendring, Braintree and Uttlesford on the North Essex Economic Strategy and Action Plan, which will help create the conditions for existing businesses to grow and attract new businesses to locate in North Essex.

We will take forward work with Tendring District Council and the Housing and Finance Institute to finalise and implement a joint action plan for the revitalisation of Jaywick Sands.

HELP KEEP VULNERABLE CHILDREN SAFER AND ENABLE THEM TO FULFIL THEIR POTENTIAL

Over the past twelve months, our work to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children, young people and families in Essex has been consistently judged as outstanding.

In November 2018 Ofsted inspected our services to vulnerable children and families and judged them to be outstanding. Our Youth Offending Service was also judged outstanding, by HMIP.

Analysis by the consultancy iMPower found that we provided the third-most efficient children's services in the country; and ECC won Employer of the Year at the annual Social Work Awards.

This recognition means that children, their families, and the people of Essex can have a high degree of confidence in the help we provide.

IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

We were awarded £2.1m over two years, by the Department for Education's Partners in Practice programme, to support other local

authorities, whose children's services require improvement. We are now working with 12 authorities, helping them to improve a wide range of children's services, successfully. In addition, we have been contracted as consultants by other authorities directly, generating a small income that will help strengthen services for Essex residents.

INSIDE OUT: ENGAGING WITH VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS IN CARE

Following a funding award of £3.1m from the Children's Services Innovation Fund, we have led work to implement the Inside Out pilot project with Hertfordshire and Norfolk county councils. The project aims to engage the most vulnerable young people in residential care, with intensive support, to settle them, and then safely step them down to family-based services. The project went live in June 2018 with 11 young people and is showing early signs of success: all young people have been engaged, and 5 have left residential care, saving over £100,000pa. The pilot continues in 2019/20, expanding into Hertfordshire and Norfolk.

ESSEX FOSTERING SERVICE

During 2018/19, we invested in adaptations to the homes of a dozen foster carers, and developed our therapeutic foster carer service, to enable more children to leave institutional settings and live in family-based care.

YOUTH VIOLENCE

Our Youth Offending Service is collaborating with partner agencies to develop a comprehensive response to youth violence. Setting up the country's first Violence & Vulnerability Unit, it will engage young people and help to reduce violence in our communities.

WHAT NEXT?

Our primary focus is to maintain the quality of our outcomes for children and their families. However, this does not mean standing still.

Over the four years of the Children & Families Business Plan 2019-23 we will:

- reduce non-contact time for social workers, by 10%;
- Increase the number of children in foster care placed with our own Fostering Service to 85%; seek to minimise growth in demand arising from poverty; and
- re-commission our emotional wellbeing and mental health services, to improve services to young people in 2019/20

We will continue to experience service pressures due to the impact of poverty, and the complexity of the difficulties facing families, from the impact of austerity.

We are developing a programme focusing on narrowing the gap in outcomes as we seek to tackle deprivation and increase aspiration. We will work alongside our key partners in Essex to identify what role we can play in tackling child poverty

ENABLE MORE VULNERABLE ADULTS TO LIVE INDEPENDENT OF SOCIAL CARE

We have sustained our focus on enabling vulnerable adults to live independently. We have continued to shift from reactive services, working with our partners in the NHS, the voluntary and community sector and the private care sector, to emphasise prevention and early intervention. We are reducing the need for hospital admissions and formal care services, and supporting recovery and reablement – helping people to regain independence following times of crisis.

INCREASING INDEPENDENT LIVING

We have supported more than 24,000 vulnerable adults this year, through a range of social care and support services.

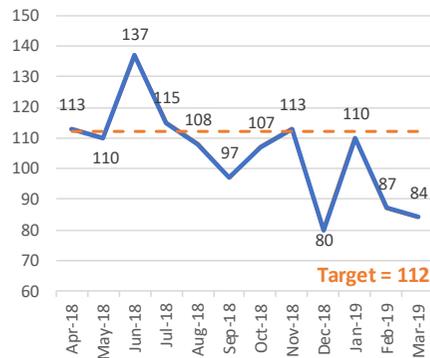
Particular highlights include:

- reducing the number of older people entering residential care by preventing crises, and by promoting both homecare and the use of assistive technologies; and
- rethinking our approach to accommodation for people with mental health issues, issuing contracts that emphasise recovery.

This has helped increase the percentage of people who are in contact with secondary mental health services and who are in

stable accommodation.

Admissions of older people to permanent residential care, Apr 18- Mar 19



Source: ECC A4W service data

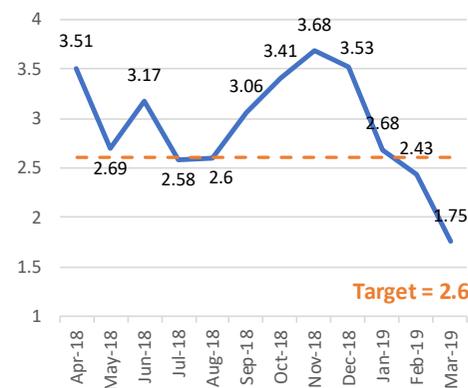
INTEGRATING HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

We have developed joined-up plans with local NHS partners for the future of health and care. This includes provider-led Alliances, Integrated Care Partnerships and the development of neighbourhood level teams.

One area where integration has had a big impact has been in reducing delayed transfers of care from hospitals to social care. By developing Integrated Discharge teams – including social care, mental health, reablement and hospital

representatives – we are providing long-term support following hospital discharge, and have improved outcomes month-on-month since Nov 2018. There were 1,400 fewer social care delays in 2018/19 than in 2017/18, and we are on course to exceed challenging national targets in this area.

Delayed transfers of care, occurrences per day per 100,000 Apr 18 - Mar 19



Source: NHS Sitrep Report, 18+ years

SUPPORTING PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

We have continued to innovate and drive new thinking. ECC's Challenge Prize focused tackling dementia was won by Wayback – a Virtual Reality film concept

designed to fully immerse viewers in positive moments from our collective past, triggering memories and helping improve the well-being of those with dementia.

WHATNEXT?

More than eight out of ten care providers in Essex are rated 'Good' or 'outstanding' but, over the year ahead, we will seek to increase this by investing in the PROSPER programme, dementia training and rolling out the Gold Standard for End of Life.

We will invest in public health initiatives to reduce long-term demands on social care and will further strengthen our work to support those with mental health issues and learning disabilities into employment. 16% of those with Learning disabilities are already in work – well above our four-year target.

We will also seek to develop digital approaches to improve access to information, advice and guidance for vulnerable adults and carers.

IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE IN ESSEX

Life expectancy in most parts of Essex is above national averages, but it varies significantly across different areas and is lower for vulnerable and socially excluded groups.

The fundamental drivers of health inequalities are inequalities in economic and educational opportunities. ECC remains committed to reducing economic inequality between more affluent and deprived communities, and giving all children the best chance of an outstanding education and quality of life (see pages 9, 12 and 13 above)

Avoidable deaths from heart disease and mental health remain key issues in Essex. Obesity, diabetes and dementia are growing problems.

DEVELOPING A JOINT STRATEGY WITH PARTNERS

Over the past year we have worked with partners to agree and launch a new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This strategy signals a commitment from across agencies to:

- tackle mental health issues;
- address the poor lifestyle choices that lead to obesity and related conditions;

- focus on disability and older age; and
- take steps to address the wider determinants of health.

We have also been instrumental in establishing a multi-partner Prevention group, focused on interventions that can help prevent poor-health outcomes. This group brings together statutory partners, businesses and local communities.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

Through 2018/19 we have strengthened our work with communities, engaging with local business, schools, GPs, and residents and developing community led, owned and delivered services. This approach has enabled us to reach further and engage more widely than we ever could by acting alone. As a result we have seen:

- a 30% increase in people helped to lose weight last year to 7,500 through community led initiatives.
- 2000 people trained in Mental Health First Aid; and
- 12,000 reached with our Suicide prevention training.

Through our work with Provide, we have also stepped up work with employers to

improve workplace health with a focus on mental health and muscular skeletal disorders. This has included offering mental health first aid training to 1200 ECC staff.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OBESITY

We have secured £10.7 million through a bid to Sport England to support work with partners in Basildon, Colchester and Tendring, to help increase opportunities for people to get active – particularly those who are older, disabled or in disadvantaged socio-economic groups.

We have progressed work with Braintree District partners to develop a system wide approach to managing childhood obesity. The programme – Livewell Child – has started to deliver significant gains. Children at the schools involved saw a reduction in levels of obesity while the levels increased everywhere else. This project will now be rolled out more widely.

WHATNEXT?

We will continue to build our work with local communities over the coming year. We will expand community weight management initiatives and roll out Livewell Child with other districts. We will begin to deliver the Sport England funded

pilot and will ensure 75% of our primary schools undertake the Daily Mile.

We will also pilot devolution of the whole drug and alcohol budget to a new Charity which will both seek additional external resources and commission user focussed services.

Crucially, we will influence and steer the work of public sector partners in tackling deprivation and disadvantage – focusing on the fundamental drivers of poor health and inequalities.

HELP TO SECURE STRONGER, SAFER AND MORE NEIGHBOURLY COMMUNITIES

We are supporting communities to help themselves by building community capacity and capability.

BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Over the past twelve months we have reached 250,000 people through Facebook. Through local Facebook groups, and links with their administrators, we have encouraged the community to help each other, using microgrants to provide support for locally devised projects.

We have convened Facebook administrators with interests in epilepsy, learning disabilities and carers issues to support the co-production of care pathways with the local NHS.

Our reach through Facebook is also helping us to tackle social isolation. Working with Provide, our community health provider, we are supporting Facebook group administrators with training in care navigation - supporting people to get to the right community, health and social care support. We are also building the role of Facebook group administrators as VIP high-value volunteers. Provide will help

Facebook administrators to develop community project ideas, access funding, facilitate meet ups and undertake training in Asset Based Community Development.

We are the only local authority working with communities in this way –defining the blue print for online community building and setting a direction for others to follow.

BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH THE VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR

We have worked to build capacity at the community level and within the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), working with partners such as the Rural Community Council for Essex and the Essex Association of Local Councils.

We have worked with partners to launch the Essex Community Alliance, giving community sector organisations a stronger voice and a vehicle to secure more co-ordination within Essex.

We have also reviewed our investment in the VCS ensuring that the resources we have are used to maximise the achievement of outcomes. A single point of access has been developed to optimise the

effectiveness of funded community schemes, including community agents and care navigators. We have also developed an approach to identifying our assets of benefit to the local community

COMMUNITIES INFRASTRUCTURE

We undertook our largest ever consultation exercise in 2018/19, on the future of libraries. Over 21,000 people have taken part in the debate and shared their views. More than seventy community groups have expressed an interest in running community-led libraries.

We have continued to invest to establish vibrant hubs in our communities that include library and registration services with other partners and our communities

SAFER AND STRONGER

The newly integrated Health and Justice Services across Essex (Street Triage, Police Custody Healthcare and Liaison and Diversion) have been mobilised to support reductions in re-offending.

We have worked with partners to improve ‘community sentencing’ and ‘out of court

disposals’ to reduce levels of offending.

Crucially, we continue to work to improve the lives of those impacted by domestic abuse. Our campaigns have resulted in more people reporting abuse to the police and accessing our community services for support. The Drive programme - a new approach to holding perpetrators of domestic abuse to account – has helped deliver substantial reductions in physical abuse, sexual abuse harassment, stalking and controlling behaviours.

WHAT NEXT?

Over the next year, we will:

- continue to fund training for Facebook admins and the groups they support;
- work with Facebook administrators to develop a welcome pack for new residents; and
- further strengthen our work to tackle social isolation, launching our ‘United in-kind’ social movement and befriending service; and
- work with local communities to establish a network of community-led libraries.

HELP SECURE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

We want to protect the environment for current and future generations. At the centre of our approach to this is our developing Green Infrastructure Strategy which will take a positive approach to enhancing, protecting and creating an inclusive and integrated network of high-quality green spaces across Essex

PROTECTING COMMUNITIES FROM FLOODING

Over the past year we have delivered a programme of flood protection schemes reducing the risk of surface water flooding in 383 properties. Over 1,000 properties have seen a reduction in surface water flood risk since the beginning of our floods capital programme four years ago. We succeeded in securing external flood investment of £1.6m in 2018/19 bringing the total amount of external investment to £3.9m over the four year programme. This external investment funds over one-third of our flood protection capital programme.

The Floods Team built new water gardens in Basildon Hospital's Cardiothoracic centre and created a nearby flood storage wetland,

designed to reduce flooding in Basildon. The gardens have proved hugely popular and provide therapeutic respite for patients, visitors and staff. The funding partnership included the ECC Capital Programme, the EU Interreg 2 Seas programme, Basildon & Thurrock University Hospital, Anglian Water, and the Environment Agency. The project received the prestigious British Construction Industry Small Project Award last year and has been shortlisted for Climate Resilience Project of the Year at this year's awards.

SUPPORTING GREENER LIVING

As part of our drive to secure a greener and more sustainable future for our county, we launched '**Solar Together Essex**' in partnership with iChoosr- the group buying specialist. This scheme offers residents the opportunity to take part in an online auction for high quality solar panels, saving money on both installation and future energy bills.

ECC is already an electricity generator, generating electricity on the roof of County Hall and from three landfill sites. Over the past year, 305 solar installations have been completed in Essex, which has resulted in a

total of just over 1,000 KW (i.e. 1MW) installed renewable energy on Essex homes and a carbon saving of almost 300 tonnes per year.

We continue to sponsor the Essex 'energy switch' scheme and have seen 1723 acceptances for the scheme this year. Since running this scheme the average saving for the bill payer has been £230.

COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE ZERO WASTE

We aim to achieve zero avoidable waste by 2050. We are continuing to focus our efforts to minimise waste and reduce our reliance on landfill - we are currently recycling and composting over 55% of our waste.

- The Love Essex social media campaign was shortlisted for the national LARAC award with content being seen more than 2.3 million times.
- A partnership with Freegle10 has seen 14,000 new users giving away unwanted items
- The £30 cloth nappy refund claims increased by 26.8% compared to the

previous year and reflects a countywide trend.

- We have led by example, driving out single use plastics in catering outlets at County Hall.

WHATNEXT?

Opportunities will be developed to generate more clean, renewable energy on publicly owned assets and promote schemes that reduce carbon emissions and that enable the growth of electric vehicles in the county.

We aim to raise residents' awareness of reuse across the county from January 2019 to December 2019.

We will develop a clean air strategy to improve the health of the county.

FACILITATE GROWING COMMUNITIES AND NEW HOMES

The County Council is working with partners to enable the development of 144,000 new homes over the next 20 years, while protecting the county's landscape and ensuring Essex remains a great place to live. Homes need to be affordable and meet residents' needs throughout their lives, building vibrant communities, not just houses.

GARDEN COMMUNITIES: SUSTAINABLE NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Districts across Essex are bringing forward proposals to create new 'Garden Communities' as great places to live and work. Essex County Council is working in partnership with district councils to plan for the new communities across the county. Garden communities are designed to promote community inclusion and walkable neighbourhoods, with easy access to green spaces and commercial areas.

We are equal shareholders with district councils in North Essex Garden Communities Ltd a company established to take forward proposals for three new Garden

Communities in Tendring, Colchester and Braintree. Over the next 30 years these three schemes will deliver over 40,000 homes and jobs in high-quality, liveable communities.

We are partnering with Uttlesford District Council in new communities at Easton Park and North Uttlesford, and development at the West of Braintree site, and with Chelmsford City Council on the garden community planned north east of the City. Further work is underway at Harlow Gilston Garden Town in the west of the county and Dunton Hills in the south. The option for a new settlement bordering Southend is under consultation.

BIDS FOR MAJOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE TO UNLOCK NEW HOMES

Infrastructure is vital alongside new homes. We have therefore worked with partners and government to make the case for transformational investments in road and rail infrastructure to help support housing growth across the county. We are also supporting bids lead by Hertfordshire County

Council to unlock growth in Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. Essex's bids total more than £540 million.

LOCAL PLANS

New Local Plans set out how to deliver significant housing proposals, including new Garden Communities, and the infrastructure required to make great places. We are providing support to our borough, city and district councils to develop Local Plans. Four were submitted for examination in Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford, and three continued to examination, in Braintree, Colchester and Tendring. Consultation on draft Local Plans took place for Basildon, Brentwood and Rochford.

A NEW DESIGN GUIDE FOR ESSEX

We need to ensure that new housing development is planned and designed to a high standard. Through the Essex Planning Officers' Association and supported by the County Council, the Essex Design Guide was updated in 2018. It embraces emerging design challenges and opportunities by incorporating

the themes of Health and Wellbeing, Active Design, Ageing Populations, Digital and Smart Technology and Garden Communities. The updated Design Guide was a winner in the 2019 Planning Awards, in the category of the award for Design Excellence.

WHATNEXT?

We will continue to work with district, borough and city councils to progress their local plans for growth, including planning and delivering Garden Communities. Essex districts have committed to increase the supply of new homes in the coming years. If successful in securing funding, we will start to deliver strategic transport infrastructure needed for new and existing communities.

We will increasingly focus on the quality of development in Essex, launching a new Quality Review Panel to advise on the quality of new developments in Essex. We will also update our Developers Guide to ensure that developers continue to support the delivery of community infrastructure as an intrinsic part of their developments.

LIMIT COST AND DRIVE GROWTH IN REVENUE

Essex County Council has already delivered £311 million of savings in the last 4 years, including £64 million in 2018/19. We have kept council tax as low as possible for residents, with bills amongst the lowest of county councils in England. But we face significant financial challenges and must continue to maximise the value of every pound of taxpayers' money.

Our commitment to secure value is reflected in the way we work. We have built sound financial and cost management practices. We apply rigour to our financial decision-making and to our investments, scrutinising the business case supporting each decision to ensure that taxpayers' money is used wisely.

We also review our services on a regular basis to ensure they are modern and fit for purpose; reducing costs, increasing efficiency, increasing skills and capacity when necessary and generating new income.

This way of working provides a platform for success. It allows us to secure quality in our services whilst maintaining discipline in managing our costs. It allows us to invest in positive outcomes whilst exploiting opportunities to generate income. It allows

us to innovate and be confident that we can realise the benefits of new ideas and new ways of working. Key examples from this year are set out below.

QUALITY & VALUE FOR MONEY IN OUR SERVICES

In 2018/19 we secured an outstanding rating from Ofsted for our Children's Services. This is a remarkable achievement, but is all the more remarkable considering our low cost base. Independent analysis conducted by IMPOWER suggests we have one of the most efficient children services departments in the country. Several factors contribute to this, including:

- a strong emphasis on early intervention – diverting children from costly care placements;
- working with neighbouring authorities to develop shared bids for funding;
- reviewing our approach to respite for children with disabilities – expanding the range of options available to families; and
- redesigning how we place foster children in residential care – developing a framework to ensure the best providers in Essex are secured to support those children with complex needs.

QUALITY AND RETURNS THROUGH OUR INVESTMENTS

In 2018/19 we completed the construction of two new residential development schemes, comprising 38 housing units, and established a pipeline of future development of around 600 units. The largest of the schemes delivered this year was Goldlay Gardens in Chelmsford - a 32-unit development located on a former library headquarters. The development combines market housing with specialist apartments, supporting a better quality of life for young adults with learning disabilities. The units are built to a high specification, and we were highly commended in the UK Housing Awards 2019.

Due to the quality of the development, and the sound supporting business case, the scheme helped secure financial returns too. The total value of sales in 2018/19 was £5.7m, generating a surplus of £1.1m.

INNOVATION IN PROCUREMENT

Sound financial management has also allowed us to innovate through our procurements. Our £600m Integrated Residential and Nursing contract is a clear example. This contract runs over six years in collaboration with health partners in Essex

and enables the roll out of innovative practices such as:

- BedFinder – a new digital tool allowing social workers and citizens to search online, and in real time, for rooms in care homes. This will bring practices which have been common place in the hotels industry into the care sector, and allow users to make more informed choices;
- offering a maximum of three choices of home that meet users' needs, changing our practice to ensure efficient use of time and money; and
- collaborative pricing with NHS partners, ensuring that ECC and the NHS pay the same rate and avoid unnecessary and costly competition.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We will continue to tightly manage costs and explore new opportunities. For example, we are investing in our outdoor centres, exploiting commercial opportunities by offering a greater range of activities and accommodation to customers in the schools and leisure market.

DEVELOP THE CAPABILITY, PERFORMANCE AND ENGAGEMENT OF OUR PEOPLE

Essex County Council employs around 6,500 people. They are our greatest asset. We need to continue to attract a highly skilled workforce, and provide the tools, processes and direction they need to perform well. This work is crucial to ensure we continue to attract and retain the best employees in local government.

OUR PEOPLE PLAN

In 2018, the workforce strategy “Our People Plan” was launched and a £2.9m investment was agreed to ensure delivery of four crucial themes.

Creating the right conditions – we are working to ensure our people can bring their best to work, making sure that we set the right culture through listening and consulting with our employees; that they have a clear and development focused performance management approach and that they are rewarded appropriately.

In support of this, we have completed 80% of the transition to Essex Pay, our new Pay & Grading approach which ensures pay is in line with the market, is fair and transparent so that we can continue to attract and retain the best employees in local government.

Alongside Essex Pay we have developed a social care competency framework which links rate of pay to an approach of capability development which will improve performance as well as retention of social care practitioners. We have also seen a reduction of our gender pay gap of 1.9%.

The use of apprentices has significantly increased with 147 active apprentices across the council.

Getting ahead of the curve – We are enabling our workforce to work more productively, providing better technology and continuous improvement capability to ensure business processes are fit for purpose and efficient. This also looks at how we better utilise data and analytics to ensure the Council has the right size workforce, with the right skills and right people – at the right cost.

Our Organisation Design programme has continued throughout 2018/19 and is laying the foundations for this. It is iterating a structure best able to respond to our current and future challenges whilst also enabling £19m savings over two years.

Optimising the employee experience – We are giving our employees a stronger voice, developing our culture of learning and ensuring ECC is a desirable place to work. We are delivering a better working environment, creating a workplace that everyone is proud of and that can help attract the best, diverse talent.

The employee experience starts with recruitment. Over the past year, we have decided to bring management of ECC’s permanent recruitment process in-house, and to develop a new approach to recruiting temporary workers. This will contribute to savings of at least £449K as well as delivering a higher performing recruitment service.

Enabling Growth & Development – We are ensuring that our workforce is ready to perform at their best in an ever-changing environment. We’re committed to building an organisation which enables every one of us to be the best we can.

Our Organisation Design programme has already achieved great results in terms of improved leadership and we continue to deliver a strong leadership development programme as well as setting the

foundation for our management programme and learning framework for all employees

WHAT NEXT?

Over the next twelve months we will be investing in areas across our People Plan to ensure we have a workforce that’s ready for the future in areas such as new people-based technology, continuous improvement and reward & recognition.

We will also be designing our new individual performance management approach, built on a foundation of what our staff want and need rather than mechanistic, unnecessary processes.

We’ll be looking at our employment standards, ensuring that they are fit for purpose and that they deliver a better employee experience. Our new wellbeing strategy will be developed focusing on employee engagement in, and employee ownership of, issues such as wellbeing, the working environment and how active leaders support wellbeing.

Through this work, we will ensure our workforce is more diverse, highly skilled and productive, transforming the council to doing more, for less.

RE-IMAGINE HOW RESIDENTS' NEEDS CAN BE MET IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Our residents expect good online services that they can access at a time and on a device of their choosing. Effective online services can help them to move from phone contact to self-service online.

IMPROVING OUR ONLINE PRESENCE

We know that residents and professionals experience challenges when interacting with essex.gov.uk and our wider web estate. In many cases, users simply cannot find the information that they need. A significant proportion of users call the council's Contact Centre as a result.

Over the past year, we have been working on a new website. Our aim has been to develop a single website that meets the needs of our residents, delivers the best possible content and uses flexible and scalable technology. This will provide a platform for better online services.

By working in stages and testing with users as we go, we have been able to identify and fix potential issues early on before investing in costly development work. And instead of building our own website from scratch we have collaborated with Stockport Metropolitan Council who made a

significant investment in their website and use an innovative approach that enables content to be delivered to a range of devices including voice (such as Alexa) rather than focusing narrowly on websites and web browsers.

To address issues with finding information, we have undertaken extensive user testing, added a new search function and redesigned our content based on user need.

Throughout this work, we have used GOV.UK good practice guidelines to ensure our work is consistent and quality assured.

ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE SERVICES

As a public body it's vital our online services are accessible to everyone.

New accessibility legislation came into force last September that gave us a legal duty to make our websites and web apps accessible to the 'AA standard'. We have been using accessibility checking tools as it is built alongside an expert Accessibility audit to achieve an AA standard accreditation. The website has a badge from the accrediting provider that indicates we are undergoing the audit to show we are

serious about accessibility.

REDESIGN AND AUTOMATION OF SERVICES

Over the past year we have assessed and redesigned key 'public facing' services, improving and automating processes to make it quicker and easier for residents and service users to have their needs met.

This has been supported by work to reduce the number and complexity of our supporting IT systems. These improvements will ensure we can do more with less, reducing duplication and overhead costs.

A clear example of this has been our work on the Blue Badge service. By simplifying our approach and using national solutions, we have improved the customer experience for both initial applications and renewals.

As we continue this work, our customer communications platform will be replaced and improved. This will add new digital access channels and provide more choice for customers. For example, it will supplement the telephony service with a self-service portal including web chat to enable assisted on-line applications.

WHAT NEXT?

We will continue to assess and consolidate our web estate. Building on the foundations of Essex.gov.uk, we begin a new programme of work to provide better online services for Essex residents.

We will monitor user feedback and respond by making quick improvements to the website as we identify issues for users.

We will offer additional support to some of our residents who can't currently access services online. We have started research to understand the level of need and the support that will be required.

We will also explore the use of new and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Robotic Process Automation, where appropriate, to ensure access to council services continues to improve and keeps pace with our residents' expectations.

