

# Motions under Standing Order

## 16.11.2

### 1. EU Referendum

Moved by Councillor David Finch and seconded by Councillor Kevin Bentley.

‘This Council congratulates the Conservative Government for delivering its promise to hold a referendum on membership of the EU.

This Council further notes the clear decision of the United Kingdom, and especially Essex to leave the EU, while recognising the concerns of those residents who voted to remain.

It is important that there is now a clear plan of action and leadership for Essex and therefore this Council pledges:

1. To help ensure that Essex businesses and residents are able to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise
2. To provide support and advice to those who may be adversely affected by the changes.
3. To work with the Government and new Prime Minister to deliver the best outcomes for Essex during negotiations.’

### 2. Highways Defects

Moved by Councillor Colin Sargeant and seconded by Councillor Chris Pond.

‘Council notes that highway defects have now been reduced to acceptable levels on PR1 and PR2 carriageways, and congratulates Essex Highways staff accordingly. However, this success has been achieved at the expense of defects worsening and becoming more numerous on footways of all categories, and on the carriageways of local roads, especially in towns. It has become more difficult to secure repairs even to significant defects in such locations. Council calls upon the Cabinet Members to build upon the welcome start made on heavily used footways in 2015, by redoubling efforts, and to amend intervention criteria to ensure the worst defects on footways and local roads are rectified in a more timely manner.’

### **3. Council Tax Fraud Campaign**

Moved by Councillor John Spence and seconded by Councillor Susan Barker.

‘Essex County Council recognises that Council Tax affects the household budgets for our honest, hardworking residents. Accordingly, we are dedicated to achieving best value for money and to minimise increases.

Therefore, this Council welcomes that all partner local authorities have agreed to collaborate in a campaign to attack Council Tax fraud. With estimates on the scale of fraud or incorrect claims on Council Tax at between 3 – 11% of discounts, it is appropriate that we work with those who are over claiming erroneously, while identifying and addressing deliberate fraudsters.

By so doing we enhance funding for our own and partner authorities, while respecting the vast majority who pay their taxes honestly despite their own financial pressures.’

### **4. Greater Essex Devolution**

Moved by Councillor Mike Mackrory, seconded by Councillor Jon Whitehouse and supported by Councillor David Kendall.

This Council notes that discussions with the Leaders of the 15 Essex Authorities to determine a devolution deal have been ongoing for well over 12 months and that a letter has been sent to the Secretary of State seeking a meeting with a delegation of Council Leaders to discuss and clarify the options.

Council further notes that a Briefing Note was circulated to County Members on 14th June, which gave background information, together with a copy of the letter to the Secretary of State. The Briefing Note made clear that there must be agreement to seriously consider new governance including a Mayor (elected) for any deal to be acceptable to the Government. The note also listed seven organisations which have been engaged with the process and that Essex MPs had been also been involved.

It is therefore regretted that Members of this Council have had no opportunity to debate what could be the most fundamental change to local government in this County since Southend and Thurrock became unitary authorities. We believe Members should express their view before any further decisions are made, in particular the principle of an elected Mayor. It is also regretted that the people of Essex are unaware of the implications of what is being proposed on their behalf.

This Council therefore resolves that a special Council meeting be convened to determine whether or not the Council supports the principle of an elected mayor for Essex before any such proposal is put to the Secretary of State.

### **5. Consultation and Engagement**

Moved by Councillor Ivan Henderson and seconded by Councillor Michael Danvers

‘The Labour Group calls upon Essex County Council to recognise that it has an engagement deficit; too often speaking on behalf of Essex residents, rather than reaching out and empowering them to speak for themselves. Policy should be collaborative by default, jointly designing solutions with communities, and working with Essex residents to break down the public disconnect with County Hall and strengthen the scope and vision of our outcomes.

Consultation should be at the heart of policy, integrated from inception to outcome. The process can always benefit from a diverse range of voices and in order to claim a mandate for change, the Council must prove that it is able to engage beyond its usual sphere of input. This means talking to our communities, service users, frontline providers and those most marginalised by our current methods of engagement: young people, those from poorer households, the elderly and the disengaged.

The Council also needs to be asking the right questions. It does the policy process no good if the questions are vague, over complex, or simply meaningless value statements. Council needs to tailor make consultations to maximise effect, and to increase the potential for meaningful input. The Council is facing significant challenges moving forward, with demand on services becoming increasingly complex, whilst resources continue to diminish. Council has no choice but to work collaboratively with partners, communities and residents, anticipating demand and collectively shaping the outcomes to be achieved.

With this in mind, Council resolves

- to call for a review of the policy timeline, ensuring that engagement features as an integral part of the ‘golden thread’ process
- this authority should utilise new forms of media, hone existing consultation strategies and do more to directly engage, qualitatively, with communities
- consultations should be crafted in partnership with the teams carrying out the engagement, who have a huge amount of untapped expertise that will enable insight to become truly indispensable when forming outcomes. More substantial consultations should go before relevant scrutiny committees, where members can constructively work with cabinet to ensure that engagement is most effective, and asking the right questions, of the right people.