

Leader's Budget speech

Mr Chairman

Thank you and I rise in this Executive Statement to introduce the Budget which will shortly be presented by the Chancellor of Essex, Cllr. Chris Whitbread.

Honesty and truthfulness are the watch words of this Administration, and it is important for people to know where their hard earned money is spent from the Council Tax they pay to ECC.

Without doubt the largest share, in fact well over half their money goes into social care – and so it should. These costs have risen in recent times, and it is absolutely our priority to keep people safe and protected, adults and children alike. I am proud of all our social care workers, those who undertake work in very difficult circumstances. We should all be proud of them. I confess that I certainly couldn't handle the situations that many of our excellent staff find themselves in every day. Yet we never talk about it in this Chamber or explain to our residents, from today that changes.

My pride for them is immense as is my esteem for my colleagues Beverley Egan and John Spence and their Deputy Cabinet Members Mark Platt and Holly Whitbread.

It is because of this life changing and critical work and the rising costs that we are all seeing means we can't always fix that pothole, or repair that kerb as quickly as people might wish.

It doesn't mean our service, or our road crews are hopeless, or we don't care, quite the reverse, our crews are out in all weathers right now in fact and during the night keeping our roads safe from ice.

Despite the criticisms they face daily they do a fine job, and I am proud of them, I told them so when I was the Cabinet Member and I tell them so, loudly, as the Leader. The truth is we simply have to cut our cloth accordingly and we will always put people in the greatest need first.

We WILL fix your potholes and you will hear more shortly about how we will do this and accelerate this work but let me say now that paying for someone's care will always take priority and if anyone disagrees with me then I'll have that debate anytime and anyway.

Cllr Whitbread will explain the challenges that we all face financially whether resident or business and this Council is not immune from those challenges – yet once again this Conservative Council has produced one of the most ambitious budgets that many would want to propose.

At its heart beats the living policy that is Everyone's Essex and this generational change work continues unabated – it will transform lives for many years to come.

As well as the Chancellor you will hear from my Cabinet colleagues on how we are investing taxpayers' money in Essex but above all how we care for those in the greatest need – people will always come first with the Conservatives at County Hall.

We have also listened to our residents and therefore through our fiscally strong management I am able to announce that within this budget we will

Maintain the current part night lighting programme and not switch off the lights an hour earlier.

We will continue to work alongside our Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst and invest a further £250k over two years into the violence and

vulnerability unit to tackle the sources of crime and our excellent county lines work.

Everyone's Essex means Everyone because this is taxpayers' money and therefore, I am pleased to say that an additional £2m goes into our Levelling Up work led by the Deputy Leader to ensure everyone get equal chances

And Mr Chairman we will put an extra £9 million into Highways maintenance to tackle road defects as we continue our popular member led scheme.

Mr Chairman, despite those challenges this is again one of the most exciting budgets this chamber has ever witnessed and with your permission I would like to hand over to the Chancellor of Essex to fully unveil our plans.