

Vision for Essex 2013-2017

Where innovation
brings prosperity



Foreword

We are proud of what we have achieved for Essex. We have kept council tax low and frozen it for the last three years. We have argued for more investment in our infrastructure while investing extra money into repairing our roads after the wettest winter on record. We have done this while making savings worth over £200 for each resident of the county (£365 million in total) and continuing to protect our most vulnerable people. We have a record of action and have been elected on the promise of more.

We believe in putting our residents first and ensuring their lives are enhanced by our policies.

This document sets out a new vision for Essex, articulating our commitment to the county, the principles that will guide our work and the priorities in which our work will be rooted.

But while publicly funded services will play a key role in the future of our county, the social, economic and cultural success of our cities, towns and villages will depend more than ever on the contribution of individuals, families, businesses and local communities. We cannot isolate ourselves from the tough choices that lie ahead. These choices will mean, in some areas, the County Council doing less and our partners – including individuals and communities – being asked to do more.

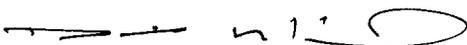
For example, the changing make-up of our society is placing huge pressure on our health and social care services. Only through the actions of individuals, families and communities can we hope to cope with these pressures. We are also living through a period of sustained economic uncertainty – we can only secure growth by the efforts of the businessmen and women whose hard work underpins our prosperity.

The role of businesses and communities will be all the more important as we see further reductions in the money available to pay for public services. Without action, the gap between the cost of our services and the money we have to fund these will get bigger and bigger over the next four years. We will continue to work to secure a better deal for Essex from the EU and we fully back the Government's commitment to ensuring every resident has a say on our future relationship with Brussels via a referendum.

If we are to meet our challenges, we cannot simply continue to do what we have always done. We need genuine innovation – we will all need to do things differently, work smarter, pursue new ideas and opportunities, accept new responsibilities and take big bold steps. For the County Council, this will also mean working more closely with our partners to change the way we work and to change the services we provide.

It is only through innovation that we can secure a future for Essex where council tax remains low, our communities remain healthy and safe from harm, and our economy sustains growth.

It will be innovation that secures our future prosperity.



Cllr David Finch
Leader, Essex County Council

The challenges we face in Essex

Essex is a large and varied county of 1.4 million people. We face challenges to match our scale. Over the coming years we must recognise that:

We cannot take economic growth for granted. Historic growth has been driven by sectors such as construction, finance and the public services – these sectors may not deliver substantial job growth in the future. Essex will need to attract investment into those parts of the local economy that offer the greatest potential growth while helping existing businesses to overcome barriers to success: escalating energy costs; greater competition from across the world; and a shortfall of skills in the local labour market.

Population growth and demographic change is placing unsustainable pressure on our services, especially health and care services. The population of Essex increased by 6.3% over the period from 2001 – 2011. The number of people aged 85 and over will grow by 47% between 2011 and 2021, while the number of adults with learning disabilities will increase by over 18%. The burden of financing services is falling increasingly on a relatively diminishing working-age group.

The money we receive from central government will continue to reduce as demand for our services increases. Public service partners across Essex face the challenge of sustaining and improving services with less money. Essex County Council has already saved £365m over the past three years (closing a funding gap equivalent to 37% of our budget), but in the years to 2016-17 we will need to save at least a further £215m per year (around 25% of our budget).

Our county's diverse variety will pose challenges – Essex is a place where rich and poor and young and old live side-by-side. As funding resources diminish, community leaders and public services will need to balance differing demands and conflicting interests. We will need to **target resources** where they can have most impact, recognising the impacts that these decisions may have on the wider community.

Public services in Essex are complex – not just because of the number and variety of organisations involved, but because of the diversity of the issues we seek to address. We need to work with our partners to find new ways to **make local public services work as a system**, rather than as a set of disparate, unconnected services.

Above all, we face the challenge to establishing a new relationship and new set of expectations between Essex residents and the public services they receive. The public services cannot sustain the level of service it has provided over the past fifteen years. It is important that government at all levels is honest and open about this. We can and should, however, play a role in **supporting residents as they take responsibility for their own futures**, and as they tackle the challenges facing their own families and communities.

Our principles

We work to support the people and communities of Essex. They are our taxpayers. They are the people that use our services. They are the people and communities that matter to us.

Public services are changing and we need to build a new set of mutual expectations between our residents and communities and the public services that they receive. This will mean developing new ways of working together and in partnership to address the issues that matter.

We will work tirelessly to keep Essex as an economic powerhouse ensuring more jobs are created and local businesses supported. Our commitment to the people and communities of Essex is based on some simple principles:

- **We will spend taxpayers' money wisely:** our income is their money and we can only spend it once. Our focus is on keeping our running costs low so we can invest in services to people and communities. Our services must be sustainable in the long-term, not unaffordable. This will mean working in partnership with a diverse range of service providers across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- **Our focus will be on what works best, not on who does it:** we want to improve the life chances and the quality of life for our residents. Our commissioning decisions will be evidence-based and be targeted on actions that can best achieve those outcomes. We are concerned less about *who* delivers but focused on *what* difference they can make and we will hold providers to account for their performance.
- **We will put residents at the heart of the decisions we make:** it is our responsibility as elected representatives to take decisions on behalf of our communities. To ensure we make the best decisions we can, we will engage with our residents and communities, gathering their views on the issues that matter most to them.
- **We will empower communities to help themselves:** individuals, families, and communities have an important role to play in taking responsibility for what happens in their area. For example, evidence suggests that if communities simply accept the first acts of anti-social behaviour and low level crime they can quickly attract escalating problems and decay.
- **We will reduce dependency:** we believe individuals and communities value their independence and their ability to make their own decisions and choices. Our focus will be on early intervention and prevention, helping equip vulnerable people, families and communities with the support and skills that they need to live independently and to help themselves. For example, we want to enable as much health and care support as possible to be delivered safely in the community and in people's homes.
- **We will work in partnership:** the public sector is large and complex in Essex and we will work with partners to make sure we work together in a way that is easy, convenient and delivers the best outcomes for our service users. We will commission together and deliver together where appropriate.
- **We will continue to be open and transparent:** building a new relationship and a new set of mutual expectations between residents and public services means we need to be open and transparent with each other about what we can do – and what we can't.

Our vision and priorities

We want Essex to be a county where **innovation** brings **prosperity**.

We know that our county faces a set of unprecedented challenges. We are living in a time of sustained economic uncertainty and cannot take economic growth for granted. We are also living through a period of austerity. To sustain the most vital services on which residents and communities rely, we must reduce dependency, encouraging individuals, families and communities to do more for themselves. Although better placed than many, we cannot underestimate these challenges. Tough decisions lie ahead on what we do, how we do it and what we as the County Council must stop doing.

There are no easy answers. If we are to meet these challenges we need new thinking and innovation to ensure we can use our resources in the best possible way for the people of Essex. We must harness the power of new ideas to secure a more prosperous Essex. These ideas will come from many places: from our businesses, our entrepreneurs, our residents, our communities and our public service partners.

As a County Council, our most important roles will be to establish the conditions for innovation and prosperity in our economy, and to lead innovation in the public services. We will foster innovation in education and learning; champion entrepreneurship and unlock the infrastructure that supports economic growth. We will work with our partners in the public, private and voluntary and community sector to reshape and renew services. We will reduce dependency – supporting individuals, families and communities as they play an ever more active role in keeping Essex communities prosperous, healthy and safe. And we will look to secure a better deal from the EU to invest directly into Essex.

If we are to succeed through these testing times, we must maintain a focus on our core purpose. The challenge ahead strengthens our resolve to:

- **increase educational achievement and enhance skills;**
- **develop and maintain the infrastructure that enables our residents to travel and our businesses to grow;**
- **support employment and entrepreneurship across our economy;**
- **improve public health and wellbeing across Essex;**
- **safeguard vulnerable people of all ages;**
- **keep our communities safe and build community resilience; and**
- **respect Essex's environment.**

Throughout our work, we will build on the strengths of our county. This means harnessing the energy and passion of people across Essex who work hard for their families, build careers and businesses and shape their communities. We must all play our part in securing a more prosperous county, one where we can flourish, live well and achieve our ambitions.

Our partners

Our vision for Essex has to be a shared vision. If we want to live and work in a more prosperous Essex where residents and communities can flourish, live well and achieve their ambitions, we must recognise that Essex County Council cannot achieve this in isolation.

Even if it were possible (and it is not) this approach would be wrong. Innovation and prosperity cannot be imposed. Nor can a safe, secure, supportive society. These conditions need to be co-produced by the state, by business and by civil society.

Whenever it makes sense, we will always look to work in partnership. True partnership is not activity for its own sake, it is a collective commitment to improve Essex, grounded in the realisation that we can achieve more together than we can alone. As we pursue our vision for Essex, we will work with:

- **Individuals, families and communities** – empowering them to take responsibility for their own futures, working with others in a spirit of reciprocity to create the society we want to live in, and act not as passive recipients of services but as active architects of their own lives.
- **The NHS** – to ensure our residents have the opportunity to enjoy better health and wellbeing and to live longer lives; to ensure that health inequalities are reduced and to give communities across Essex greater choice, control, and responsibility for health and wellbeing services.
- **All tiers of government** – whether parish or town councils; districts, boroughs or cities; county; or national, we want to work to create the social and physical infrastructure that helps our residents and businesses to thrive. Most importantly of all, we call on all levels of government to recast the system of public services around the needs of communities and residents, and to deliver the conditions for growth that support business and residents.
- **Essex's Police and Crime Commissioner, Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service** – to keep our residents safe, and to tackle the causes of disorder, fear and harm before they impact on our communities.
- **Our Essex businesses** – to generate wealth, creating and securing opportunities for growth that benefit employees, employers and society.
- **Our schools, colleges and universities** – to support students, businesses and wider society to help people achieve their potential and make a valuable economic and social contribution.
- **Essex's voluntary and community organisations** – to bring together individuals, creating social capital and the capacity for community renewal. We call on the voluntary and community sector to develop innovative solutions to the challenges faced by their communities and by Essex at large.

Our legacy

We know that public services in Essex will need to change over the next four years. The economic, social and financial challenges we face mean that we cannot continue to deliver the same services in the same way as we have in the past. We need to find new ways of working that secure improved efficiency and improved outcomes for our people and communities.

Recognising these challenges, our vision and priorities aim to equip people and communities so they can flourish, live well and achieve their ambitions without being dependent on government. We recognise our duty to support and protect the most vulnerable in our communities, but we will do this in a way that allows all our residents to shape their own futures.

Delivering this vision will require action from all our partners: from government at all levels; from organisations across Essex civil society; from businesses; and from individuals, families and communities. This will require a long-term commitment, but by working together, we can address the issues that matter and secure an Essex where:

- **The economy is growing** – where prosperity is secured by a focus on life-long education and skills; sustaining and maintaining the transport network; attracting investment in jobs and growth from government, the EU or private enterprise; and stimulating growth both in our town centres and key business sectors. We will work to help start up businesses and attract more firms to locate in Essex.
- **Our residents are safe** – where crime and the fear of crime is reduced further, where our roads are safer and where communities work with the authorities to rid their neighbourhoods of anti-social behaviour.
- **Our public services are sustainable, affordable and built around the needs of our residents** – where Essex public services work effectively together, commissioning services, integrating their operations and collaborating on projects to ensure that demand pressures are reduced through early intervention and prevention.
- **Dependency is reduced** – where individuals, families and strong communities take responsibility for the quality of life in their area and play an active role in influencing local decisions.
- **Council Tax remains low** because of continued improvements in efficiency, clear decision-making and excellent financial management.

This information is issued by
Essex County Council, Strategic Services

You can contact us in the following ways:

By telephone:
0845 743 0430

By email:
strategic.services@essex.gov.uk

By post:
Strategic Services
PO Box 11
County Hall
Chelmsford
CM1 1LX

Visit our website:
www.essex.gov.uk

Read our online magazine at **essex.gov.uk/youressex**

Follow us on  **Essex_CC**

Find us on  **facebook.com/essexcountycouncil**

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/
or made available in alternative formats, on request.

Published July 2013

DS13 4282