



Essex County Council

Cabinet

14:30	Wednesday, 24 November 2021	Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
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For information about the meeting please ask for:

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2	Minutes 15 October 2021	6 - 12
3	Questions from the Public A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting. No statement of question will be longer than three minutes and speakers will be timed. On arrival, and before the start of the meeting, please register with the Democratic Services Officer.	
4	Action Plan in Response to Essex Climate Action Commission's Report (FP/177/10/21) The Equality Impact Assessment is available online - please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting Documents	13 - 50

- 5 Better Care Fund Plan 2020/21 (FP/180/10/21) 51 - 75**
The Equality Impact Assessment is available [online](#) - please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting Documents
- 6 Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022 (FP/178/10/21) 76 - 130**
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- 8 Concessionary Fares Settlement 2022-23 (FP/138/08/21) 143 - 154**
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- 9 Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members (FP/176/10/21) 155 - 157**
- 10 Dates of Future Meetings**
To note the dates of Cabinet meetings in 2022, as set out below:
- | | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 18 January | 19 July |
| 15 February | 13 September |
| 15 March | 18 October |
| 19 April | 15 November |
| 24 May | 15 December (Thursday) |
| 21 June | |
- (all Tuesdays, except 15 December)
- 11 Date of Next Meeting**
To note that the next meeting of the Cabinet will take place at 10am on Tuesday 21 December 2021 in the Council Chamber at County Hall, Chelmsford.
- 12 Urgent Business**
To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.

13 Confidential Appendix Extension and Tender of Local Bus Contracts (FP/136/08/21)

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information);

14 Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Committee: Cabinet

Enquiries to: Emma Tombs, Democratic Services Manager
Emma.tombs@essex.gov.uk

Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

Recommendations:

To note:

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

Membership
(Quorum: 3)

Portfolio

Councillor K Bentley	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor L McKinlay	Deputy Leader and Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor T Ball	Education Excellence, Life Long Learning and Employability
Councillor M Buckley	Waste Reduction and Recycling
Councillor G Butland	Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture
Councillor B Egan	Children's Services and Early Years
Councillor L Scott	Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport
Councillor J Spence	Health and Adult Social Care
Councillor L Wagland	Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning
Councillor C Whitbread	Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet that took place in the Council Chamber at County Hall at 10.15 am on Friday 15 October 2021

Present:

Councillor	Cabinet Member Responsibility
Councillor K Bentley	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor L McKinlay	Deputy Leader and Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance
Councillor T Ball	Education Excellence, Life-Long Learning and Employability
Councillor M Buckley	Waste Reduction and Recycling
Councillor G Butland	Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture
Councillor B Egan	Children's Services and Early Years
Councillor L Scott	Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport
Councillor J Spence	Health and Adult Social Care
Councillor L Wagland	Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning
Councillor C Whitbread	Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

Councillors M Durham, I Henderson, D King, M Mackrory, M Platt, and P Schwier were also present. Councillor C Pond also participated via Zoom.

1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest.

The report of Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and the following were noted:

1. There had been no changes of membership since the last report.
2. There were no apologies for absence.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions from the public

There were none.

4. 2021-22 Financial Overview as at the Half Year Stage (FP/012/03/21)

The Cabinet received a report setting out the current forecast financial position of Essex County Council's (ECC) revenue and capital budgets as at the half year stage of the 2021/22 financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care responded to questions from Councillor Henderson on recruitment and retention in the care market and backlogs in providing care and support.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs responded to questions from Councillors Henderson, King, Mackrory and Pond in respect of council tax collection rates, the impact of interest rate rises on the County Council's borrowing and modelling for the impact of any increases in the rate of National Insurance and in the rate of inflation. In response to a question from Councillor King, the Leader confirmed that a formal response to the recommendations from the Climate Action Commission would be considered by the Cabinet in November 2021.

Resolved:

1. To draw down funds from reserves as follows:

- i. **£2m** from the Waste Reserve to the Waste Reduction and Recycling portfolio due to pressures which have increased tonnages costs (section 5.11.iii)
- ii. **£860,000** from the Covid Equalisation Reserve to the Adult Social Care and Health portfolio; **£634,000** to offset the overspend on the Essential Living Fund (ELF) and **£226,000** for residential and nursing care block bed contracts (section 5.1.vi)
- iii. **£219,000** from the Covid Equalisation Reserve to the Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning portfolio relating to under recovery of income within International Trade (section 5.5.ii)
- iv. **£192,000** from the Covid Equalisation Reserve to the Children's Services and Early Years portfolio due to the pressure caused by increased applications to the Early Years inclusion panel (section 5.2.ii)
- v. **£167,000** from the Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) Equalisation Reserves to the Education Excellence, Skills and Training portfolio in relation to Debden PFI (**£139,000**) and Building Schools for the Future PFI (**£28,000**) (section 5.7.iv)
- vi. **£99,000** from the Community Initiatives Fund Reserve to the Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance portfolio to fund eligible expenditure incurred within Community Partnerships (section 5.3.iii)

- vii. **£85,000** from the Reserve for Future Capital Funding to the Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport portfolio relating to expenditure incurred on benefits realisation studies for SELEP and DEFRA (section 5.9.ii)
 - viii. **£80,000** from the Covid Equalisation Reserve to the Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture portfolio relating to Gypsies and Travellers in respect of loss of income on rent and lettings (section 5.4.ii)
 - ix. **£65,000** from the Bursary for Trainee Carers Reserve to the Education Excellence, Skills and Training portfolio to Adult Community Learning (ACL) in respect of the Nightingale Project (section 5.7.iv)
 - x. **£24,000** from the Covid Equalisation Reserve to the Leader RSSS portfolio due to Communications and Marketing costs related to the pandemic (section 5.16.iii)
 - xi. **£22,000** from the Covid Equalisation Reserve to the Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance portfolio to cover the cost of terminating a transport contract for the Youth Service (NCS) (section 5.3.iii)
 - xii. **£18,000** from the Commercial Investment in Essex Places Reserve to the Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs RSSS portfolio relating to the final costs of sale of Schools Payroll (section 5.15.iii)
 - xiii. **£13,000** from the Quadrennial Reserve to the Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance portfolio relating to costs of the May 2021 elections (section 5.3.iii)
2. To appropriate funds to reserves as follows:
- i. **£2.5m** to the Adults Transformation Reserve from the Adult Social Care and Health portfolio appropriating the Social Care Grant settlement to the reserve until it is required (section 5.1.vi)
 - ii. **£1.8m** to the Carry Forward Reserve from the Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs RSSS portfolio to support the 2022/23 budget as detailed in section 5.15.iii
 - iii. **£1.5m** to the Carry Forward Reserve from the Children's Services and Early Years portfolio to support the 2022/23 budget as detailed in section 5.2.ii
 - iv. **£764,000** to the Covid Equalisation Reserve from the Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance portfolio relating to funding which is no longer required due to an improved financial position within Essex Outdoors (section 5.3.iii)

- v. **£800,000** to the Carry Forward Reserve from Other Operating Costs to mitigate future interest rate risk (section 5.12.ii)
 - vi. **£367,000** to the Collection Fund Risk Reserve from the Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs portfolio to support council tax funding in future years (section 5.8.iii).
 - vii. **£142,000** to the Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) Equalisation Reserves from the Education Excellence, Skills and Training portfolio in relation to Clacton secondary schools PFI (section 5.7.iv)
 - viii. **£85,000** to the Carry Forward Reserve from the Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance RSSS portfolio from Essex Legal Services to cover costs associated with an ongoing Trading standards case which has been delayed due to Covid related court delays (section 5.13.iii)
3. To approve the following adjustments:
- i. To create a new Everyone's Essex Reserve to set aside resources to support delivery of the Everyone's Essex strategy for levelling up the county and improving lives and opportunities for all our residents, and to transfer **£25m** from the Renewal Fund Reserve, **£10m** from the Equalities Fund Reserve and **£10m** from the Ambition Fund Reserve to this reserve.
 - ii. Vire **£195,000** from the Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance portfolio to Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs RSSS portfolio to meet pressures relating to a restructure from Service Transformation to Organisation development and talent Management (sections 5.3.iii & 5.15.iii)
 - iii. Vire **£33,000** from Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance RSSS portfolio to Leader RSSS portfolio to part fund a fixed term position within the Partnerships and Equality team (sections 5.13.iii & 5.16.iii)
 - iv. Vire **£26,000** within the Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs RSSS portfolio from Finance to Human Resources in order to support business partnering training capacity across the functional area (section 5.15.iii)
 - v. To amend the capital budget as shown in Appendices C (i) and C (ii) which allows for capital slippage of **£10.7m**, capital budget additions of **£6.3m**, capital budget reductions of **£5.7m** and advanced works of **£5.3m** (see section 7.2).

5. **Bus Back Better: Bus Service Improvement Plan for Essex (FP/091/06/21)**

The Cabinet was asked to agree a Bus Service Improvement Plan which the Council had been asked to produce by the Government as part of the Government's national bus strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport responded to questions from Councillors Henderson, Mackrory and Pond in respect of cross border connectivity and liaison with adjacent counties, building confidence and incentivising usage, supporting young people in peak times, network franchising, the use of income from fines, investment in the fleet, and partnership working. It was confirmed that the Enhanced Partnership Plan would be presented to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

Resolved:

1. It was agreed to adopt the Bus Service Improvement Plan at appendix A to the report.
2. It was agreed that the Cabinet Member will take decisions relating to the elements of the Bus Service Improvement Plan that it is proposed will be delivered through Essex County Council's first Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme.
3. It was noted that there are likely to be additional resources required in order to deliver the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme which are the delivery mechanisms for key parts of this plan and required to be in place by 31 March 2022. A further decision relating to those resource requirements will be included in the paper that is due to be considered at Cabinet in March 2022 to make the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme.
4. It was noted that the Cabinet will take the final decision on adopting the Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme(s).

6. **New Library Building in Shenfield and Associated Development (FP/115/07/21)**

The Cabinet's approval was sought to redevelop the Shenfield Library site to make better use of this public land, create a more energy efficient building, improve a much valued community asset and attract a surplus to be reinvested in public services.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning responded to questions from Councillors Henderson, Mackrory and Pond in respect of adjacent trees, sale values of apartments, links with public transport, social value investments and affordable housing, green

technologies and the carbon impact of demolition and fabrication of new buildings.

Resolved:

1. It was agreed to demolish the current Shenfield Library building and replace it with a new scheme comprising a new library, a commercial unit and nine apartments.
2. It was agreed to invest from the capital programme to cover the costs of technical design, site preparatory works, demolition, and construction costs as set out in the confidential appendix.
3. It was agreed to the drawdown of £85,211 from the transformation reserve (for costs that cannot be capitalised) as set out in the confidential appendix.
4. It was agreed to undertake a procurement process for a demolition contractor via the Mitie Facilities Management contract for the demolition of the current building. This is Essex Housing's preferred method of procurement for demolition contractors as it reduces uncertainty for design and build contract bidders and can speed up and therefore lower the overall cost of the project. The award of contract to be delegated to the Head of Essex Housing so long as the cost is within the budget.
5. It authorised the commencement of improvement works at Bishops Hill Adult Community Learning Centre to create a temporary library space to be used during the period of works at the current site procured via Mitie Facilities Management contract to start work as soon as possible and avoid delays to the rest of the programme.
6. It was agreed to undertake a procurement process and to enter into a design and build contract for the re-development of the Site in line with the planning consent. The design and build contract will be procured under a single stage competitive tender with bids evaluated on 50% quality (including 5% social value) and 50% price. Agree that the Head of Essex Housing may award the contract if it is within budget and in line with our evaluation criteria.
7. It was agreed that the private apartments are sold individually through a traditional open market sales approach, through the appointment of a sales agent for the scheme.
8. It was agreed that a tenant be found for the commercial unit through a traditional open market approach, through the appointment of a letting agent for the unit who is briefed on the need to identify a tenant that will be complementary to the library.

9. It was agreed that the Head of Essex Housing be given delegated authority to accept or reject bids for sales of the nine housing units after taking proper advice.

7. **Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members (FP/086/06/21)**

The report was noted.

8. **Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Cabinet would take place at 2.30pm on Wednesday 24 November 2021 in the Council Chamber at County Hall, Chelmsford.

9. **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

10. **Exclusion of the press and public**

Resolved that the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.

11. **Confidential Appendix: New Library Building in Shenfield and Associated Development (FP/115/07/21) (Public and press excluded)**

The confidential appendix to report FP/115/07/21, to which minute 6, above, refers was agreed.

12. **Urgent exempt business (Public and press excluded)**

There was no urgent exempt business.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11.10am

Forward Plan Reference Number: FP/177/10/21

Report title: Action Plan in Response to the Essex Climate Action Commission's Report	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor Peter Schwier - Deputy Cabinet Member to the Leader with responsibility for Climate Action	
Date: 24 November 2021	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Sam Kennedy - Director, Environment and Climate Action email: Samantha.Kennedy@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex has a strategic aim of creating a high quality environment.
- 1.2 The Essex Climate Action Commission published its report 'Net-Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' in July 2021, which set out a comprehensive plan for Essex to: reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 in line with UK statutory commitments; and to make Essex more resilient to climate impacts such a flooding, water shortages and overheating.
- 1.3 The report's recommendations are a comprehensive call to action for everyone and every organisation in Essex. ECC has a critical role to play, working in partnership with others to deliver a programme of action.
- 1.4 This report presents ECC's initial climate action plan. ECC will take action on its own estate, service delivery and operations, for example reviewing its core ways of working, building its first net zero school building and installing solar panels on its estate.
- 1.5 In addition, ECC is working on projects in partnership across Essex to develop a comprehensive, collective response to the report. Examples including the Net Zero Innovation Network with businesses and Universities, the roll out of the grant schemes to support upgrading of fuel poor homes and active travel schemes across the county. ECC is establishing a new climate group with Essex Partners, working with District, Borough and City Councils, local businesses, universities, community groups and residents.
- 1.6 Our plan is not exhaustive - the Commission's report has milestones and recommendations that stretch out to 2050. ECC will continue to develop its climate action plan in the future.
- 1.7 Our climate priorities also benefit other strategic objectives. For example, active travel schemes which enable people to walk and cycle, planting trees increases green space have important benefits for physical and mental health

for resident. A commitment to greener buildings helps to provide green construction jobs for Essex businesses.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree that Essex County Council fully supports the recommendations in the Commission's report Net Zero: making Essex Carbon Neutral.
- 2.2 Agree that ECC will work with partners across Essex to play its part in the delivery of the Commission's vision for a net zero, climate resilient county and that it will establish a climate action group with the anchor institutions to drive collective action across Essex on the climate agenda and help Essex deliver the Commission recommendations.
- 2.3 Agree the action plan at appendix A to this report.
- 2.4 Agree to earmark reserves funding to deliver the action plan as follows and note that the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs will be asked to approve drawdowns when detailed business cases have been completed:
 - Everyone's Essex Plan Reserve £6.23m,
 - Climate Change Reserve £2.265m,
 - Transformation Reserve £695,000
- 2.5 Agree that ECC work to develop a zero landfill by 2030 policy, subject to an affordability and deliverability review, for all waste it is responsible for as the Waste Disposal Authority. ECC will develop a new Essex Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy in partnership with District, Borough and City authorities which will put greenhouse gas emission considerations at its heart.
- 2.6 Within the Everyone's Essex Plan Reserve, agree to request that Essex Housing Development LLP develops proposals to for the proposed residential units on the Hargrave House development to be a pilot scheme to be net zero in construction and net zero in use, as well as climate resilient for flooding, overheating and water scarcity. This requirement will be reflected in the development appraisal which is used to inform the value at which the site is transferred to Essex Housing LLP.
- 2.7 Recognise new burdens of £1.151m for consideration for approval within future years' Medium Term Resource Strategy (MTRS) and future budget planning requirements.
- 2.8 Note that cabinet members are committed to bringing updates, on a rolling rota basis, progress made in their own portfolios to address the climate challenge.

- 2.9 Instructed officers to report annually to Cabinet on the Council's greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilience measures. The first report will be for financial year 2021/22 and will be published in 2022.
- 2.10 Agree that an updated action plan should come back to Cabinet following publication of these emission reports.

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1 Climate change is the single biggest threat facing Essex. The Climate Change Act 2008 places a duty on the secretary of state to ensure that the UK achieves Net-Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (referred to in the report ongoing as Net Zero). Essex continues to experience the impacts of a changing climate year on year with increasing levels of flooding, drought and overheating.
- 3.2 The Essex Climate Action Commission was announced in October 2019 by the Leader, and the inaugural meeting was in May 2020. The Commission's Interim Report, published in November 2020, set out the first suite of ambitious recommendations for Essex, which would enable a move towards Net Zero.
- 3.3 ECC published its interim [response](#) to the interim report in March 2021.
- 3.4 The Commission published their [Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral](#) report in July 2021, setting out a comprehensive plan for Essex to: reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 in line with UK statutory commitments; and to make Essex more resilient to climate impacts such as flooding, water shortages and overheating.
- 3.5 Whilst some of the Commission's recommendations are directed towards the activities of ECC, most are not. Many recommendations are for things largely beyond ECC's control. Some have relevance for District, Borough, City, parish and town councils other have relevance to businesses, residents, charities and community groups.
- 3.6 We need a wider system approach and we will need to work with partners and stakeholders; supporting businesses, residents and communities to take action; and lobbying Government for key policies, freedoms and flexibilities and funding support. ECC is working with District, Borough and City Councils, local businesses, universities, community groups and residents to drive collective action: everyone in Essex has a role to play.
- 3.7 A draft programme of action to respond to the Commission recommendations, is set out in Appendix A. The Cabinet is asked to support in principle the programmes outlined. This reflects a core commitment in Everyone's Essex – to a High-Quality Environment. This includes commitments to deliver on net zero targets, to deliver a step change in sustainable travel and support net zero and climate resilient new build housing and commercial developments, to

reduce waste and deliver a more circular economy; to help our communities be more resilient against flooding, heat stress and water shortages; and to work with communities and businesses providing advice and support to enable them take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build their own climate resilience. Key highlights in the current action plan include:

- 3.7.1 A commitment to embed climate impacts into decision making and procurement across ECC. This includes commitment to ensure its electricity procurement later this year is for renewable energy only.
- 3.7.2 A policy to transform its estate to have Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. A comprehensive property review is in train to inform future progress, and new funding of £3m has been committed to support this ambition.
- 3.7.3 A Net Zero Innovation Network, chaired by Victoria Hills, CEO Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) (which is working with a network of c50 Essex businesses and Essex Universities to drive innovation in climate action in Essex).
- 3.7.4 Development of a new Joint Municipal Waste Strategy developed in partnership with waste collection authorities across Essex, with climate considerations at its heart.
- 3.7.5 An Electric Vehicle Strategy which will work with partners to agree a way forward for EV infrastructure across the county.
- 3.7.6 A rolling flood resilience programme which will see £7.2m invested in flood schemes over the next four years.
- 3.7.7 The Essex Forest Initiative which ECC has committed £500,000 to plant 375,000 trees over 5 years. ECC continues to work with partners to deliver this. Collectively partners across the county as a whole have committed to plant a million trees by 2025/6.
- 3.7.8 A £500,000 Climate Action Challenge Fund which gives community groups grants of up to £20,000 to support their own climate projects
- 3.7.9 Support to establish community energy groups to enable communities to develop their own renewable energy projects.
- 3.7.10 Working with EALC to deliver a series of webinars to help parish councils reduce emissions and build climate resilience
- 3.7.11 A project working with children in Essex and Los Angeles (who face similar climate challenges such as water shortages and coastal erosion, and where the project enables children in both locations to understand the global nature of climate change) to co-create video games to increase children's engagement with and knowledge of the climate challenge.
- 3.7.12 A carbon literacy training programme for ECC Members and Officers.

- 3.8 ECC continues to work with partners across the public, private and community sector and with residents to support the fullest response to the Commission recommendations. by 2030. The annual reports on ECC estate and Essex wide emissions will enable ECC to track progress against the Commission recommendations; and will inform further development of the action plan.
- 3.9 One of the recommendations of the commission was to vastly improve the energy efficiency of new homes, making them net zero by 2025 and carbon positive by 2030. This is something that the Council can lead the way on as a result of its ownership of Essex Housing Development LLP. It is proposed that the Council will work with its LLP to produce plans for a net zero development at Hargrave House in Chelmsford. It must be recognised that as a pilot project this will involve extra development costs which will impact on the return which the development can provide to the Council as landowner. At this stage we are asking the LLP to work on a carbon neutral scheme and the proposal will come back to the Cabinet Member for approval.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:
- Strengthen communities through participation
 - Develop our County sustainably
 - Connect us to each other and the world
- 4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will set out ECC's initial climate plan both in response to ECC's strategic objective for a high quality environment and the Essex Climate Action Commission report Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral. This is a summary of the action to reduce greenhouse gases and increase climate resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions both within ECC and ECC contribution to action across Essex, working in partnership with organisations and communities across the county.
- 4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in 'Everyone's Essex':
- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
 - A high quality environment
 - Health, wellbeing and independence for all ages
 - A good place for children and families to grow.

5 Options

- 5.1 **Do Nothing** This would not be consistent with ECC stance on climate to date. ECC has publicly committed to the Climate Change Agenda, first by championing Essex's Climate Action Commission to drive change within Essex; by setting out its strategic commitment to the climate agenda in Everyone's Essex; and by committing substantial funding to ensure key Projects are delivered.

- 5.2 Agree the proposed actions and note the action plan outlined in Appendix A.** Taken together this represents a strong initial response to the Essex Climate Commission's Net Zero Report. Key features of the new investment include:
- 5.2.1 A new fund to support green space management on our highways to enable investment in greening our streets and urban spaces.
 - 5.2.2 A new nature recovery network to support delivery of a nature recovery strategy for Essex, and to work with farmers and communities to drive faster change in a Climate Focus Area in the Colne & Blackwater.
 - 5.2.3 A net zero pilot housing project from Essex Housing which will be net zero in construction and net zero in use, as well as climate resilient for flooding, overheating and water scarcity.
 - 5.2.4 A new climate action planning team to help us Build Back Better and to provide specialist expertise and work with and support the District Councils to raise the bar and address the Commission recommendations on new build development (housing and commercial) to deliver to a Net Zero standard.
 - 5.2.5 Updating our transport policies to align with climate change and place-making requirements. To help ensure we create the places people want to live, work and enjoy in the future.
 - 5.2.6 A new bus team, and further capital funds, develop our Bus Back Better strategy with partners across the county to deliver a step change in investment in public transport in Essex.
 - 5.2.7 A significant investment of £4.75m in new cycling infrastructure, alongside £3m to maintain and upgrade our existing cycle networks.
 - 5.2.8 Increased investment in communication and community engagement to support residents and businesses to take their own climate actions.

6 Issues for Consideration

6.1 Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 The action plan in Appendix A demonstrates a programme of activity costing £200.275m over four years. This breaks down to £101.786m capital and £98.489m revenue, including £10.424m (39 full time equivalent) of existing ECC staffing opportunity cost.
- 6.1.2 Decision FP/898/11/20 approved a drawdown from the Climate Change Reserve of £2.5m for additional resource (£2.1m) to support the reduction of emissions and building resilience in the ECC estate and more broadly across Essex, plus £400,000 of targeted capital investment. The new investment asks set out in this report are in addition to this.

- 6.1.3 ECC has already been successful in securing External Funding to support this agenda to the total value of £62.011m to 2025/26 (£54.558m capital and £7.453m revenue) and the associated project costs are set out in tables at Appendix A.
- 6.1.4 This report seeks new Revenue investment asks totalling £10.341m, including 45 additional full time equivalent staff, and the total project costs are separately identifiable in Appendix A. This is proposed to be funded as follows:
- Additional core funding to be considered in setting the MTRS from 2022/23 onwards of £1.151m
 - A draw down from the Climate Change Reserve of £2.265m
 - A draw down from the Transformation Reserve of £695,000
 - A draw down from the Everyone's Essex Plan Reserve of £6.23m
- 6.1.5 The Action Plan includes new Capital investment asks of £6.5m as set out in the total project costs and is separately identifiable in the Appendix A.
- 6.1.6 Please note that all funding commitments outlined, unless otherwise noted in Appendix A, will be profiled across 2022/23 to 2025/26.
- 6.1.7 The recommendations seek support in principle to the programmes recommended. Full financial appraisals will support each of the recommendations at the relevant business case stage for financial prudence and to address any further impact this may have on the MTRS. Funding will be approved subject to appropriate business case sign off.

6.2 Legal implications

- 6.2.1 Individual actions will need to be authorised in conjunction with the constitution. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 the Council is under a duty to have regard to the duty to conserve biodiversity. The aims of the recommendations of the panel are designed to minimise climate change and thus conserve biodiversity.

7 Equality and Diversity Considerations

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8 List of Appendices

- Appendix A – ECC's Response to 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral' Report
- Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

9. List of background papers

Climate Action Commission Report: 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral'
<https://www.essex.gov.uk/climate-action>

Essex County Council's Response to Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral





















1. Introduction

Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral, sets out recommendations to 2050 and recognises that Essex County Council (ECC) cannot tackle this challenge alone. This document therefore outlines the immediate actions ECC is taking directly and in concert with partners to drive effective progress against the Essex Climate Action Commission's (ECAC) recommendations.

The ECC responses follow the structure of the Commission report under the key themes of land use and green infrastructure, energy, built environment, transport, waste, and community engagement. Please note that all funding commitments outlined below will be for the next 4 years to 2025/26 (unless stated otherwise).

2. Commitments

Essex County Council has adopted a new organisational strategy Everybody's Essex (ref: FP/172/10/21). This sets out four key strategic objectives for ECC as set out in the table below:

KEY for Contributions to Strategic Commitments							
Strong Inclusive & Sustainable ECONOMY		High Quality ENVIRONMENT		HEALTH, wellbeing & Independence for All Ages		A Great PLACE for Children & Families to Grow	
	Good Jobs		Net Zero		Levelling Up Health		Education Outcomes
	Levelling Up the economy		Transport & Built Environment		Healthy Lifestyles		Levelling Up Outcomes for Families
	Infrastructure		Minimise waste		Promoting Independence		Family Resilience & Stability
	Future Growth & Investment		Levelling Up the Environment		Place based Working		Safety
	Green Growth		Green Community		Carers		Outcomes for Vulnerable Children

One of the four strategic objectives is a core commitment to a High Quality Environment. This includes commitments to deliver on net zero targets; to deliver a step change in sustainable travel and support net zero and climate resilient housing developments; to reduce waste and deliver a more circular economy; to help our communities be more resilient against flooding; heat stress and water shortages; and

to work with communities and businesses providing advice and support to enable them take action to reduce green house gas emissions and build their own climate resilience. The commitment to a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy includes a commitment to green growth in Essex.

ECC is therefore committed to ambitious climate action and is embedding this across every aspect of Council service delivery. We also recognise that delivery of climate action also meets other ECC strategic objectives and this is set out below.

3. Cross Cutting Projects Within ECC

Essex County Council is leading a number of cross-cutting projects within the Council itself which are contributing to tackling climate change. ECC recognises that action on one theme can benefit another, and this has a cumulative positive impact:

3.1. Ways of working

The Ways of Working (WoW) Programme is to explore a future way of working at Essex County Council. It will have an impact on goals to meet climate change targets, reducing the energy we use and the waste we create.

ECC colleagues are working in different ways now to meet the needs of different people in Essex.

We know that a 'one size fits all' model will not work for our organisation, due to our range of different services with different needs. We also know that we will not return to using our workspaces as we did previously. We're focusing on:

- updating our workspaces and making them more comfortable to work in
- reducing how much energy we use and waste
- how we use technology, and making sure it works properly
- developing new hybrid workstyles that will work for every job role
- keeping the health, safety, and wellbeing of our people a priority
- supporting managers as they adopt hybrid working for themselves and within their teams

The ways of working programme is being undertaken in parallel with a property review and the final outcomes will frame future work in line with policy to make ECC estate net zero by 2030.

3.2. The Essex Pension Fund

[Essex Pension Fund](#) administered by Essex County Council recognises both their responsibility to be a trusted investor and the range of potential long-term risks associated with climate change that the Fund, as a long-term investor, faces. The Investment Steering Committee has appointed specialist external managers to a range of investment mandates. The financial impact of issues, including climate change, forms one part of the process that determines the investments made on the Fund's behalf. From this a full stakeholder consultation commenced summer 2020,

with the outcome of this being the formulation of a new Responsible Investment (RI) Policy based on a set of RI Investment Beliefs which includes climate change and forms part of the Fund's Investment Strategy Statement.

3.3. ECC Investments

Climate change will likely affect long-term investment returns. Temperature increases and measures taken to limit global heating will translate into lower returns on some assets. Climate change leads to conditions where economies are less productive and productivity growth is a key driver of economic growth. It is therefore important to mitigate these impacts where reasonable and practical to do so.

3.4. ECC Procurement

ECC outsources the majority of its services and as such has a significant spend with third party organisations. ECC introduced consideration of climate impacts as part of its social value procurement strategy launched in July 2021. The procurement team are reviewing policies and practices to build on this foundation and establish the most effective way of ensuring that climate considerations are taken into account in this third party spend. The whole procurement lifecycle will be considered, from contract specification, requirements at tender stage and performance monitoring. We will engage with existing and prospective suppliers throughout the review to better understand how we can work collectively to tackle climate challenges.

4. Land Use & Green Infrastructure

Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral made a number of recommendations on land use and green infrastructure, including 50 per cent of farmland in Essex to adopt sustainable land stewardship practices by 2030; 75 per cent by 2040 and 100 per cent by 2050, and coastal flood resilience schemes in critical areas to be implemented by 2023.


















Essex County Council has made one of its 20 strategic objectives, "Levelling up Environment", which states "we will help all our communities to enjoy a high quality environment by making them more resilient against flooding, heat stress and water shortages, by enhancing our county's green infrastructure and by reducing air pollution." This is a very good reflection of the Land Use & Green Infrastructure work going forward and acts as a vision for the Climate Adaptation and Mitigation teams.
























The basis for our work in Land use & Green Infrastructure is the 2020 Green Infrastructure Strategy which has provided an Action Plan which forms the platform of our Green Infrastructure work. This includes establishing a pan-Essex Local Nature Partnership, developing a Green Essex Fund, researching the very real potential investments of Biodiversity Net Gain metrics, Carbon credits, CSR payments and water company investments and delivering the Essex Forestry Initiative, which exceeded its targets in Year 1 (20-21).

The following table sets out the projects ECC are already committed to, the financial spend and how these align with ECC's strategic aims and how they meet the ECAC

recommendations. A number of these demonstrate that ECC is already going beyond these requests.

The following table sets out the projects ECC are already committed to, the financial spend and how these align with ECC's strategic aims and how they meet the ECAC recommendations. A number of these demonstrate that ECC is already going beyond these requests.










Initiative	Description	Financial commitment	Align ECC Strategic aims			
Flood Resilience - Capital Flood Programme	The floods capital programme is aimed at reducing surface water flood risk to the communities of Essex. The current programme has been highlighted as a priority up to 2024/25. The projects delivered through the capital programme will not only reduce surface water flood risk, but they will incorporate Natural Flood Management and Green Infrastructure measures that will provide environmental benefits such as habitat creation, carbon reduction/sequestration and health & wellbeing.	Capital 50% ECC funded, £6.57m. 50% Env Agency Grant, £1.97m 2021/22	    			
Flood Resilience – Community Climate Resilience Plans	Local Councils and the public more informed on steps they can take to address the climate emergency – whether adaptation or resilience. E.g. more informed about their flood risk and other climate change impacts in line with ECAC findings. Implementing proportionate local plans for mitigation and adaptation measures. Linking up with existing community groups and supporting the Essex Climate Action Commission changemakers programme.	£60,700 Revenue, Service Improvement Reserve	    			
Essex Forest Initiative	<p>In October 2019, we committed to plant 375,000 trees over the next five years. The primary reason is to lock up carbon, offsetting the carbon produced which is contributing to ongoing climate change. The trees will be planted across Essex, including on our own and other council's land and land from partners in voluntary sectors. The first year's planting target was 25,000 trees. We went beyond this and actually planted 38,615. This Initiative is supported by a Forestry Officer funded by the ECAC until April 2023. ECC works in partnership with other authorities and charities across Essex.</p> <p>Essex County Council was successful in securing a £300,000 grant from the Forestry Commission. The Local Authority Treescape Fund is designed to support tree planting outside of woodlands. As such, work has been undertaken with borough and district partners (Colchester, Harlow and Epping Forest) and ECC has one site of its own (Cressing Temple Barns) to deliver the planting and maintenance of 5,595 trees (some whips and some standard sized street trees).</p>	<p>Revenue New Investment £220,000 2022/23-2025/26.</p> <p>£300,000 grant from Forestry Commission</p>	   			








Building with Nature	ECC are working with Natural England and universities to write a set of Green Infrastructure Standards, which can be used to assess local planning policy and new development within the county to ensure that they are properly incorporating the principles outlined in the adopted Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy. The document has been through initial consultation and is currently going through a revision process based on comments we have received. We expect that a final version of the document should be published this winter. This Initiative is supported by 2 Green Infrastructure Planning officers funded by ECC until April 2023.	£680,000 drawdown from Climate Change Reserve 2021/22 to 2022/23 Sustainable land use.	   	 		
Maintenance Green Streets (Cross Cut Transport)	Essex Highways are the custodians of the public realm and there are multiple benefits to green initiatives, principal amongst these are flood reductions and urban heat stress reduction. To reduce the uncertainty about annual income we propose a Green Infrastructure Maintenance Reserve based on 35,000 trees at £55 per tree.	Revenue New Investment £1.925m 2022/23-2025/26.		  		
Local Nature Partnership	We have been working closely with the Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) the Royal Society For the protection of Birds (RSPB) and Natural England to set up a Local Nature Partnership. The LNP will pull together over 80 diverse groups and organisations to co-ordinate a countywide approach to levelling up the environment and identifying options to make the most efficient use of resources. We hope that the first meeting will take place in November 2021. The organisations listed above are also undertaking a mapping exercise to identify suitable Nature Recovery Networks that we expect will form part of an Essex-wide Nature Recovery Strategy.	Revenue New Investment £267,000 2022/23-2024/25.	  	 		
Nature Recovery Strategy (Statutory)	The Environment Bill is introducing a statutory requirement for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). While the Environment Bill will require LAs to develop an NRS, the responsibility for delivery will be held across multiple partners. ECC are also seeking to have a partnership approach to adapting Essex to a Net Zero environment. We will set up a Local Nature Partnership (LNP). ECC are funding a new Green Infrastructure Delivery officer post until April 2023 and a LNRS and LNP officer for 2 years from January 2022.	Linked to Local Nature Partnership	  	 		
Water Strategy	ECC are working with Water Resources East (WRE) to put together an integrated water strategy for the county. The aim of this document will be to take a holistic view of water management across the county to maximise the use of green and blue features to capture surface water where it lands to help address future water scarcity issues that are likely to emerge because of climate change. In addition to this, the document will recommend a range of sustainable land management practices to reduce the need for potable water to be used as part of land management processes. It is envisaged the strategy will last 5-10 years.	Allocated funding from Climate Change Reserve. Included within £680,000 allocation for Sustainable Land Use, 2021/22-2022/23.		 		

5. Energy

The Commission has recommended that ‘Essex produces enough renewable energy within the county to meet its own needs by 2040’, with the Commission seeing a critical role in this for large scale solar production but ‘on available land without unduly compromising agricultural land’; that there should be a network of community energy neighbourhoods across every district; solar panels to be installed on every roof–and all fuel poor homes should be retrofitted.

ECC is committed to playing its part, sourcing its own electricity from renewable sources; supporting establishment of new community energy groups; helping 670 residents source solar panels and battery storage through a bulk scheme Solar Together; and supporting roll out of Government fuel poor grants, seeing 82 homes upgraded in the last year and supporting uptake of future grant funds totalling £5.2m (plus £17.2m and £2.58m pending successful bids to Sustainable Warmth Competition and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund)

Initiative	Description	Financial commitment	Align ECC Strategic aims			
Buying Renewable Energy	Using our purchasing power as an electricity customer to encourage investment in additional renewable energy generation such as solar farms or onshore wind and enable ECC to source green renewable energy to power its offices and street lighting. This will give ECC some protection against energy price volatility and the potential to make long-term cost savings on our electricity bill.	£337,000 Revenue.				
Generating renewable energy on the public estate	Action plan to develop opportunities across ECC's public estate to generate renewable energy including rooftop solar on our buildings ERO and 14 schools, solar canopies and ground mounted systems across the rest of our estate. Builds upon £140k EU funded scheme EMPOWER that delivered solar on Danbury Country Park, Danbury Primary and St John's Primary schools delivered in 2020/21	Capital Grant funding Property Decarbonisation £6.65m 2021/22		 		
Making Essex a centre for innovation in renewable energy – Local area energy decarbonisation	South East New Energy, a grant funded programme to tackle the barriers to local areas rapidly decarbonising their communities, buildings, and lives. The project will deliver pathfinder projects on affordable net zero housing and retrofit in domestic housing through communal solar and storage and develop proposals for community ownership of large scale solar. It will identify and address barriers to delivering and financing projects at scale. ECC is working in partnership with Kent County Council.	SE New Energy Grant: £6.4m shared across Essex and Kent.	 	 		
Renewables policy	Action plans and planning policy guidance to support the development of renewable energy generation in the county including but not limited to solar farms, onshore wind, bioenergy, and hydrogen production.			 		

Solar Together	<p>Solar Together is a unique group-buying scheme for solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and battery storage. This scheme will make solar PV and batteries more accessible and more affordable for a great number of people. This is open for residents and SMEs.</p> <p>Solar Together delivered solar panels on 305 households: a £1.3M investment saving 7,150 tonnes of carbon over the lifetime of the installations. Residents saved an average of 20% on market rates.</p>	Management of the scheme by ECC resource.		  		
Essex Energy Switch	<p>The Essex Energy Switch is a county wide collective energy switching campaign designed to help Essex residents reduce their gas and electricity bills.</p> <p>We support residents to switch supplier through a collective energy switching campaign each year. 61,000 households have switched since 2014, saving more than £3.9M; on average £230 per household. 2020/21 Campaign – 2,323 switched their energy tariffs; an average of £161 per household; 1,989 tonnes of CO2 saved per year, 100% renewable electricity tariffs</p>	Management of the campaign by ECC resource.		  		

6. Built Environment

Net Zero: making Essex Carbon Neutral recommendations focus on ensuring new development is fit for the future with recommendations for new schools to be net zero by 2022; new homes and commercial buildings to be net zero by 2025 and all to be carbon positive by 2030. Developments also need to support active travel and deliver climate resilience with sustainable drainage as standard.

The second challenge is to recognise that whilst we need to look forward, we also need to recognise that over 80% of the built environment of Essex in 2040 already exists now, hence retrofit is a significant area of work.

The Commission recommends all schools have smart meters by 2021, and half should be retrofitted to net zero by 2025 anchor institutions, including ECC should be net zero by 2030 and 100% by 2030. Also, by 2030, all anchor institutions- the large public sector organisations across Essex – should ensure their estates are net zero; all fuel poor homes should be retrofitted and supplied with affordable energy and two thirds of all homes retrofitted to net zero. All retrofitting should include water as well as energy efficiency measures and a stronger policy on sustainable drainage should be supported.








Action is also being taken to train the trainers, and support the frontline town planners, building inspectors and elected members. Our research undertaken in 2020 revealed a huge appetite and demand for an ongoing programme of training, and access to best practice guidance as well as have technical specialists/expertise to support the District Councils in the formulation of planning policies, the evaluation of technical evidence submitted, in order to push forward the new standards needed



















within the Local Planning Authorities Planning to deliver Net Zero new developments by the 2025 recommended target date.




As part of its estate management strategy, ECC undertakes an annual maintenance programme covering all its built estate and the maintained school's estate. A significant element of this work includes roof, window, and heating system replacements and ECC are working to deliver low or zero carbon alternatives and upgrades when delivering these projects.






Progress is being made to upgrade existing schools and the ECC estate through the utilisation of grant funding to deliver Solar PV, LED lighting and Air Source Heat Pump projects.






Like many other authorities' ECC is currently reviewing its estate portfolio and working to develop an updated Estate Strategy in line with new Ways of Working. The running costs and carbon footprint of existing assets are a key consideration in establishing the future portfolio and ensuring that ECC can achieve its climate change targets. With a rationalised estate and a clear strategy in place, the authority will be better able to target carbon reduction investment on property that is to be retained long term and roll out more retrofit projects.


















Initiative	Description	Financial commitment	Align ECC Strategic aims			
Retrofitting homes and energy efficiency: supporting low-income households	<p>Advice and grant support to Essex households on low income or in fuel poverty and in poorly insulated homes to retrofit their home and improve its energy efficiency, lowering carbon emissions but also improving the living conditions, making the home warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer and reducing energy bills.</p> <p>ECC received £776,000 in funding to support development of an advice website with Citizens Advice Essex.</p> <p>ECC delivered fuel poor grants totalling £0.8m Between Feb-Aug 2021 a communications campaign to promote this £800k funding was completed, ensuring over 80 Essex homes benefited from up to £10k worth of free energy efficiency improvements</p> <p>The South East Energy Hub currently holds a further £5.2m in grant funds to support retrofitting fuel poor homes. Funding will be promoted later in 2021 onwards to ensure many more Essex homes can benefit. This is a grant funded programme delivered in partnership with the Districts and BEIS. ECC has worked with 11 District, Borough and City authorities to bid for a further £17.2m in grant funding (outcome pending - funding tbc).</p>	<p>Green Homes Grant: £776,000 2021/22 Warm Homes Fund Grant: £800,000 2021/22. GHG LAD Phase 1a</p> <p>Marketing support provided by ECC resource for retrofit schemes.</p>	  	  		

	ECC has further worked with social housing providers to bid for £2.58m to upgrade 769 housing association properties across Essex (outcome pending – funding tbc)					
Retrofit Schools	<p>We have a programme to roll out smart meters to ECC controlled schools to enable better tracking of energy usage across the school's estate. To date 125 maintained schools have a meter fitted: a further 47 are in train.</p> <p>By the end of 2021/22 we will have installed solar panels that will generate over ½ million kWh of energy - saving our schools £77,000 a year in energy costs. These high specification solar installations enable schools to track their energy usage and generation and provide great information for teachers to formulate lesson plans. This information, combined with the data from our gas and electric smart meter installations, can provide evidence for further improvement projects, as we can target specific wastage within the school – and enable monitoring and targeting to be put in place.</p> <p>This year we have also been successful in receiving £1.8m of funding for double glazing, which has enabled upgrades across 15 sites – reducing their heating demand, and so their overall energy costs.</p> <p>We are funding a new team to support schools to develop a net zero investment plan to enable them to apply effectively for grant support for required investment.</p> <p>We will continue to seek funding opportunities, as well as utilising our school's maintenance budget, to deliver improvements across the school estate.</p>	£1.8m Window Glazing Grant secured 2021/22. Revenue New Investment, Carbon Education team £245,000 2022/23-2023/24.		   		
Retrofit Academy	The Retrofit Academy Community Interest Company (CIC) in partnership with Essex County Council will run a project to support residents and businesses to create jobs and growth from making private properties more energy efficient.	Grant Award of £717,060.	  	  		
Essex Housing Carbon Zero housing pilot	Essex Housing looks to exceed legal requirements for sustainability in all its developments. All private sale schemes delivered to date include photovoltaic panels, electric vehicle charging ports and ample cycle storage to encourage sustainable travel. Essex Housing is continually looking to build on this further and where viable, is now starting to bring forward schemes with air source heat	Revenue New Investment £640,000 2022/23.	   	  		

	<p>pumps, as well as considering how we can best ensure biodiversity is unaffected, or even improved on schemes. Residential units at the next two schemes to be brought forward, Purford Green and Shenfield Library, are designed to achieve an EPC 'A' rating and a carbon neutral pilot scheme is also currently being identified. It is expected that the Future Home Standard will launch in 2025 and under this standard CO2 emissions will be at least 75% lower than homes built today and Essex Housing will continue to seek to exceed these standards wherever it can viably do so.</p> <p>Essex Housing are bringing forward a pilot Net Zero – For Construction materials and in operation – development which will also give full consideration to climate resilience issues around flooding, water scarcity and overheating.</p>					
New Schools Net Zero	ECC has already commissioned a number of net-zero carbon school expansions, the first of which was handed over for school use earlier this year. These pilot schemes will help ECC identify the best way to deliver net-zero carbon school buildings in the future. As a minimum all new school buildings are now being designed with an A+ EPC rating, pending results of the net-zero carbon work.	Linked to schools retro fit to net zero, support provided by ECC resource.				

Anchor Institution commitments	<p>ECC has a policy to transform its own estate to net zero by 2030. ECC will continue to work with other anchor institutions who are also taking action on their estates.</p> <p>ECC is working with The Essex Partners and anchor institutions across Essex to establish a climate group to develop joint working in delivery of Commission recommendations</p>	Capital Priority Recommended £3m Estate Retrofit 2022/23-2025/26.				
Essex Design Guide Climate Change Net Zero Update	<p>At ECC we have worked with planning authorities across Essex to produce the Essex Design Guide for development in Essex. We are now updating this to ensure it reflects best practice in both net zero and climate resilient homes.</p> <p>The first phase of this work has been to align existing guidance material within a new thematic climate change heading. The second phase of work underway is to provide best practice advice on Climate Change which addresses the component of advice both the local authority officers and developers will use. This includes but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net Zero (carbon) Development 	£25,000 Revenue 2021/22. In addition supported by ECC resource in Economic growth team.				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Healthy Places (including Healthy Homes Standard) ○ Sustainability Design Guidance for example solar orientation ○ Delivering Garden Communities through TCPA principles ○ Cooling in Buildings and Public Places ○ Use of Smart Technology in Public Places e.g. reducing light pollution. ○ Delivering heritage retrofitting in development 					
Essex Design Guide Climate Change – Walkable Neighbourhoods Guidance best practice	A further section of the Design Guide is being written to provide best practice advice on Walkable Neighbourhoods- new neighbourhoods and streets designed to promote the use of walking, cycling and sustainable transport with the option of remote parking (includes commissioning of evidence base study)					
Green Skills Infrastructure Review	<p>We are undertaking a Green Skills Infrastructure Review for Essex so as to provide an in-depth analysis of the existing skills and training provision and how it meets the needs of employers, providers, residents, ECC and partners/stakeholders. Specifically, the review will spotlight ways we can use existing or new or improved skills infrastructure to support the delivery of the Commission recommendations.</p> <p>A joint Stakeholder Action Plan with resource implications will recommend next steps for ECC and partners.</p>	Drawdown from Climate Change Reserve £105,000 Revenue.				
Garden Communities	<p>ECC is working with planning authorities in Essex to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of an evidence-based study, including a cost-benefit analysis, which examines the different ways to deliver a number of carbon saving scenarios through a combination of building fabric and technologies including net zero carbon in new development proposals, including Garden Communities. • Develop Local Plans Toolkit • Ensure that Garden Communities are built to the highest standards in terms of design, quality, and climate change adaptations. And make use of the Essex Design Guide Climate Change advice once completed. • Implement sustainable drainage solutions. • Deliver biodiversity net gain and green infrastructure gain. • Create walkable neighbourhoods and tree lined streets. • Deliver carbon zero new schools (primary and secondary) • Deliver localised energy solutions. 	Drawdown from Climate Change Reserve £30,000 Revenue.				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide quality sustainable modes of transport which maximise modal shift to ensure 50% of trips use sustainable modes. Deliver a long-term stewardship model that supports the quality of place created and is capable of sustaining this long term. 					
Prepare a Developers Climate Change Charter	<p>Work is underway by the Essex Developers Group and the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) to produce a pan-Essex Charter which sets out what the construction and development industry will commit to move towards carbon zero development in Essex. ECC are providing a system leadership role to help make this work happen.</p> <p>The aim is to have all major developers that operate in Essex to sign-up to the Climate Change Charter.</p>	The investment is ECC officer time and resource.				
Training for members and officers	Training to provide an overview of Climate Change and Planning related matters to Essex Planners and Members across the county. Additional training in the delivery of BREEAM Assessments. This work has been commissioned and will commence in November and funded from the first CMA draw-down.		  	  		
New- Establish Climate Action Planning Team to Build Back Better and help deliver on Net Zero new build recommendations.	<p>New Investment to establish a Climate Action Planning Team (CAPT) of specialists/experts within Planning to advise and support district officers as well as developers with new build housing and commercial standards, to deliver Net Zero. Climate Change planning policies and support with advice on planning applications, and support the performance of building post-development. This team will also help deliver on net zero carbon housing demonstrator/pilot projects in each district.</p> <p>This new investment will provide ECC capacity and specialist knowledge to work with District, Borough & City Councils and ECC as a developer focusing on planning, housing, and estate managers to provide good design and appropriate challenge and support so that new build and development proposals positively contribute to meeting our climate change targets.</p>	Revenue New Investment £699,000 2022/23-2025/26.	 	   	 	

7. Transport

We will deliver a step change in sustainable travel across the county, by growing passenger transport and active travel and will ensure we support the move towards net zero. All our work is delivered in partnership, either with districts, central

government or suppliers and is aligned with the transport priorities within Everybody's Essex.

Our approach is 'Avoid – Shift – Improve', avoiding unnecessary motor vehicle trips; encourage residents to shift to other more sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport; and improving the sustainability of those journeys which are essential such as improving bus provision and developing a strategy for electric charge points.

ECC has made great progress on delivering against our recommendations, most obviously through the development of 5 active travel schemes totalling ~£8M. The schemes will reallocate road space to make it easier to walk and cycle and have been designed in partnership with our districts. They will be delivered in Summer 2022.

We have also taken two proposals for famous congestion hotspot the Army & Navy junction out to public consultation. Rather than simply build another road junction for cars, we have focused on developing a solution for people, following best practice guidance for walking and cycling routes. This is being developed in conjunction with local MPs, Parish and City Council, the DfT, Essex Highways, Jacobs and Highways England.

We have introduced electric scooter trials, in partnership with a private operator, in 6 locations delivering near 500,000 trips, actively delivering modal shift from car and onto net zero alternatives.







We have launched Essex Pedal Power, in conjunction with Sport England, Tendring District Council, The Active Wellbeing Society, SELEP and Active Essex, - a community-based bike project giving 1,300 residents in Jaywick Sands and Clacton a new bike free of charge. The new inclusive programme aims to make cycling accessible for everyone providing access to employment, training and educational opportunities or key local services. We hope to roll this scheme out to other districts next year.






We have launched our Safer Greener Healthier and Stop Swap Go behaviour change campaigns, communicating our sustainable transport ambitions with residents.









Going forward, our priorities will be to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plans for our districts, developing a long-term framework which will guide future investment in walking and cycling infrastructure.





We will be developing our Alternative Fuels strategy, rolling out electric charge points and electrifying the ECC car fleet.

We will also be developing our Bus Services Improvement Plan to rebuild the Essex bus network, reverse the long term decline in passengers, delivering modal shift from car and improving public health.

Initiative	Description	Financial commitment	Align ECC Strategic aims					
Active Travel	Active Travel includes dedicated cycleways, walkable neighbourhoods and school streets. We aim to encourage modal shift to	£4.75m ECC capital funding for cycle infrastructure						

	<p>active travel by improving cycling infrastructure to all stations and develop a coherent network across the county, increase walking through the development of walkable neighbourhoods and encourage active travel in young people through the creation of school streets.</p> <p>During Covid we introduced semi-permanent segregated cycle paths and we recently completed public consultations on five active travel schemes, worth £8M. These schemes will reallocate road space to provide more space for people walking and cycling, provide public realm improvements, and implement 10 school streets. The schemes will be implemented in Colchester, Chelmsford, Braintree, Brentwood and Wickford by Summer 2022. These schemes were developed in partnership with the local districts, businesses, access groups and local residents.</p> <p>In addition ECC Is directly investing £x to develop new cycle paths across the county</p> <p>We launched our first Walking Strategy in September 2021.</p>	<p>£2.13m ECC capital funding: 100%</p> <p>Capital Grant £50,000 received 2020/21</p> <p>Revenue Grant received £919,000 2020/21</p> <p>Service Improvement Reserve £61,000 Revenue 2021/22.</p> <p>Active Travel Grant funding Rev: £2.42m Capital: £5.95m</p>				
Cycle Assets Renewal	The purpose of this programme is to ensure that existing cycle infrastructure is brought up to standard and is safe and fit for purpose and is therefore attractive to users. Capital investment for asset renewal of cycleways across the County – business case submitted to Capital Challenge on 20 th Sept	Capital Priorities Recommended £3.0m 2022/23-2025/26.		 		
Highways LED	<p>Complete replacement of all streetlighting lanterns with LED units which will result in a significant energy saving, and therefore carbon reduction. One year into the programme with 50,000 units replaced out of a lighting stock of 130,000 units. The programme has prioritised units where the greatest energy saving can be achieved.</p> <p>During Covid we introduced semi-permanent segregated cycle paths and we recently completed public consultations on five active travel schemes, worth £8M. These schemes will reallocate road space to provide more space for people walking and cycling, provide public realm improvements, and implement 10 school streets. The schemes will be implemented in Colchester, Chelmsford, Braintree, Brentwood and Wickford by Summer 2022. These schemes were developed in partnership with the local districts, businesses, access groups and local residents.</p>	<p>Capital (Phase 2, 3, 4) Programme: £26.87m 2021/22-2024/25.</p> <p>ECC Funding: 100%</p>				

Warm Tarmac pilot	Essex Highways is trialling warm tarmac, which is hoped will become the standard material for inlay surfacing. This form of asphalt is better for the environment because it uses less energy when it is being mixed and laid. This one simple switch is expected to significantly reduce carbon emissions and work is underway to quantify this saving.	Within existing Capital Programme.				
Bus Back Better	<p>Essex County Council will shortly (by the end of October) publish its Bus Service Improvement Plan. This will set out how buses can help deliver Safer, Greener, Healthier travel in Essex. The plan sets out specific measures where Essex County Council (ECC) will work with the bus industry and other partners to deliver safer, greener, and healthier travel by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuilding the Essex bus network to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic • Developing an attractive, sustainable, and affordable bus network, offering an alternative to car use. • Reversing the long-term decline in passenger numbers, in absolute terms and as a modal share of all journeys. • Improving public health and addressing climate change by reducing pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides (NOx), ozone (O3), sulphur dioxide (SO2) and carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, produced by cars in Essex. <p>Switching your journey from car to bus, if it's not possible to walk or cycle, is a key way to reduce carbon emissions and help mitigate climate change. It is also an investment in your local community, economy and environment</p>	<p>Capital Priorities Recommended £500,000 2022/23. Revenue New Investment £884,000 2022/23-2025/26. Revenue Grant £443,000 2021/22.</p>				
Behaviour Change	New investment in the mobilisation of a wider behaviour change programme beyond current activity to help drive the Safer, Healthier, Greener ambition. Funds will be spent on behaviour change expertise to develop the evidence base and a campaign manager to work alongside them and the rest of PPH to ensure that everything we're delivering – be it potholes or cycle ways – are making Essex Safer, Greener & Healthier.	Revenue New Investment £450,000 2022/23.				
Transport & Parking Planning Policy	To provide ECC capacity to update Transport and Highways policies in line with emerging priorities from DfT, the new transport hierarchy and Climate Commission recommendations. This will take the form of multiple one-off projects.	Revenue New Investment £675,000 2022/23.				





Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<p>We are creating an alternative fuel strategy for Essex working with partners including anchor institutions across Essex to agree a plan for Essex. This is funded by the Climate Commission and will include electrifying the ECC fleet (below), developing a model for countywide charge point roll out and exploring alternative fuel for freight. The strategy will focus initially on on-street residential charge points, for those 40% of households who do not have access to off-street parking.</p> <p>Our objective is to ensure that for any trip which must be by road, is done so as sustainably as possible.</p>	Drawdown from Climate Change Reserve £200,000 Capital 2021/22.	 			
ECC Electric Fleet Pilot	We have conducted a Fleet Electrification Review to consider the path forward for ensuring vehicles used in delivering our services are all hybrid or electric and have committed to introducing EV into our own car lease fleet this year.	Drawdown from Climate Change Reserve £200,000 Capital 2021/22.				








8. Waste


In 'Our Plan for Essex' we have committed to *Minimise Waste* and reduce its environmental impacts, by supporting residents and businesses to reduce waste and increase recycling, and by working towards a more circular economy where we better protect our natural resources.

We have already committed to zero waste to landfill by 2030, through the delivery of waste reduction, enhanced recycling and sustainable disposal. We are relaunching our Recycling Centres by bringing this service in-house and focussing it on meeting local need and providing enhanced opportunities to reuse and recycle. Whilst our engagement with residents and partners thorough 'Love Essex' and the 'Blueprint for a Circular Economy' project is ensuring we are all better equipped to reduce waste and its environmental impacts.

Our focus on the future through the development of a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex with our partners has begun. This will develop over the coming year and will provide the required framework for a generational shift in how we view and manage waste and the policies and approaches needed to deliver our ambition. This strategy will have tackling climate change at its core to ensure waste system design, procurement and operational approaches actively contribute to net zero targets.

	Description	Financial commitment	Align ECC Strategic aims			
New Joint Municipal	To develop a future vision and approach for waste in Essex which aligns with the	Existing Revenue programme 2021/22-2024/25 £180,000 (external consultancy) for initial modelling and options appraisal.	 	 		

Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS)	<p>ECAC recommendations to minimise waste, maximise recycling and embed a circular economy in Essex</p> <p>This joint strategy with the Essex Borough, City and District Councils will develop the strategic framework needed to deliver this vision. It will identify the policy, infrastructure and service requirements and implement the required action plan to deliver this.</p> <p>The initial assessment (during year one) will model different delivery options to enable a preferred approach to be identified and public consultation to occur.</p> <p>The strategy, policy changes and actions plan to deliver the strategy will be adopted and delivered during year 2.</p>				
Bio-waste Contract Procurement	<p>The purpose of this activity is to secure the necessary future treatment capacity for green garden waste and food waste generated in Essex and collected by Essex Councils.</p> <p>This will enable Essex to divert this waste away from disposal and meet the ECAC recommendation to ensure all biowaste is put to beneficial use by composting it or using it to generate bio-gas.</p>	<p>Delivery investment for the procurement is primarily existing officer time.</p> <p>Current Revenue programme 2021/22-2024/25 £26.29m (Bio-waste treatment costs)</p>			
Blueprint	<p>BLUEPRINT to a Circular Economy is an Interreg-funded European project led by Essex County Council.</p> <p>The circular economy encourages the efficient use of resources when manufacturing products and the 'designing out' of waste from systems. It also promotes the re-use, repair, refurbishment and recycling of products for as long as possible with minimal waste. The project will support local authorities to move to a more circular economy by</p>	Grant Revenue 2020/21 £3.87m - across partnership. ECC £912,000 2021/22- 2023/24.	  		

	<p>identifying current barriers and developing a policy framework for adoption.</p> <p>The project will also support training opportunities to assist individuals and support organisations within the circular economy. ECC is the lead authority for the project working with multiple local authorities across UK & Europe.</p>					
Love Essex	<p>Love Essex is an initiative developed and shared by the Essex Waste Partnership – a collaboration of ECC, District, Borough and City Councils across Essex - to collaborate county-wide on the delivery of waste projects with residents, businesses and schools.</p> <p>The Love Essex programme aims to inspire behaviour change and encourage residents to reduce waste and litter. Love Essex campaigns supports reusable hygiene products, cloth nappies, recycling, composting and library of things projects across Essex. The team use social media platforms and the Love Essex website to engage along with community volunteering activities.</p>	<p>Current Programme £2.14m Revenue 2021/22-2024/25.</p> <p>Drawdown from Service Improvement Reserve £52,000 Revenue.</p>				

9. Community Engagement

9.1. Finance

Total financial commitments by way of Revenue New Investment for Engagement and Communications £1.57m to 2025/26. Spend will be incurred on charges for staff communication, social media and delivery and support roles. This amount also includes charges for marketing, ECAC event, website development, training and research costs.

9.2. Summary of Activity

ECC has developed a detailed communications strategy, taking a three-pronged approach to communications activity:

- Formal communications
- Stakeholder engagement
- Community engagement

We will communicate to traditional audiences (such as general public, media outlets) via regular channels (such as e-newsletters and media releases). This will primarily be one-way communication, pushing key messages out en-masse and be less labour intensive.

A media release will be issued after each Commission meeting detailing what has been discussed or agreed. The chair and other commissioners will be offered for interview. For any interviews secured, an interview briefing will be developed for the interviewee.

Also, under this prong, more formal social media activity will be undertaken via newly established ECAC accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram which point traffic to and complement the Essex is Green work.

Key characteristics

- Develops overarching comms strategy and plan
- Develops and delivers key messages via 'traditional' channels
- Generally one-way broadcast of key messages with the exception of social media activity
- Commission's identity, design, employee comms and content support from central comms team
- Measures and evaluates comms activity

ECC has committed to working across the county to hit its net zero targets, by ensuring that the Council significantly reduces its carbon footprint whilst also supporting an acceleration in the progress towards sustainable housing and energy, and active and alternative forms of travel. It has committed to engaging with communities and businesses, providing advice and support to enable and empower local action.

The Commission recommended that we invest in research to identify Essex audience groups and develop more targeted communications. Extensive research to underpin future communications was undertaken in the first half of 2021 looking into the attitudes of Essex residents and their willingness to undertake action on climate change. This research has been shared across District, Borough and City Councils across Essex. Alongside this, there was a public consultation on many of the Commission's key recommendations, the results of which were published as the community engagement annexe to the Commission's report, [Net Zero – Making Essex Carbon Neutral](#).

The Commission recommended that an online resource be developed to enable individuals to take action on climate change and a website has been developed for this purpose: essexclimate.org.uk This acts as a growing resource for the community in Essex to understand how they can take action on climate.

ECC is working with the Essex Association of Local Councils, offering a series of climate-related webinars is helping to address the recommendation that local authorities should align on messaging around climate. The Net Zero Innovation Network has already been established, as recommended by the Commission to bring together businesses and anchor institutions to develop innovative climate solutions within the county.





ECC has started to develop climate action packs for specific groups such as residents, schools and businesses, to give practical advice on how each of us can play our part in tackling climate change. In September 2021 we also began rolling out a series of webinars to support town and parish councils in tackling climate change at a local level. By supporting others in taking action, we can make even faster progress towards our climate goals.



ECC continues to support the Essex is Green social media channels which are a collaboration between ECC, the Commission and local social media admins to enable more Essex residents to understand the work we are already doing to tackle climate change and learn how they too can become more involved in our journey to net zero.


Finally, just last month, ECC was proud to become official partners in Ashden's Let's Go Zero campaign to encourage schools across the county to become carbon zero by 2030.

These are some of the areas of communication (section 9.3) and community (section 9.4) we are already prioritising as we continue to consider the Commission's other recommendations relating to community engagement.





9.3. Communication and Education

Initiative	Description	Align ECC Strategic aims			
Advice Packs	We are producing advice packs aiming at different audiences explaining to them the impact climate change is having, what they can do about it and how to get involved. Initially we are producing packs for residents, schools and businesses.		 		
Low Carbon Bus Event	Wednesday 1 September saw the COP26 Carbon Battle Bus arrive in Essex, as it made its way across the country in the build-up to the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, taking place in Glasgow in November. The bus stopped off at the GRIDSERVE Electric Forecourt in Braintree where an event was held by the Essex Climate Action Commission. The event showcased some of the action that is being		 		

	<p>taken both around the county and locally in Braintree in the fight against climate change.</p> <p>The event featured talks from Toddington Harper, Chief Executive at GRIDSERVE, alongside representatives from Essex County Council, Braintree District Council, Brentwood Borough Council and the Net Zero Innovation Network (NZIN).</p> <p>Following the completion of the event Cllr Kevin Bentley and Cllr Graham Butland, leaders of Essex County Council and Braintree District Council respectively, planted a tree on the GRIDSERVE site to symbolise the commitment to climate action around the county.</p> <p>A full recording of the event can be found on the Essex Climate Action Commission's YouTube channel.</p> <p>A further event at Gridserve took place on Oct 29 which brought together local government and business leaders from across the East of England.</p>				
Carbon App	<p>Essex Climate Action Commission is currently about to start the procurement process for a carbon counting app which tracks an individual's carbon footprint, suggests ways to reduce their carbon footprint and rewards actions by awarding carbon credits they take to mitigate the footprint.</p> <p>Retailers, hospitality and other relevant businesses in Essex would be encouraged to sign up to accept the carbon credits and provide an environmentally friendly reward. An ECC reward could be a free water butt or composting bin for example. A retailer could give a reusable coffee or water cup etc.</p> <p>Versions of the app would also be available to schools and businesses.</p> <p>The Commission aims to find a pre-existing app that we could white label.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why <p>We need to become a net zero county by 2050. Individual residents have a large role to play in helping us achieve that. The app would be a way to engage residents, schools and businesses and get data on who is doing what and measure the level of success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact <p>The app will engage and inform residents about small changes they can make to their daily life to offset their carbon footprint. It would reduce the county's carbon footprint It would give residents a way to engage and participate in climate change action It would encourage behaviour change It would reward positive behaviour</p>		 		

ECAC Website	Maintaining the Administration and Support of the ECAC website and Officer Time				
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9.4. Empowering our Communities

Initiative	Description	Align ECC Strategic aims			
Essex is Green & Essex Changemakers	Essex Is Green social media channels actively engage and inspire thousands of residents online to get involved and tackle climate change reaching over 10million newsfeeds since we launched last July and over 8000 followers since September 2021. Changemakers group was opened where over 100 Essex admins or local community group leaders could meet to work and learn together to achieve their shared goals of fighting climate change and improving the environment.				
Resident Research Work	Annual research to benchmark residents' attitudes to climate change and measure positive progress and attitudinal change among Essex residents				
Community Led Action	The new £500k Climate Action Challenge Fund for local community groups and schools, gives an opportunity for up to £20,000 of funding to deliver activities that respond to key climate challenges in Essex. Funding is available until March 2023 https://www.essex.gov.uk/leisure-culture-local-heritage/culture-and-communities				
EALC webinars	ECC is hosting a series of webinars for EALC members across the various themes of the Commission's work to help encourage and support action at parish and town council level. The series of workshops began in September 2021 and will be rolled out bi-monthly between now and July 2022				







10. Supporting Our Businesses


Essex County Council has made a strategic commitment in its organisation strategy (*Everyone's Essex*), to ensure that it delivers a Strong, Inclusive & Stable Economy, as well as a High Quality Environment. The strategy encompasses 20 commitments, including Good Jobs, Net Zero and Green Growth. Fostering, developing and sustaining green growth in the county is central to our strategy for regional economic growth.

Essex County Council is clear in its ambition to “develop Essex as a centre for innovation, supporting new technologies and business models to enable our economy to transition to net zero and secure green jobs for the future by ensuring we have the right local skills and drawing in investment opportunities”

This is supported by the work of the newly-established Net Zero Innovation Network, a group 30-plus businesses, academic institutions and public sector working collaboratively to develop a pipeline of delivery around the themes emerging from the Essex Climate Action Commission. Together the pipeline will ensure joined up working and help to secure funding opportunity to deliver transformational green projects.

Essex County Council is looking to support the growth of businesses within Essex enabling a thriving economy in the medium and long term. This means not only supporting green businesses but encouraging all business to be green. There are particular opportunities which will secure investment from Government and the private sector but only if we can produce the evidence and analysis to support the business cases/test cases needed. ECC will also need to lead the market showing the opportunity to business, via leveraging its purchasing power, and that of fellow anchor institutions to facilitate Green Business Growth within Essex.

Initiative	Description	Financial commitment	Align ECC Strategic aims			
Net Zero Innovation Network (NZIN)	NZIN will bring together individuals from a wide range of education and business sectors across Essex. The aim is to support partnerships and drive innovation, helping Essex achieve its target of being a net zero carbon emissions county by 2050. The Network develop and deliver new projects which will be defined and owned by Network members. There is a particular focus on themes emerging from the Essex Climate Action Commission including: transport, energy, waste, the built environment, and land use and green infrastructure	Revenue New Investment £1.95m 2022/23-2025/26.				
Green Growth	Essex County Council is looking to support the growth of businesses within Essex enabling a thriving economy in the medium and long term. This means not only supporting green businesses but encouraging all business to be green. There are particular opportunities which will secure investment from Government and the private sector but only if we can produce the evidence and analysis to support the business cases/test cases needed. ECC will also need to lead the market showing the opportunity to business, via leveraging its purchasing power, and that of fellow anchor institutions to facilitate Green					

	Business Growth within Essex..					
Supporting Essex SMEs with green projects and reducing their carbon emissions	<p>Low Carbon Across the South East (LOCASE) ERDF grant funded programme helping businesses with 'green' projects such as energy efficiency or supporting SMEs in the low carbon sector.</p> <p>Since the programme started in 2016, £2.6m has been awarded to 397 businesses with an estimated 2,902 tonnes CO2 equivalent emissions reduction and £992,534 cost savings per annum within Greater Essex (including Southend and Thurrock). Further funding has been secured for the partnership to extend the delivery of support to SMEs until June 2023, with an expected £2.7m of grants available to Greater Essex businesses.</p>	<p>Grant: £6.4m funding (across the South East LEP)</p> <p>Drawdown from Service Improvement Reserve £38,000 Revenue 2021/22.</p>				

11. Evaluation and Monitoring

We are already committed to produce annual reports to track:

- Essex County Council's greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilience measures.
- Greenhouse gas emissions and climate reliance measures across Essex.

Aligning with the organisational strategy Everyone's Essex there will be a suite of KPI's supporting the high quality Environment strategic aim reporting on a quarterly basis.

We are in process in developing a waste strategy and reviewing service design and the lifecycle of waste.

We recognise we are just at the start of this process and are working towards developing an evaluation framework for individual climate action projects/ programmes. The objectives of this evaluation are to understand how these climate actions contribute towards achieving the Net Zero target.

12. Summary Finance Schedule

Below is a financial summary schedule combining all service areas taken from the Capital MTRS, Capital recommended priorities, External funding and new Revenue investments from the Climate Change reserve, Service Improvement reserve and Transformation reserve.

Capital amounts are based on the percentage allocation funded by ECC and are as at MTRS P5 Position with Climate selected as the primary outcome. Capital recommended priority items are not currently part of the capital programme and subject to review and approval.

Staff costs associated for teams working on Climate change activity is in addition to the costs below and amount to £1.96M per annum for c39 FTE.

Total external funding and financial commitment of £200.3m including external grant funding (subject to offer) and staff costs to 2025/26. This includes the request for additional revenue investment of £10.3m and Capital investment of £6.5m to 2025/26.

Finance view by Activity:

Financial Commitments - Prioritised

Financial Commitments - Prioritised			DRAFT MTRS				
	£000's Total ECC	FTE	£000's 2021/22	£000's 2022/23	£000's 2023/24	£000's 2024/25	£000's 2025/26
Flood resilience	6,571		1,171	1,750	1,700	1,950	-
Highways LED Rollout (Phase 2/3/4)	26,870		6,506	7,547	7,547	5,270	-
Active Travel	2,137		1,656	481			
Cycling Infrastructure	4,750			750	2,000	2,000	
Electric Vehicle Strategy	400		200	200			
Capital MTRS	40,728	-	9,533	10,728	11,247	9,220	-
Estate Retrofit Core	3,000		-	750	750	750	750
Bus Back Better	500		-	500	-		
Cycling Assets Renewal	3,000		-	750	750	750	750
Capital Priorities Recommended	6,500	-	-	2,000	1,500	1,500	1,500
Total Capital Excl Grants	47,228	-	9,533	12,728	12,747	10,720	1,500
Love Essex	2,141		678	480	488	495	-
Biowaste contracts	26,285		5,615	6,702	6,889	7,079	-
Compost Credits	8,330		1,961	2,040	2,122	2,207	-
Inter Authorisation Agreements	30,636		7,323	7,542	7,769	8,002	-
Revenue MTRS	67,392	7	15,577	16,764	17,268	17,783	-
Climate Team Staffing	699			206	206	206	81
Climate Communications & Engagement	1,566			495	558	432	81
Environment - Essex Forest Initiative	220			55	55	55	55
Highways - Request for Green Infrastructure maintenance reserve	1,925			220	330	550	825
Planning - Build ECC capacity to support new build standards across Essex	820			220	200	200	200
Essex Housing Hargrave House	640			640			
Transport - updating of transport policy for climate challenge	675			675			
Supporting our businesses - Sustainable growth, sector developmenta and Net Zero innovation	1,950			493	493	493	471
Supporting our Businesses - reduction carbon education	245		-	125	120	-	-
Transport - Behaviour Change; Safer, Healthier and Greener	450		-	450	-	-	-
Land Use and Green infrast- Local Nature Partnerships	267		-	89	89	89	-
Transport - Bus back better	884		-	221	221	221	221
Revenue New Inv	10,341	38	-	3,889	2,272	2,246	1,934
First CMA drawdown Climate Reserve	2,422		1,405	1,018			
Service Improvement Reserve	458		458				
Service team staff charges	10,424	39	1,963	2,022	2,083	2,145	2,210
Total Revenue Excl Grants	91,036	84	19,402	23,693	21,623	22,174	4,144
	0	-	-	0	0	0	-
TOTAL Excl Grants	138,264	84	28,935	36,421	34,370	32,895	5,644
Capital MTRS	40,728	-	9,533	10,728	11,247	9,220	-
Capital Priorities Recommended	6,500	-	-	2,000	1,500	1,500	1,500
Capital Externally Funded:							
Flood management REFCUS	6,547		1,147	1,750	1,700	1,950	-
Green Infrastructure Fund	2,500		-	-	500	1,000	1,000
Flood Alleviation Scheme - Env Agency	1,973		1,973	-	-	-	-
Decarbonisation Scheme 1	6,282		6,282	-	-	-	-
Decarbonisation Scheme 2	226		226	-	-	-	-
Decarbonisation Scheme 3	4,860		4,860	-	-	-	-
Low Carbon Skills fund	146		146	-	-	-	-
Green Homes Capital Grant - BEIS	776		776	-	-	-	-
Grant: £0.8m GHG LAD Phase 1a	800		800	-	-	-	-
Grant: £5.2m GHG LAD Phase 2	5,200		-	5,200	-	-	-
Grant: £17.2m Sustainable Warmth bid (outcome pending)	17,200		-	17,200	-	-	-
Window glazing grant	1,800		1,800	-	-	-	-
Active Travel - Dft	5,950		-	5,950	-	-	-
Essex Forest initiative - LA Treescape fund	300		300				
Capital Externally Funded	54,558	-	18,308	30,100	2,200	2,950	1,000
Total Capital Incl Grants	101,786	-	27,841	42,828	14,947	13,670	2,500
Revenue MTRS	67,392	7	15,577	16,764	17,268	17,783	-
Revenue New Inv	10,341	38	-	3,889	2,272	2,246	1,934
First CMA drawdown Climate Reserve	2,422		1,405	1,018			
Service Improvement Reserve	458		458				
Revenue Externally Funded:							
Blue print Circular Economy Interreg France. Partnership	3,873		3,873	-	-	-	-
Clean Bus Tech Fund - Dft	443		443	-	-	-	-
Retrofit Academy	717		359	359			
Active Travel	2,419		2,419	-	-	-	-
Revenue Externally Funded	7,453	-	7,094	359	-	-	-
Total Revenue Incl Grants	88,065	45	24,533	22,029	19,540	20,029	1,934
Staff Team Charges	10,424	39	1,963	2,022	2,083	2,145	2,210
TOTAL Inc Grants	200,275	84	54,337	66,879	36,570	35,845	6,644

Finance view by funding stream:

Financial Commitments - Prioritised

	DRAFT MTRS						
	£000's Total ECC	FTE	£000's 2021/22	£000's 2022/23	£000's 2023/24	£000's 2024/25	£000's 2025/26
Capital MTRS	40,728	-	9,533	10,728	11,247	9,220	-
Capital Priorities Recommended	6,500	-	-	2,000	1,500	1,500	1,500
Total Capital Excl Grants	47,228	-	9,533	12,728	12,747	10,720	1,500
Love Essex	2,141	7	678	480	488	495	-
Biowaste contracts	26,285	-	5,615	6,702	6,889	7,079	-
Compost Credits	8,330	-	1,961	2,040	2,122	2,207	-
Inter Authorisation Agreements	30,636	-	7,323	7,542	7,769	8,002	-
Revenue MTRS	67,392	7	15,577	16,764	17,268	17,783	-
Essex Plan Reserve	6,230	13	-	2,303	1,078	1,298	1,551
Climate Change Reserve	2,265	10	-	701	764	638	162
Transformation Reserve	695	3	-	575	120	-	-
Additional funding in MTRS	1,151	3	-	310	310	310	221
Revenue New Inv	10,341	29	-	3,889	2,272	2,246	1,934
First CMA drawdown Climate Reserve	2,422	9	1,405	1,018	-	-	-
Service Improvement Reserve	458	-	458	-	-	-	-
Service team staff charges (existing ECC staff)	10,424	39	1,963	2,022	2,083	2,145	2,210
Total Revenue Excl Grants	91,036	84	19,402	23,692	21,623	22,174	4,144
TOTAL Excl Grants	138,264	84	28,935	36,420	34,370	32,895	5,644
Capital MTRS	40,728	-	9,533	10,728	11,247	9,220	-
Capital Priorities Recommended	6,500	-	-	2,000	1,500	1,500	1,500
Capital Externally Funded	54,558	-	18,308	30,100	2,200	2,950	1,000
Total Capital Incl Grants	101,786	-	27,841	42,828	14,947	13,670	2,500
Revenue MTRS	67,392	7	15,577	16,764	17,268	17,783	-
Revenue New Inv	10,341	38	-	3,889	2,272	2,246	1,934
First CMA drawdown Climate Reserve	2,422	-	1,405	1,018	-	-	-
Service Improvement Reserve	458	-	458	-	-	-	-
Revenue Externally Funded:							
Blue print Circular Economy Interreg France. Partnership	3,873	-	3,873	-	-	-	-
Clean Bus Tech Fund - Dft	443	-	443	-	-	-	-
Active Travel	2,419	-	2,419	-	-	-	-
Retrofit Academy	717	-	359	359	-	-	-
Revenue Externally Funded	7,453	-	7,094	359	-	-	-
Total Revenue Incl Grants	88,065	45	24,533	22,029	19,540	20,029	1,934
Service team staff charges (existing ECC staff)	10,424	39	1,963	2,022	2,083	2,145	2,210
TOTAL Inc Grants	200,275	84	54,337	66,879	36,570	35,845	6,644

The breakdown of external funding is shown below.

EXTERNAL FUNDING - MTRS / PIPELINE	DRAFT MTRS						
	£000's Total ECC	FTE	£000's 2021/22	£000's 2022/23	£000's 2023/24	£000's 2024/25	£000's 2025/26
Capital Externally Funded							
MTRS	6,547	-	1,147	1,750	1,700	1,950	-
Pipeline	48,012	-	17,162	28,350	500	1,000	1,000
Total External Capital	54,558	-	18,308	30,100	2,200	2,950	1,000
MTRS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
New Inv	7,453	-	7,094	359	-	-	-
Total External Revenue	7,453	-	7,094	359	-	-	-
Total External Funding	62,011	-	25,402	30,459	2,200	2,950	1,000

The table below is a breakdown of costs for prioritised initiatives by service area and inclusive of grants:

	£000's Total ECC	FTE	£000's 2021/22	DRAFT MTRS				
				£000's 2022/23	£000's 2023/24	£000's 2024/25	£000's 2025/26	£000's
Land Use & Green Infrastructure								
Total Capital	17,890		4,590	3,500	3,900	4,900	1,000	
Total Revenue	3,228	5	400	780	474	694	880	
Total Land Use and Green Infrastructure	21,118	5	4,991	4,280	4,374	5,594	1,880	
Waste								
Total Capital	-		-	-	-	-	-	
Total Revenue	71,316	7	19,501	16,764	17,268	17,783	-	
Total Waste	71,316	7	19,501	16,764	17,268	17,783	-	
Energy								
Total Capital	35,489		13,089	22,400	-	-	-	
Total Revenue	961	2	520	346	95	-	-	
Total Energy	36,450	2	13,609	22,746	95	-	-	
Built Environment								
Total Capital	4,800	-	1,800	750	750	750	750	
Total Revenue	1,590	3	130	860	200	200	200	
Total Built Environment	7,107	3	2,289	1,969	950	950	950	
Transport								
Total Capital	43,607	-	8,362	16,178	10,297	8,020	750	
Total Revenue	5,097	6	3,006	1,428	221	221	221	
Total Transport	48,704	6	11,368	17,606	10,518	8,241	971	
Supporting our Businesses								
Total Capital	-		-	-	-	-	-	
Total Revenue	2,195	10	-	618	613	493	471	
Total supporting our Businesses	2,195	10	-	618	613	493	471	
Communication and Education								
Total Capital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Revenue	2,332	10	302	560	669	638	162	
Total Communication and Education	2,332	10	302	560	669	638	162	
Community Engagement								
Total Capital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Revenue	629	2	314	314	-	-	-	
Total Community Engagement	629	2	314	314	-	-	-	
check	-							
Team Staff charges	10,424	39	1,963	2,022	2,083	2,145	2,210	
TOTAL	200,275	84	54,337	66,879	36,570	35,844	6,644	

Revenue investments requested from Reserves are captured against the following activities and financial years.

	Total	DRAFT MTRS			
		£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
New Investment included in Total Commitments					
Essex Plan Reserve					
Environment - Essex Forest Initiative	220	55	55	55	55
Highways - Request for Green Infrastructure maintenance reserve	1925	220	330	550	825
Planning - Build ECC capacity to support new build standards across Essex	820	220	200	200	200
Essex Housing Hargrave House	640	640			
Transport - updating of transport policy for climate challenge	675	675			
Supporting our businesses - Sustainable growth, sector developmenta and Net Zero inno	1950	493	493	493	471
	6230	2303	1078	1298	1551
Additional funding in MTRS					
Land Use and Green infrastructure - Local Nature Partnerships	267	89	89	89	-
Transport - Bus back better	884	221	221	221	221
	1,151	310	310	310	221
Climate Change Reserve					
Climate Team Staffing	699	206	206	206	81
Climate Communications & Engagement	1,566	495	558	432	81
	2,265	701	764	638	162
Transformation Reserve					
Supporting our Businesses - reduction carbon education	245	125	120	0	0
Transport - Behaviour Change; Safer, Healthier and Greener	450	450	0	0	0
	695	575	120	-	-
Total	10,341	3,889	2,272	2,246	1,934

Forward Plan reference number: FP/180/10/21

Report title: Better Care Fund Plan 2021/22	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor John Spence, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	
Date: 24 November 2021	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Peter Fairley, Director, Strategy, Policy and Integration email peter.fairley@essex.gov.uk or Emma Richardson – Head of Integration Partnerships emma.richardson@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Thousands of Essex residents and their carers rely on health and care services to support them. By working more closely with partners in the NHS, integrating our approaches, we can provide services in a more joined-up way. Doing this well can then lead to better outcomes for residents across Essex.
- 1.2 The Better Care Fund (BCF) was created to help this approach by bringing together funding pooled between the NHS and, in our case, Essex County Council, to spend together on services and support, providing a more integrated approach to health and social care services. In 2021/22 this funding amounts to £165m (£108m from NHS and £57m from the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities).
- 1.3 In order to comply with the terms of funding, it is necessary for Essex County Council (ECC) and partners to submit a plan to NHS England by 16 November 2021 showing how the money will be spent. This report therefore sets out the BCF Partnership's spending plans, which ECC has developed with health partners, and asks the Cabinet to endorse this Plan. It will also need to be endorsed by the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board. It will appear strange that approval for spending in the current financial year is only being sought at this stage, but the national guidelines were in fact only published on 30 September 2021.
- 1.4 By developing a more integrated approach to services and the spending of public money, these proposals will contribute strongly to ECC's strategic ambitions in Everyone's Essex, notably around Equality and Levelling Up – working with our health partners to improve outcomes for Essex residents – particularly those more vulnerable, who depend on effective local health and care services to enable them to lead a more independent and good-quality life.

- 1.5 This decision will lead to the commission of services which do emit carbon but we do not anticipate change and the decision will therefore have little or no adverse impact on the county's focus on tackling climate change.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree the Better Care Fund Plan for Essex in the form appended to this report.
- 2.2 Agree to authorise the Executive Director for Adult Social Care to vary the section 75 agreements to reflect the agreed Plan.

3. Summary of issue

Context

- 3.1 Essex County Council works with the local NHS and with district and borough councils to provide help and support to people to address their health and care needs, to help people to recover their strength and confidence after an adverse life incident, and to support them back home after a period in hospital.
- 3.2 The Essex Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan brings together NHS and local government funding worth £165m in 2021/22 to provide vital services that support Essex residents with health and care needs. The Plan includes expenditure of:
- a) £79m on adult social care services, including contributing towards the costs of funding care services in a person's home (domiciliary care); reablement services that enable people to recover their strength, confidence and independence; and support to carers.
 - b) £65m on NHS community services funding a range of health services that support people with complex needs to live as independently as possible and enjoy quality of life.
 - c) £11.9m via district/borough/city councils on adaptations to homes to meet the needs of people living with disabilities (Disabled Facilities Grant)
 - d) £8.9m on schemes that support hospital discharges and help address pressures that typically result from higher demand during winter (such as investment in 'bridging' services that provide interim support for a person between leaving hospital and being able to return home); investment in support to the care market (such as training and quality improvement); and investment in services that support people with sensory impairments.
- 3.3 Essex has already been working with local NHS partners during 2021/22 on using the Better Care Fund to deliver services in line with previously published planning guidance and local priorities. At the end of September, national guidance for 2021/22 was belatedly published and this requires local health and care systems to submit their Better Care Fund (BCF) plans for 2021-22 to NHS England by 16 November 2021. The Better Care Fund plan for Essex

will cover the ECC area which is also covered by five NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups. The Essex BCF Plan is also relevant to, and links to, the work of the three Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) that cover Essex but are not contained within our borders.

- 3.4 The national guidance and planning framework for 2021/22 expects systems to work together to:
- Reduce the number of permanent admissions into long-term residential and nursing care, in line with the principle of 'Home First'
 - Invest in reablement services with a focus on ensuring people are still at home 91 days after receiving reablement services
 - Reduce the length of time people stay within hospital by reducing the proportion of people who are in hospital over 14 days and over 21 days (this is a change to the previous national condition on delayed transfers of care)
 - Focus on addressing avoidable admissions (this is a change to the previous national condition on reducing non-elective admissions)
- 3.5 The national guidance says approval of plans will be judged largely on assurance around Hospital Discharge plans and a clear suggestion that approval of Plans will be determined by this. National Condition 4 and the BCF Discharge Metrics have changed to reflect the national Hospital Discharge policy and guidance (which was published in March 2020 at the start of the pandemic and significantly updated in July 2021).
- 3.6 Although the Fund covers 2021/22 and relies on the production of a plan, the national guidance on the production of the BCF Plan was only released at the end of September 2021 with a requirement for plans to be submitted to NHS England by 16 November 2021, which is a challenging timetable. This report outlines the key elements of the Plan and Essex's position on them.

Strategic Context

- 3.7 The proposed decision accords closely with the Council's key strategic theme, in *'Everyone's Essex'* of 'health, well-being and independence for all ages' including and Levelling Up health, by proposing a funding plan that will help us and our health partners deliver our services in a more joined-up way, and so help to improve the experience and outcomes for residents in Essex who rely on our services.
- 3.8 The Council's priorities include:
- Enabling residents to live independently
 - Leveling up health
- 3.9 This decision will contribute towards these priorities by improving our capacity to work closely and develop a more seamless provision of care and support to some of the county's most vulnerable residents; enabling them to live the best-quality life they can.

Background to the Better Care Fund

- 3.10 The Better Care Fund (BCF) was announced by Government in June 2013. It was intended to provide an opportunity to transform local services through better integrated care and support. Health and Wellbeing Boards have been obliged to submit BCF Plans since then that meet mandated minimum financial values and demonstrate achievement of a series of NHS England national conditions. The BCF is overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board and quarterly status reports are submitted to NHS England on performance. The Better Care Fund incorporates funding to support local authority social care (the Improved Better Care Fund; and Winter Pressures) which are subject to conditions that it be pooled into the BCF and used to ease pressures in the health and care system.
- 3.11 Since 2017 the Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) has been included as part of the wider BCF and is part of the sixth county wide section 75 agreement. It is a grant provided to Adult Social Care and must be focused on:
- Sustaining Adult Social Care
 - Supporting activity to ease health pressures
 - Sustaining the Care Market
- 3.12 During the pandemic, there have been some further additions to the Better Care Fund to incorporate national funding for hospital discharges.
- 3.13 The total value of the Better Care Fund has increased in recent years:
- 2018/19: £135.8m
2019/20: £153.9m
2020/21: £159.7m
2021/22: £165.3m

4. National Conditions:

As with previous BCF plans there are four national conditions for the funding:

4.1 National Condition 1 – The plan must be jointly agreed

The plan must be signed off by ECC, the individual CCGs and endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The BCF plan will be presented to Cabinet on 24 November and to the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board on 24 November. Each CCG will take the plan through its governance before 16 November. The proposed plan meets that condition.

4.2 National Condition 2 – NHS contribution to Social Care is maintained in line with inflation

The total amount from the Better Care Fund CCG minimum contribution allocated for supporting social care in 2021-22 is £43.127m and represents a 5.37% increase. The proposed plan meets that condition.

3.7.3 **National Condition 3** – NHS commissioned out of hospital services

The total amount invested in NHS commissioned out of hospital care exceeds the minimum ringfence required. In Essex this is £30.791m. The proposed plan meets that condition.

3.7.4 **National Condition 4** – Improving outcomes for people being discharged from hospital

From March 2020, the Hospital Discharge Service Requirements replaced previous Delayed Transfer of Care (DToc) performance standards with revised national processes for hospital discharge. This includes a requirement that people should be discharged the same day who no longer need to be in hospital and implementation of 'home first' arrangements.

The proposed plan meets that condition.

5. **Metrics**

- 5.1 As with previous BCF plans there are also national metrics used to measure progress. These have changed for 2021/22 and they are published in the Better Care Fund Planning Requirements 2021/22.

Avoidable admissions (specific to Acute)

- 5.2 This is a new metric and replaces the old target for acute hospitals on non-elective admissions.
- 5.3 The new metric measures the number of times people with specific long-term conditions, which should not normally require hospitalisation, are admitted to hospital in an emergency. These conditions include, for example, diabetes, convulsions and epilepsy, and high blood pressure. The metric includes all ages, the rate is standardised to account for differences in the age and sex distribution of the population. **The target in Essex for 2021/22 is a rate of 810 per 100,000.**
- 5.4 The latest avoidable admission rate in Essex (825.6 per 100,00 in 2019/20) is lower than the latest England rate (862.1). There was a small drop in avoidable admissions between 2018/19 – 2019/20 in Essex. This is an annual figure and there is no national target.

Admission to residential and care homes

- 5.5 This metric remains the same as previous plans and measures the rate of admissions for people aged over 65. In 2020/21 there were 1,381 older Essex residents admitted to permanent residential or nursing care. This year, to September 2021 there have been a total of 715 admissions. If the number of monthly admissions stays at the average for 2021/22 so far, the total number

of admissions for the year will be around 1,420 – a rate of 450 per 100,000 older Essex residents.

- 5.6 **The target in Essex for 2021/22 is a rate of 450 per 100,000 older Essex residents.** This is a maintenance of current performance.

- 5.7 The table below shows the recent number of admissions by month and by care setting for 2020/21 - the trend has been down for residential care. Recent months are subject to change due to reporting lags:

Month	Residential	Nursing	Total	To date
Apr	133	24	157	157
May	105	24	129	286
Jun	98	26	124	410
Jul	88	23	111	521
Aug	86	16	102	623
Sep	76	7	83	706

Effectiveness of reablement

- 5.8 This metric remains the same as previous plans and measures the number of people supported to stay at home after receiving reablement. The metric counts the number of older people discharged from hospital into reablement services between October 1 and December 31, who are still at home when they are followed up between January 1 and March 31.
- 5.9 **The target in Essex for 2021/22 is for at least 90% of the people who have received reablement services to remain out of hospital for 91 days following completion of reablement.**
- 5.10 This target has been set based on maintaining performance in previous years (table below). In 2019/20 reablement figure for Essex was within the top 20% of counties for reablement performance

Year	older people discharged in rehab / reablement services	still at home 91 days after discharge	performance
19-20	1,359	1,224	90.1%
18-19	1,550	1,362	87.9%
17-18	1,211	1,053	87.0%
16-17	1,130	918	81.2%

Hospital Discharge

- 5.11 The new discharge metric measures the proportion of patients discharged to their usual place of residence. Historically Essex has performed well on this metric, with a pre-pandemic average of 93.8% of patients discharged to their usual place of residence.
- 5.12 **The target in Essex for 2021/22 is 93.4% of people being discharged into their usual place of residence.**

- 5.13 Since January 2021 Essex has seen higher proportions of patients discharged to their usual residence compared to England and similar HWB areas - the target looks to improve on this further.

Length of Stay

- 5.14 This metric is new and replaces the old metric which measured delayed transfers of care. This is because the hospital discharge process national guidance was fundamentally changed in March 2020 and updated in July 2021.
- 5.15 There are two new length of stay metrics, measuring the proportion of patients staying in hospital for longer than 14 days and 21 days. There is a national target of no more than 12% of patients staying more than 21 days. There is no national target for the 14-day measure.
- 5.16 Essex consistently performs better than England and similar HWB areas on both measures. In August 2021 10.8% of patients were in hospital for 14+ days and 5% of patients were in hospital for 21+ days.
- 5.17 **The target in Essex for 2021/22 is:**
- **No more than 10% of patients staying for 14+ days**
 - **Maintaining 5% of patients staying for 21+ days.**

6. Other Considerations

6.1 iBCF (Improved Better Care Fund)

In the Government's March 2017 Budget additional transitional funding was allocated to social care. The funding is non-recurrent and amounts to £45m in 2021/22. The conditions for use of the iBCF remain the same. That is, it may only be used for:

- Meeting adult social care needs
- Reducing pressure on the NHS (including winter pressures)
- Supporting more people to be discharged from hospital
- Supporting the social care provider market

- 6.2 The iBCF has funded various schemes and initiatives over the course of the allocation and these will need to be afforded within the reduced iBCF envelope in 2021/22. Management of this has been through locality partnership boards where those schemes that have shown to add value have been adopted as part of mainstream health or care base budgets. Scheme level information will be included within the plan (Appendix A).

Additional (winter pressures) funding for Social Care

- 6.3 It has also been confirmed within the guidance that additional Winter pressures funding is now included as part of the iBCF but is not ringfenced for use in winter.

Disabled Facilities Grant

- 6.4 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is transferred directly from ECC to the twelve District, Borough and City councils to allow them to discharge their statutory duty with regard to DFGs. The main area of focus for 2021/22 is to improve the quality of life and promote independence within home settings. The DFG will continue to be used by each of the twelve District, Borough and City councils in Essex to discharge their statutory housing responsibilities.

High Impact Changes

- 6.5 The High Impact Change Model was developed by the Local Government Association and NHS England as a way to support local care and health systems to manage patient flow and discharge and implementation of the model has been a requirement of the BCF plan since 2017. For 2021/22 The High Impact Change Model has been updated and remains best practice. But systems will not have to provide detailed narratives or progress against individual elements in 2021-22 .

The Future

- 6.6 The future of the BCF and iBCF beyond March 2022 is unclear given wider changes to system working within the Health and Care Bill.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The Council is the pooled fund host for the Essex BCF. The planning requirements for 2021/22 were not published by NHSE until 30 September 2021, and so interim arrangements were agreed in March 2021 (decision FP/995/02/21) to ensure continuity of funding from each CCG partner. The national uplift figure of 5.3% was applied uniformly to the 2020/21 CCG minimum contributions and payment schedules, which will be amended now that actual contributions have been published.
- 7.2 The approval of the BCF plan allows the relevant section 75 agreements for 2021/22 to be drawn up. These must be signed and in place by 31 January 2022.
- 7.3 The tables below summarise the funding sources and planned expenditure at a countywide and local level for 2021/22:

Better Care Fund Summary	2021/22 £m
Funding Sources	
Minimum CCG Contribution	108.4
Additional CCG Contribution	-
iBCF	45.0
DFG	11.9
Total BCF Pooled Budget	165.3
Expenditure	
Community Services	65.2
Social Care (min CCG contribution)	43.1
iBCF Meeting Social Care Needs	36.1
iBCF Countywide & Locality Schemes	8.9
DFG funded	11.9
Total Expenditure	165.3

CCG Area Allocations	Community Services	Social Care (min CCG contr'n)	iBCF Meeting Social Care Needs	iBCF County- wide & Locality Schemes	DFG funded	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Basildon & Brentwood	12.0	7.6	-	0.1	1.9	21.6
Castle Point & Rochford	7.7	5.4	-	0.1	1.4	14.5
Mid Essex	15.8	11.1	-	0.2	2.8	29.9
North East Essex	16.1	10.2	-	0.1	3.8	30.2
West Essex	13.6	8.8	-	0.2	2.1	24.7
Subtotal - Locality	65.2	43.1	-	0.7	11.9	120.9
Countywide	-	-	36.1	8.2	-	44.3
Total	65.2	43.1	36.1	8.9	11.9	165.3

Expenditure on all schemes including those specific to each CCG area are outlined in the attached BCF plan.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The mandate from the Secretary of State to NHS England under which requirements as to how NHS money is spent may include specific requirements relating to the establishment and use of an integration fund. In recent years the Secretary of State has done this by requiring CCGs to establish better care funds (BCF).
- 8.2 In Essex the BCF is established by means of individual agreements under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 between the Council and each of the five CCGs operating within Essex, together with an overarching County wide s75 agreement which relates to the Improved BCF (iBCF). There are six s75 agreements in total which are subject to annual variations to reflect the annual mandate and planning requirements. Following approval of the final BCF Plan, the same will be submitted to the Health and Well Being Board for

endorsement. The Board's role is to consider reports as requested by the Department of Health and to note the proposal with regards to the iBCF. This is part of the Board's role to promote the integration of health and social care.

- 8.3 The BCF Plan for 2021/22 must be submitted to NHS England by 16 November 2021 and s75 agreements to implement the BCF Plan for 2021/22 must be executed by 31 January 2022.

9. Equality and Diversity implications

- 9.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to ECC when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 9.3 The equality impact assessment (appendix 1) indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a characteristic.

10. List of appendices

Equality impact assessment

11. List of Background papers

Appendix A - BCF 2020-21 Planning Template

BCF Narrative Plan

Bodies involved in the plan

The Better Care Fund (BCF), and those budgets within it, are key elements of discussions across systems in Essex. This is key through all levels of the Essex system. Local alliances/ICPs determine the best approach for investing the BCF budget which has been delegated. There are dedicated local Partnership Boards focused on managing the BCF, developing schemes, evaluating performance and managing the budgets for local delivery. These boards cover the following organisations in Essex:

Essex County Council	5 CCGs through BCF Boards:	Wider Alliance representatives including:	ICS Partners:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North East Essex CCG• Mid Essex CCG• West Essex CCG• Basildon & Brentwood CCG• Castlepoint & Rochford CCG	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hospital Trusts• CVS• District & Borough Councils• GPs / PCNs / Primary Care• Community Health Providers• Ambulance Trust• Hospices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Herts and West Essex ICS• Mid and South Essex ICS• Suffolk & North East ICS

The Delivery Plan for Essex has been co-produced through local Partnership meetings that sit outside of the formal BCF boards, where priorities for local alliances form the basis of decisions to invest.

Executive Summary

Essex is one of the largest and most complex health and care systems in the country. The Essex Health and Wellbeing Board area comprises five CCGs, three acute trusts (across 5 sites), and links to three integrated care partnerships and to an additional 4 local authorities (Southend, Thurrock, Suffolk and Hertfordshire) and additional 6 CCGs that sit outside these BCF arrangements but are part of the STP footprints.

Our vision for health and wellbeing is to be more place-based, more preventative and more joined-up in order to improve population health outcomes, and to reduce health inequalities, for people of all ages across Essex. The Essex system is committed to building inclusive place-based partnerships as the bedrock of how it works to improve health and care outcomes in a local place and to achieve this through working with local ICSs on transition planning. Fundamentally, we want to see improved health outcomes, and reduced health inequalities, across the whole Essex population of all ages from the cradle to the grave as we deliver our duties set out in the Care Act.

The **Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy** sets out a vision that:

We want everybody in Essex to live well together.

- We want all people in Essex to live healthy, happy and full lives and to be able to fulfil their potential, including those who might be vulnerable.
- We want every child to get a great start in life.
- We want everybody to live in a strong, sustainable and supportive community with good opportunities for work and other meaningful activity and a healthy standard of living.
- We want everybody to be able to maximise their capabilities with control over their own lives, including the ability to make healthy lifestyle choices for themselves and their families.
- We want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy life long into old age. We want everyone to have access to high quality health services delivered in the right way at the right time when they need specialist help and support.

This Strategy, along with the Essex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, is due to be renewed by March 2022 to ensure that changes because of Covid and the Health and Care Bill are taken into consideration.

To achieve this, we recognise the need for a more integrated health and social care system and our priorities for 2021/22 are:

- Prevention and promoting self-care
- Enabling people to live independently and to access support in their community
- Working in more integrated and joined-up ways to improve patient pathways and transfers of care
- Improving information sharing
- Ensuring that health and social care are financially sustainable
- Improving patient experiences

Scheme		2021/22 £'000
1	Provision of Social Care	33,377
2	Care Act	4,167
3	Reablement	4,838
	Community Services/ Mental Health	
4	Services/Carers Support / Carers Breaks	65,972
5	Disabled Facilities Grant	11,885
6	Improved Better Care Fund	45,017
Total		165,257

To meet future challenges Adult Social Care needs to change, moving to a place-based model that is more local, more preventative, and more integrated, with citizens, communities, partners and providers working together to ensure that people can get the right support at the right time to maintain their independence and quality of life. The vision that underpins this strategy is shared with partners and sets an ambition to put communities at the heart of Adult Social Care: enabling people to live their lives to the fullest.

Our Adult Social Care Strategy defines key areas of focus through to 2025 to progress the Council's strategic ambitions and has been developed in the context of the Government's Health and Care Bill. We have identified 7 immediate, mission-critical areas that we must address in the next 4 years:

1. Develop a prevention and early intervention offer - to reduce or delay the onset of health and care needs;
2. Improve our support offer to carers – to ensure that people get the support they need in their caring roles, while enabling them to enjoy a good quality of life;
3. Improve access to housing, employment, and meaningful opportunities – ensuring we promote an inclusive society that addresses inequalities in access that have an adverse impact on quality of life, independence and health outcomes;
4. Implement place-based working and integration – working in multi-disciplinary teams with partners to improve people's experience of the health and care system;
5. Support and shape the care market – so that care provision is viable and sustainable going forward;
6. Improve quality of practice – to fully embed a strengths-based approach that promotes independence, choice and control and dignity;
7. Improve digital and technology infrastructure – to ensure we have the right support for people with care needs to live independently, to support the workforce to work as efficiently as possible, and to support the care market.

Governance

The Health & Wellbeing Board provides strategic leadership and direction for decision-making and joint commissioning across Essex covering all relevant CCGs and ECC. In this capacity it also acts as the final point of governance for BCF. The HWB receives quarterly reports on progress, spending and impact of the BCF. It reviews these in the context of reports on the broader integration agenda.

The BCF is governed at a local BCF pool level for the ongoing monitoring of schemes, metrics and financial performance through locality BCF Partnership Management Boards (CCG Accountable Officers and Finance Officers /

ECC Heads of Commissioning, reporting to Directors for Local Delivery, and Finance Officers). In some localities these Partnership Management Boards are free standing Boards and in others they have been incorporated in alliance/ICP discussions. Transformational plans and programmes are formally discussed and approved by existing local authority Governance processes and within each CCG's governing bodies.

Within Essex the Better Care Fund has one overarching S75 that incorporates all agreements for delegating BCF locally. ECC and the CCGs have agreed use of all pooled budgets in a joint and transparent manner, through jointly agreed governance routes. Decisions about use of funding are based on a clear and shared understanding of the allocation of resources across different areas of Essex, how this relates to population need, the services that will be supported and the outcomes that will be delivered.

In addition to the locality management and monitoring of the BCF, ECC is providing Programme Management and PMO resource to support the Health and Wellbeing Board with its responsibilities to agree and submit plans and quarterly reports to NHS England.

Overall approach to integration

We recognise that there is no one size fits all model that will be appropriate across the whole of Essex, which is why our focus has been on local collaboration. However, the approach to integration set out in this plan outlines our desire to move towards:

- building inclusive place-based partnerships as the bedrock of how we work to improve health and care outcomes in a local place.
- A greater focus on prevention and maintaining independence
- A common commitment to Discharge to improve the timeliness of transfers of care but also the quality of service received – with a focus on Home First
- Creating closer working between all partners to improve outcomes for the population of Essex.
- Taking forward new ambitions set out in the Health and Care Bill in how Health and Care systems work together
- Population Health Management approaches to support better risk stratification and preventative work
- Addressing and reducing Health inequalities

Ultimately our long-term ambition is to take collective responsibility for resources and population health and to provide joined up, better coordinated care for the benefit of the Essex population.

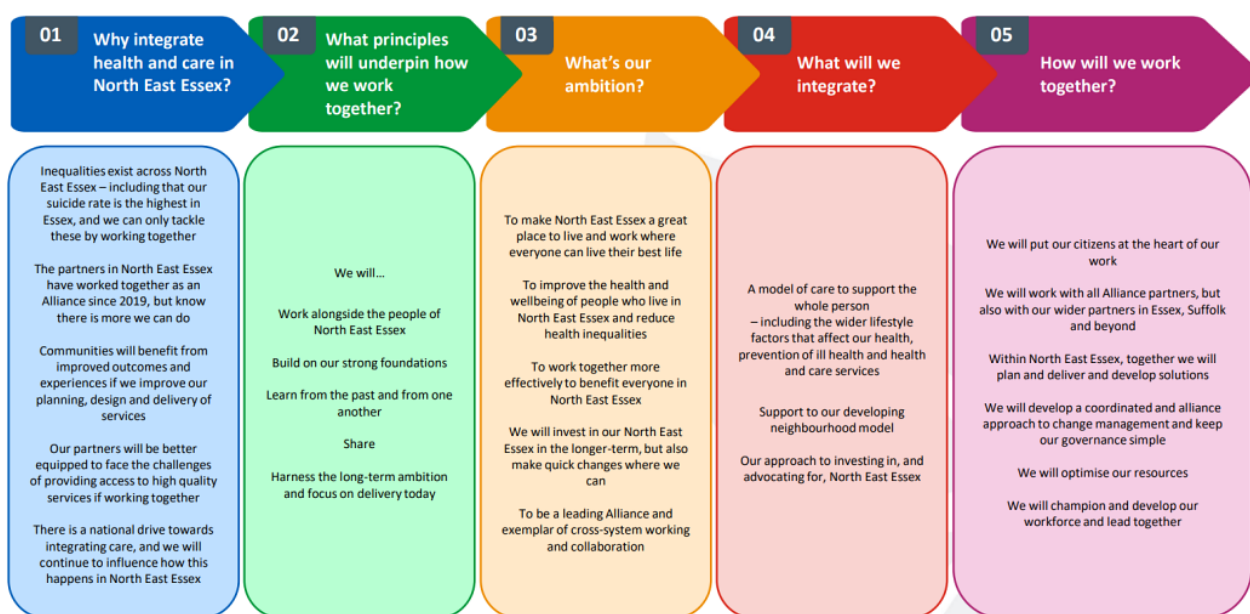
While all areas in Essex are committed to progressing the integration agenda, and implementing requirements set out in the Health and Care Bill by April 2022 through a shared strategic vision, it remains vital that local needs, opportunities, and challenges are considered in the models we take forward. The complex geography of Essex and the various organisational and strategic footprints mean that while the overarching vision, and ICSs, will guide our work on integration, how this looks locally will take different forms and progress at differing rates. We will also look to advance integration on the ground where it can be done quickly and beneficially without the need for complex new organisational structures and / or commissioning and contractual arrangements.

North East Essex

The aim of the NEE Alliance is to transform the health and wellbeing of the population of North East Essex by creating a sustainable system of health and wellbeing services that meet the immediate and longer-term needs of our population. This will be achieved through integrated commissioning and integrated delivery of health and wellbeing services. The Alliance will work collaboratively to achieve the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes for the people of North East Essex. It is committed to preventing and tackling the causes of ill health and reducing health inequalities, as well as improving the services and support we already provide. The Alliance will listen to the voice of local people in order to truly understand their needs, and address these by working alongside communities, and building on community assets.

The NEE Health and Wellbeing Alliance has recently undertaken a 16 week period of reflection on its maturity, focus and next steps of integration and work together, whilst acknowledging future potential changes linked to the NHS

white paper on ICS development as an organisational body. The goal is to keep moving towards a unified capability and capacity to achieve the triple aim and to provide a fair, honest, transparent and timely account of “place-based” performance to the communities served.



This ambition is supported through the local NE Essex iBCF Schemes where additional contributions have been made by the wider system into the iBCF pool to drive this agenda forward. NEE is perusing a Home First agenda to support admission avoidance and safe timely discharge back to the community. Some of the key activity supported through the iBCF includes:

NE Locality Initiatives	Description
Additional Swan UCRS Hours	To fund extra contractual hours with Swan for adults requiring reablement as admission avoidance to support the UCRS transition with ECL.
The Sound Doctor	An audio-visual learning programme aimed at encouraging effective self-management.
NEE Alliance Integration	To support place-based integration approach (as outlined in the above NE Essex Case for Change).
NEE Neighbourhoods	To realise the Alliance Neighbourhood ambition, costs will be attached to test and learn activity, the development of community hubs and employment of external project support.
Change and Domain Delivery	Alliance Delivery Lead roles (4) to support CMO and Live Well Domains.
Community Micro Enterprises (CMEs)	Using an Asset Based approach to the provision of care and support services in the local area.
System Resilience	Supporting Winter and system pressures
Active Environment Officer	Match funding for post to support the Alliance roll out of the LDP – it will report into the CMO and Be Well domain Leads
OT services for the Early Intervention Vehicle	Supporting Fallers to remain at home and prevent conveyance to hospital and hospital stays for OT support to be provided at home
Reablement Support	Admission Avoidance Social Workers to support people to remain at home where possible.

Mid Essex

The Mid Essex Alliance has set out high level ambitions aligned to the requirements of each *neighbourhood* for 2021-22:

- COVID recovery
- Integrated health and social care (including the development of PCNs), and
- A renewed focus on prevention and reduction of health inequalities.
- Reduced social isolation/Suicide prevention

- ABCD/strengthening communities
- Frailty elderly
- Drugs/Alcohol/County Lines/violent crime
- High street recovery/Night-time economy / homelessness (rough sleepers)
- Promote physical wellbeing
- Promoting mental wellbeing
- Reducing obesity
- Primary Care sustainability and development

The Mid Essex Alliance is fully committed to putting its citizens at the heart of its decision making at all times. Our strength lies within the strength of our communities. A place plan has been developed to include this approach.



Some of the guiding principles for delivering this include:

- Support the Live Well ethos, Asset Based Community Development principles, and embed social value in all that we do.
- Demonstrate that the citizen's, service users' and patients' best interests and safety are at the heart of planning, development, oversight and accountability activities.
- Transparency for information sharing, skills and experience and encourage Co-Production in designing and delivering integrated services.
- Collaborative governance to support open and transparent decision making. Decisions will be on a "Best for Service/Place" basis, evidencing population outcomes.
- Conduct timely and efficient organisational decision-making to support the work programme envisaged under the Mid Essex Alliance, adhering to statutory requirements and best practice by complying with applicable laws and standards, including EU procurement rules, EU and UK competition rules, data protection and freedom of information legislation.

Some of the key activity supported through the iBCF includes:

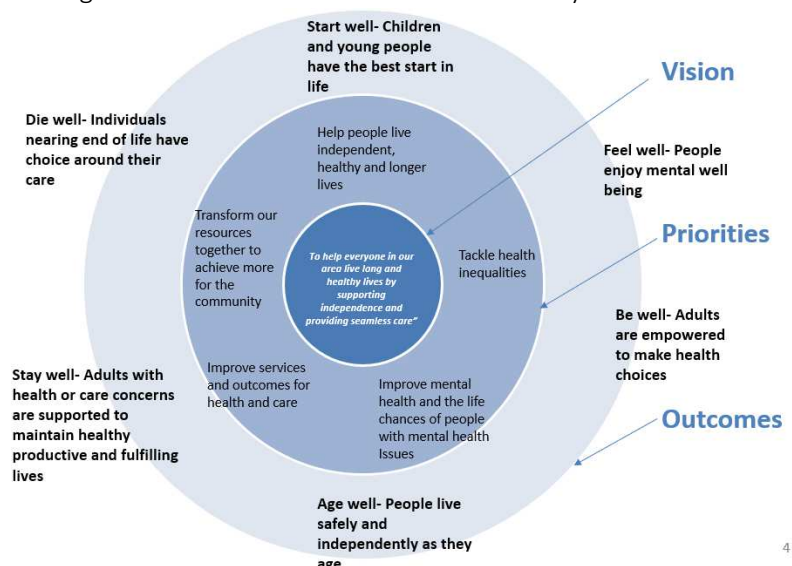
Mid Locality Initiatives	Description
Trusted Assessors	Trusted Assessor posts at Broomfield Hospital to support with increased discharge time of Adults into ECL reablement.
CHC Social Worker	Social worker post to support with leading on continuing healthcare assessments in Mid Essex, supporting with decreased discharge times, access to CHC funding and integration with health partners involved with continuing healthcare.
DISS	Contribution towards the Dementia Intensive Support Service (DISS) to provide link social worker posts within the neighbourhood teams and overall senior social worker coordination.
EOL	ASC contribution towards the overall End of Life service in Mid Essex provided through Farleigh Hospice.

West Essex

In the West Essex One Health and Care Partnership the vision is to help everyone in our area live long and healthy lives by supporting independence and providing seamless care. This will be delivered through the following priorities:

- Help people live independent, healthy and longer lives
- Tackle health inequalities
- Improve mental health and the life chances of people with mental health Issues

- Improve services and outcomes for health and care
- Transform our resources together to achieve more for the community



Models of Care to achieve the above include:

- Greater focus on preventing disease and managing existing long term conditions in the community
- Fundamentally shift more care from the hospital to the community, treating people closer to home without the need to go into hospital – home first
- Enable fluidity of resources across organisational boundaries to dissolve the historic divide between primary care, secondary care and community health and care services.
- Further integration across health and social care pathways designed on the principles of multi-disciplinary team (MDT) working.
- Majority of our provision will be deployed by providers at geographical PCN level, resourced based on the population health needs of those populations.
- Patients will be supported to have more control over their own health and wellbeing supported by personalised care & guided through digital tools.
- More outreach from acute hospital consultants and specialist teams to work alongside community health and social to support admission avoidance, management of long-term conditions and post-hospital discharge.
- Access to emergency care services will be expanded and reformed to provide alternatives to Emergency Departments that offer timely access for urgent care closer to people’s homes, and to shift towards “managed urgent care” through effective clinical triage and a digitally enabled NHS ‘front door’.

Some of the key activity supported through the IBCF include:

West Locality Initiatives	Description
Admission Avoidance	To support the adult to remain in the community and their own home during a period of crisis. This supports adult who may have turned up at Emergency Departments and without this service it would have led to the adult having a 24hrs – 48hrs assessment period or admission within an acute setting
Impartial Assessor	This service acts as an intermediary between the care home and acute hospital and will support the adults the discharge back to the care home including undertaking nursing needs assessment on behalf of the care.
Care Home Facilitator	This service supports the adult and carer find a suitable care service that meets those needs and is targeted at those who are self-funded and without this support would have longer stays in hospital
Care Home Hub Operation and transformation	To support the care homes and implement new initiatives that include the management of discharges and readmission to hospital.
Therapy Review	To undertake a review of all therapy services across acute, community and social care to redesign the service to support better outcomes for the adult and better integrated OT interventions

Care Co-ordination Centre Development	Support the development a co-ordination centre that will manage all discharges from the hospital and priorities system capacity to meet the demands on the system and proactive management of the adult through their pathway
PACTs / Care Co-ordination Centre implementation	To support the implementation of the co-ordination centre by ensure appropriate resource available
Falls in Care Homes	To supply equipment and the training of care home staff to avoid unnecessary ambulance call out and conveyances to hospital

South East Essex

South East Essex Alliance's ambition is to enable smooth and easy access to integrated health and care provision, that is delivered by a happy and motivated workforce; working together to reduce health inequalities. By

- Working towards outcome-based commissioning
- Empowering clinicals at the heart of change
- Addressing health inequalities
- Collaborative working across system and place
- Utilising Population Health Management data and methodologies.

South East Essex has developed a place plan divided into themes: Healthy Living, Healthy Places, Healthy Communities, Healthy Care, Healthy Start and Minds. Overarching themes are:

- Locality working
- Development of PCN footprints
- Co-production
- Tackling Health Inequalities
- Prevention and Early Intervention

There is a notable complexity with this Alliance as it encompasses Southend Borough Council / unitary authority who of course have their own BCF, Social Care and Commissioning functions.

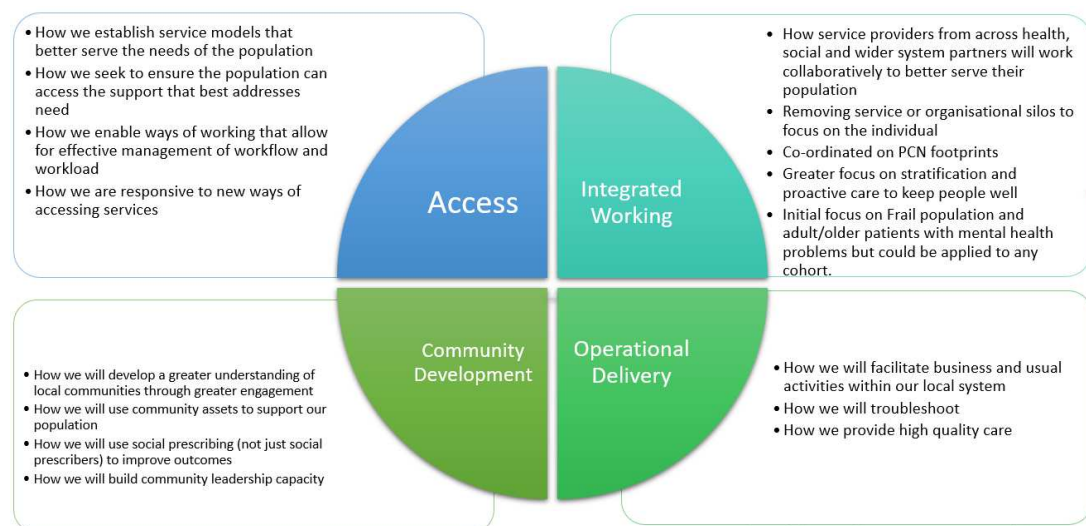
South East Locality Initiatives	Description
Neighbourhood Teams	The Locality Development Managers will take an operational and strategic lead on the development of a population health focused system that will improve well-being and outcomes for the locality populations working across health, social-care, housing and non-paid services.
Dementia Support	Bespoke support pre-diagnosis through to end of life for people living with dementia and their carers. Forming part of an integrated service that wraps around people, enabling them to live the life they would like with their diagnosis, including hospital inpatient stays and residential care. It is also the crucial link to all health, social care and community support in the area. The Team also includes support for Older People's Mental Health and Frailty.
Bridging Service	'Bridges the gap' between hospital discharge and reablement or domiciliary care support in people's homes. Coverage includes 17 starts flexed across the area. Commissioned by the CCG (delivered by the Acute Trust) this has proved to be highly effective in South Essex providing vital link and enabling smooth discharge to a home setting.
Care Coordination	Enhance the offer of the existing EPUT 'Care Coordination service' to undertake gait and balance assessments for patients on their caseload through the employment of Physio Therapists to undertake this role. Due to come to an end Dec 21.

South West Essex

The primary ambition of the Basildon and Brentwood Alliance is to reduce inequality, placing this at the centre of all decision making. This ambition is directly shared by the Health and Care Partnership Board. The local place plan is focused on implementing transformation across four domains and enablers to address inequality:

- **Access** – understand the communities that are underserved by current approaches to access. This will be considered at a PCN level due to the need for **Page 67 of 157** understanding of the communities served.

- **Integrated Working** –new approaches to proactive care planning that enable patients that often present late in disease progression due to socio economic factors to be identified and supported at an earlier stage
- **Community Development** – focus our community development approach on the three PCNs in Basildon using social prescribing, asset-based community development and other approaches to build stronger resilience
- **Operational Delivery** – continuously learn and refine approaches based on the experience of delivery in Basildon and Brentwood. Share learning on hard-to-reach communities that has been at the forefront of the Covid Vaccination approach and apply this to other interventions



Some of the key activity supported through the iBCF includes:

South West Locality Initiatives	Description
Alliance Development Diagnostic	This will be completed by Collaborate
Neighbourhood Teams	Neighbourhood Co-ordinators to strengthen the contribution of neighbourhood teams and improve care coordination for people with different levels of need in that neighbourhood. Key activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a locality workforce identity. • Pilot a new model of care. • Map assets and review commissioning arrangements. • Cultivate inclusive locality leadership. • Revised activity post covid restrictions
Bridging - existing runs till end of April	17 starts flexed across South Essex to 'Bridge the Gap' between hospital discharge and care support in people's homes.
Associate Director	Funding for Joint role of NELFT and Health and Social Care to deliver a locality, neighbourhood plan. With the view for integrated delivery and building collaboration to support system needs.
Trust Links	A charity running a garden scheme in the area has requested support for a site in Vange, Basildon. Funding has been secured from the CCG, Sport England LDP, Basildon Health and Wellbeing Board, 'ECC Strengthening Communities' budget and a few smaller sources of money.

We have a robust approach to constructive collaborative commissioning across Essex. A joint bi-monthly meeting of CCG Accountable Officers and Directors of Adults Services provides Essex-wide coordination. Some of the key work areas and programmes include:

- Joint county-wide commissioning arrangements for Transforming Care led by Essex County Council.
- Joint county-wide children's mental health commissioning led by West Essex One Health & Care Partnership (West Essex CCG)
- Mental Health Programme Boards to oversee mental health commissioning and delivery in North East Essex, West Essex and for Mid & South Essex
- Local alliance based collaborative planning for intermediate care (North East Essex, West Essex, Mid Essex, South East Essex & South West Essex)
- County-wide joint finance meetings to discuss financial planning and alignment

- County-wide planning group for continuing care and a joint transformation programme in Mid & South Essex
- Joint commissioning of the North East Essex Integrated Community Service Alliance led by North East Essex CCG
- Joint commissioning of the Essex Equipment Service led by Essex County Council for Mid & South Essex and North East Essex
- Joint planning and development work with District and Borough Councils on use of the Disabled Facilities Grant
- Joint planning groups with District and Borough Councils on independent living and move on from supported accommodation
- Joint strategies for Autism, Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, Carers and Dementia
- Joint dementia commissioning team employed through Essex County Council covering North East Essex, West Essex, Mid Essex, Castle Point & Rochford and Basildon & Brentwood
- Joint suicide prevention - planning and oversight group for Southend, Essex & Thurrock

As part of the new ICS arrangements, we will be reviewing the current governance, commissioning and financial alignment.

Supporting Discharge (national condition 4)

The Connect Programme

The Connect Programme brings together ECC, NHS and Newton Europe and comprises 5 workstreams, 4 of which directly relate to hospital flow. The programme will improve system flow, prevent avoidable admissions into hospital, reduce admissions into residential care, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of reablement services.

The programme is introducing new processes to improve flow and effectiveness within ECL's Reablement service, supporting 1200 more people to use a more effective service each year. It is embedding more independent decisions on discharge from hospital and short-term beds to enable 240 more people home every year and reduce length of stay in interim beds for adults.

It includes an acute-based trial to reduce inappropriate use of interim bed pathways when home is a suitable and safe alternative through:

- Advanced planning in the acute to ensure that ideal outcomes can be realised as often as possible, by removal of blockers and targeted actions during a patient's stay.
- MDT meetings across Health & Social care to agree the ideal pathway on discharge. Multidisciplinary working to maximise a strengths-based approach throughout. Patients going home when deemed appropriate by teams sharing knowledge and expertise.

These are now live across all 5 acute hospitals in Essex, underpinned by an improvement cycle ethos.

The Programme is also working with ASC Discharge to Assess (D2A) Teams to reduce Length of Stay and improve outcomes from interim beds through:

- Live Allocation of Social Worker upon discharge and first contact with family/individual within 48 hours.
- Working with health therapy and community nursing provision, to ensure adults' goals and needs are understood and met whilst in interim bedded care.
- Weekly review meetings with ASC, Community Therapy (currently in some areas but not all) and Provider where plans for every adult are discussed with a clear understanding of aims and progress.
- Making sure every adult is progressing to their most independent outcome, at a time that is right for them.

This activity is live in all quadrants of Essex, underpinned by an improvement cycle ethos.

Working with ECL, our Reablement Provider, to improve flow and effectiveness within the service by:

- Supporting ECL to be more focussed on identifying and meeting the outcomes of adults in their service.
- Introducing new methods to identify, meet and track the therapy needs of adults in their service.

- Introducing new processes to recognise when an adult is ready to exit Reablement, and to support a timelier and more seamless exit into the Care Market.
- New 'Early MDTs' to identify and agree actions to support adults with complex health, care or social needs.

Connect has provided a *single version of the truth* in terms of discharge outcomes by pulling together multiple data sources. This creates a positive culture through measuring the percentage of people returning home from an interim setting. Our data already shows us that:

- 1 in 5 people previously discharged to an out-of-hospital bed in MSE now go home instead.
- 55% of people plan to go home from an interim placement with the support of our D2A pilot (previously 25%).

As well as the Connect Programme our approach to improve outcomes for people discharged from Hospital includes the following components:

Investment in bridging, ILOR and reablement surge capacity

We are working on our reablement offer to improve the efficiency of reablement services (by reducing length of stay in the service) and improve the effectiveness of the service (by reducing ongoing care needs for people leaving the service), with an ambition of creating capacity for an extra 1,100 people to benefit from reablement per year.

We are also increasing Reablement surge capacity through further contracts across the county with 'in lieu of reablement providers' as well as bridging services in each area, to reorientate people in their own homes while they wait for reablement support to commence.

Designated settings

We are working with a care home to provide a Covid Positive Designated setting within the administrative boundaries of Essex. This setting is to support the safe discharge of Covid Positive adults from hospitals who are medically optimised yet testing Covid positive which is preventing them from returning home until their isolation period is completed. The designated setting is ensuring strong infection prevention, protecting care homes and communities and allowing the necessary flow within the acute and community hospital sector. Capacity is currently being maintained with options of increasing if required.

Care Provider Hubs

Care provider hubs have been developed to support Care Homes to be in the best position to accept admissions from hospital. This was implemented across Essex in response to the pandemic, changing guidance, infections control procedures etc. but will continue to deliver going forward to provide ongoing support to the Market.

LAPEL

We have developed a LAPEL system to support our ability to respond to and communicate the level of pressure within the system. In Essex we are operating at LAPEL 3. This is mainly due to pressures in the domiciliary care market. A variety of different intelligence is triangulated to support decisions on LAPEL level. Escalation on LAPEL triggers a different pace and focus to our response as well as supporting prioritisation of capacity within ECC.

Care home vaccinations

Vaccinations will also support improved discharge in Essex. By combining this requirement with annual flu vaccinations, care staff should be in the most protected position possible to support vulnerable people, including those being admitted from hospital. Current rates of vaccinations are at 95%.

We also have plans in place to review bottlenecks and challenges in the system and a review of how the D2A process is working throughout winter 2021. This will determine recommendations going into 2022/23 to improve pathways even further. Other Initiatives to support discharge include:

- Growing provider of last resort capability
- Collaboration across the system via escalation meetings
- Work to coordinate voluntary sector offer across health and social care
- Interim placement beds – mini competition under IRN to secure capacity. Work underway to ensure wrap-round support to maximise independence and move people back home.
- Prioritisation of placements for domiciliary market
- PPE and infection control processes in place and supported through care hubs

- Workforce initiatives – link to ECC economic growth, summit with Essex Carers Association to explore most effective means of incentivising people to take up a career in health and/or care.
- DFG housing OTs - Timely discharges from hospital are made possible through the DFG, shortening the amount of time people remain in hospital. Progress is monitored through these early returns to home.

These countywide initiatives are also supported by more focused ambitions to improve discharges at local level:

North East Essex

The ambition is for local community health and care services to work together, to care for people in their own home wherever possible. This is essential if everyone in Suffolk and North East Essex is to live well and age well. They commit to ensuring that:

- People in health crisis or recovering from ill-health have the health and care support they need, within their own homes wherever possible
- Care and support is provided in the local community and by integrated services
- People living in care homes have access to healthcare support when they need it

Mid Essex

The following iBCF schemes directly contribute to improving discharges:

- Trusted Assessor – Trusted Assessor posts based at Broomfield Hospital to support with increased discharge time of Adults into ECL reablement.
- Continuing Health Care Dedicated Social Worker - Social worker post to support with leading on continuing healthcare assessments, supporting with decreased discharge times, access to CHC funding and integration with health partners involved with continuing healthcare.
- Admission Avoidance supported by the UCRT initiative
- Community Hospital Flow

West Essex

The Vision of an out of hospital strategy and model is for a Health and Care system that helps people to stay well. When patients need health and social care, we meet that need together to provide the most effective care in the best setting. Specific initiatives funded through the iBCF focused on Discharge:

- Admission Avoidance - To support the adult to remain in the community and their own home during a period of crisis. This supports adults who may have turned up at Emergency Departments and without this service it would have led to the adult having a 24hrs – 48hrs assessment period or admission within an acute setting
- Impartial Assessor - an intermediary between the care home and acute hospital and will support the adult's discharge back to the care home including undertaking nursing needs assessment on behalf of the home.
- Care Home Facilitator - supports the adult and carer to find a suitable care service that meets those needs and is targeted at those who are self-funded and who without this support would have longer stays in hospital
- Care Home Hub Operation and transformation - To support the care homes and implement new initiatives that include the management of discharges and readmission to hospital.
- Development of a Care Co-ordination Centre Development – to manage all discharges from the hospital; prioritise system capacity to meet demand and proactively manage the adult through their pathway. This is being explored with support from ECIST/LGA to work with PAH to embed criteria to discharge and monitor impact of any changes.

South East Essex

A renewed focus on discharge has been supported through various workshops to understand where improvements could be made. Potential improvements to the discharge process include:

- Specialist Support for end of life with the aim of reducing admissions and readmissions.
- Integrating Occupational Therapy into D2A Team with a view to reducing readmissions.
- Discharge Link workers to improve and accelerate the discharge process.
- Business brokerage to support the emerging Transfer of Care Hub.
- Additional Support for ageing carers with the aim of reducing readmissions.
- Discharge Guidance for Carers.

- All Family Approach to social prescribing.
- Commission research into reasons for readmission / root cause analysis.
- Transformation Resource to help develop the role of the South East Essex Alliance
- Social care input within Urgent Care response Team.
- Care coordination Centre across partner organisations within the community.

South West Essex

Bridging is a key scheme in Basildon and Brentwood focused on improving discharge pathways. The purpose is to 'Bridge the Gap' between hospital discharge and care support in people's homes. The development of **neighbourhood teams** aligned to Primary care networks is also a key initiative to provide timely and well-coordinated responses to need. A joint post between the community provider and local authority is in place and team alignment along with multidisciplinary working is taking place within each PCN.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and wider services

DFGs are grants offered through the Better Care Fund to Essex County Council, who then distribute to all District and Borough councils to make adaptations to the home for residents to live as independently as possible. The allocation of funds differ between each authority. The Government, through the BCF, has allocated to Essex for the 2021/2022 financial year; £11,885,443 for DFGs, which is an increase of nearly £1.5m from last year's allocation. The highest allocation amount is for Tendring with £2,320,471 and the lowest amount is for Uttlesford with £235,576 with an average of £990,454. The agreed allocations have been passed on to district councils in their totality.

An MOU sets out that Essex Districts, County Council, Health and Care partner organisations need to work better together and commits to supporting and delivering housing solutions that have a positive impact on residents.

The MoU sets out:

- Our shared commitment to joint action across health, social care and housing sectors in Essex;
- Principles for joint working to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes and to reduce health inequalities;
- The context and framework for cross-sector partnerships, nationally and locally, to design and deliver:
 - o healthy homes, communities and neighbourhoods
 - o integrated and effective services that meet individuals', carers' and their family's needs
- A shared action plan to deliver these aims.

Working together, we aim to:

- Establish and support local dialogue, information exchange and decision-making across health, social care and housing sectors
- Enable improved collaboration and integration of healthcare and housing in the planning, commissioning and delivery of homes and services
- Promote the housing sector contribution to addressing the wider determinants of health; health equity; improvements to patient experience and outcomes; 'making every contact count'; and safeguarding.

Oversight and delivery of this agreement is through the Essex Well Homes Group, which will be the operational arm of the action plan with further oversight by local Health and Wellbeing Boards. The Essex Well Homes Group meets quarterly and has membership from each local authority, including ECC, as well as Housing OTs. In this forum, all DFG matters are discussed, looking at short-, medium- and long-term plans to ensure the DFG funding is being utilised as well as possible.

ECC and Essex district and borough councils have invested in 4 Senior OTs in Housing roles to ensure assessments are made in people's homes and that DFG applications are passed to the relevant local authority in a timely manner. Timely discharges from hospital are made possible through the DFG, shortening the amount of time people remain in hospital. Progress is monitored through these early returns to home.

Keeping residents out of accommodation where they are not having their needs best met is also a priority. An example of this would be residential care, where in some cases residents are not able to maintain independence whilst being 'stuck' in a residential setting. A DFG can allow the resident to return home with the right environment made for them. By investing a DFG through the BCF, Essex health and social care can make a saving by ensuring residents can return home rather than remain in a residential setting.

Equality and health inequalities.

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the Essex Better Care Fund Plan:



There is a strategic ambition in Essex of Levelling Up. As a system we will seek to reduce health inequalities by bringing together partners and communities to address the socio-economic drivers that underpin poor health outcomes, such as poor housing, poverty, economic insecurity, and low skills. This ambition crosses boundaries between health and care partners and ensures that place-based organisations and communities become the focus.

One area of focus for reducing inequalities and levelling up is **Digital Inclusion**. We have established a digital inclusion working group to establish what is currently being delivered in this space and identify where opportunities to make a difference may exist. We are focussing our attention in 3 key areas to support the development of our DI Strategy: Digital Skills; Digital Access and Community Mobilisation.

Another area of focus has been on **Social exclusion** to understand those that are "left behind". Through working with Oxford Consultants for Social Exclusion and their community needs index we have a better understanding of the position of our communities. This shows that a significant % of Essex wards score poorly on the community needs index i.e. they struggle for community assets, connectedness to services and civic participation.

In addition, there are some *Left Behind Areas* in Essex. These communities are in the 10% worst nationally for the community needs index and also the 10% worst scores nationally for deprivation. There are 12 wards in Essex classed as left behind: 8 in Tendring and 4 in Basildon. By comparing areas with similar levels of deprivation but different levels of community assets over the last 10 years, it is possible to see the challenges that left behind areas face versus areas of very similar deprivation. For example, left behind areas have almost half the job density as other similarly deprived wards that score better on the community needs index.

The analysis highlights multiple challenges for *Left Behind Areas* all of which need to be addressed to truly address inequalities:

- A lack of local job opportunities and poor access to centres of employment
- Low skills and attainment, leading to relatively high levels of low income and worklessness
- Poor health outcomes
- More vulnerable groups, including households with multiple and complex needs, carers, lone pensioners, lone parents and people with long-term health conditions; as well as those experiencing long term barriers to employment
- Neighbourhood challenges, including higher levels of crime and a lack of affordable housing
- A growing gap between left behind areas and other deprived areas
- A lack of community and civic resources to address and mitigate these issues

Inequalities boards have been created across Essex with a focus on addressing health inequalities and the causes of them. Many factors determine health and care outcomes and about 80% of health outcomes are determined by non-health services. This is often referred to as the 'wider determinants of health' and includes factors such as employment, housing, education, community safety, the built environment and personal lifestyles.

Anchor Institutions. The pandemic has had a significant impact on Essex's economy, particularly those who were already within our most disadvantaged communities, causing widening gaps in inequalities and contributing to poor public health. Anchor Institutions are in a unique and important position to be able to maximise their location, resources and spending power and address these challenges, improving the health of local populations and bringing benefits to all. Anchor Institutions can also develop a strong, local economy that is more self-sustaining, independent, and therefore more resilient to future challenges within the global market.

Anchor Institutions have several levers that they can influence to help shape the local area, these are:

- Workforce development – shaping and developing the skills of the local workforce.
- Employer –employing locally and improving the wellbeing of their employees.
- Local business incubators – supporting SMEs to encourage growth and innovation within them.
- Procurement of goods and services – increasing social value through procurement.
- Estates and environment – ensuring estates include community, health and environmental benefits.

The Essex system is committed to supporting delivery of anchor programmes across Essex. This includes working through Essex Partners Board to establish The Essex Anchor Network co-chaired by Ian Davidson, CEO of Tendring District Council and Ed Garratt, Executive Lead, Suffolk & North East Essex Integrated Care System. The Network provides a platform for members (representing all ICS partners in Essex) to work collaboratively on shared strategic priorities and support each other to unlock their full Anchor potential. This Board provides direction and oversight of local anchor groups and programme boards.

Information, best practices and learning experiences are disseminated into the wider system to facilitate and promote engagement across Essex, thereby extending the impact and outreach of each Anchor's work across different geographical areas and organisation sectors. The network:

- Connects anchors, countywide activity, organisational projects, and local initiatives
- Directly delivers key anchor partnership initiatives and provides support to local anchor projects
- Monitors delivery, utilising the system scorecard
- Develops communications and engagement material to support learning from anchor practice across Essex and the rest of the UK.

Through the anchors network we are also establishing small working groups to take forward priority programmes:

Employability Programmes

Working group chaired by Ian Tompkins, Director of Corporate Services, NHS West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group. Will look at learning from and building on existing employability programmes, promoting the public sector as an employer and supporting people into roles in anchor organisations, whilst developing a workforce that have the transferable skills we require. Initial discussions of the group focused on:

- The potential for a shared recruitment campaign promoting the breadth of roles in local anchor organisations and the benefits of these organisations as employers
- A public sector employability programme to support people into common roles across our organisations, for example administration or facilities management.

Inclusive Employment

Working group chaired by James Rolfe, Chief Operating Officer, Anglia Ruskin University, will be exploring the practices anchors can adopt to make them more inclusive employers. Two initial areas of work will be:

- **Reverse Jobs Fair** – Increasing inclusive employment across the county through events that highlight the talent within these groups. During Reverse Job Fairs employers circulate the job seekers' stands, giving those individuals (including those with diverse disabilities) the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and abilities in a supported environment.
- **Inclusive Employment Job Coaches** – Providing Employment Practitioner Apprenticeships to organisations so that they may support their own employees to address and overcome obstacles, therefore helping these individuals to secure and maintain employment.

Essex Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022-2027

***Supporting families to enable all children and young people to have the best start
for life***

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1. About this Strategy

This Strategy sets out a high-level overview of the different things we intend to do to achieve our intentions. This overview has been translated into a detailed five-year delivery plan which prioritises the actions we intend to take, outlines specifically what we are planning to do and when we are planning to do it. This Plan will be delivered by the Essex Early Years and Childcare Service working in partnership with other parts of Essex County Council and with our partner agencies. There are many other strategies, plans and programmes of work which we will take account of and align to when implementing this Strategy including our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy, the Lifelong Learning Strategy, the work of our Education Task Force, our Educational Disadvantage Strategy, our Inclusion Framework, our Early Help Offer, the Levelling Up Agenda, and our Working Families Programme.

2. Forewords



Essex County Council is committed to ensuring all children and young people get the best start for life. As Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years I have a specific remit for leading targeted and coordinated action across the early years and childcare system to improve outcomes for children. This ensures that Essex County Council has a strong Early Years function, and that Essex County Council provides strong leadership and coordination to the whole Early Years System, supporting all agencies who have a role to play in early years to work in partnership to achieve a joint vision.

I am very proud of the good outcomes that Essex achieves for young children; currently just under 75% of children under 5 consistently achieve well against standard national measures. This is due to our hard work over the course of the last Early Years Strategy and our commitment to exploring innovative approaches to tackling embedded disadvantage. I will ensure that under this Strategy we continue to build on this positive progress and enable even more children to do well by increasing our focus where problems persist, and by better targeting our support to those who need it most.

By working effectively together the Essex Early Years System can do better for all, but there are also important contributions that we need national agencies and Government to make, so I am committed to lobbying for improved support and recognition for children, families, and the early years at a national level.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this Strategy. Most importantly the parents who gave up their time to feed in their views and whose priorities have shaped this strategy. The Essex Early Years System works in support of families and recognises and values their unique place in it. The next steps in implementing this Strategy will be taken in conjunction with parents and that we will actively seek feedback from them at every stage to assess the impact we are having.

Cllr Beverley Egan, Cabinet Member for Children and Early Years

November 2021



As Leader of the Council, I recognise the importance of this work in reaching our strategic aims set out in our Everyone's Essex organisational strategy and helps build our vision of Essex being a great place for children and families to grow.

It is so important that children are able to thrive and achieve the very best that they can at all stages of their development, however the work that is done in those early years of life is invaluable to ensuring that children go on to achieve their full potential, in turn are able to grow up to become responsible adult citizens. This strategy goes a long way towards achieving these goals and I would personally like to recognise all the hard work that our early years workforce are doing in supporting a children's journey and improving outcomes.

Through the measures set out in this strategy, we will see families that are better enabled to be the best they can be and with a stronger emphasis on early intervention, this can only be a good thing for families in Essex, I look forward to seeing its impact over the next 5 years.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Leader of the Council



As Essex County Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for our Essex Plan for Working Families, I am committed to exploring all the available options for easing the burdens on hard working parents. All parents know the difficulties of managing the strains of work, household finances, childcare, and providing quality experiences and support for their children. I welcome the opportunities offered by this Strategy to explore how we can better support families access improved information, advice, and guidance and to work with providers to explore options for expanding affordable, flexible and accessible childcare. This particular stream of work and the Essex Plan for Working Families is a key part of our new Levelling Up agenda, which seeks to improve the lives of Essex residents.

Cllr Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance



My vision for Education in Essex is to ignite in children and families a passion for lifelong learning enabling all residents to achieve their personal ambitions and to eradicate inequalities in outcomes. I strongly believe that doing this has to start during the earliest stages of life when we have the maximum potential to encourage children to be curious and inquisitive learners and to embed a lifelong love of reading and knowledge acquisition. I welcome the focus of this Strategy on supporting parents to provide quality home learning environments and on working with early years providers to ensure quality and inclusive provision which enables a great start to all children's educational journeys.

Cllr Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training



The importance of the early years in enabling children to grow into emotionally and physically healthy adults capable of achieving their full potential can never be over-estimated. It is during this period when we have so many important chances to establish the bedrocks of good health and wellbeing and for all partners in the system to provide early help where problems are identified and to address the impact of inequality. As Cabinet Member with responsibility for Health I therefore strongly endorse the importance of this Strategy and commit to identifying and maximising opportunities to provide quality support to parents, expanding the ways in which parents and children can access support from local services and their communities. I will continue to forge relationships with colleagues in health services and our local district, borough, and city councils so that strong and successful partnerships with others will drive forward the Strategy's successful implementation. This goes further than collaboration; it should be a shared venture with shared ambitions.

Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

3. The Importance of the Early Years

The time from which a child is conceived to when they are five is a vitally important one. This is a time during which the things that happen to a child will determine the course of their later life **and creates foundations in them becoming responsible adults**; it is therefore a critical time to provide support to children and families. There are many different people and services who come into the lives of families with young children, all of whom have an important contribution to make. These people and services need to work together effectively, in partnership with parents, to enable all children in Essex to get the Best Start for Life.

In this Early Years and Childcare Strategy, we have set out a vision for the changes we want to make to improve the experiences and outcomes of all young children living in Essex. Through this Strategy we want to enable more children to have positive experiences in their early years and parents to feel better supported.

The early years is important because it is during this time that there is the greatest potential to impact on a child's developing brain. Identifying problems early provides the best chance for families to be provided with support to stop these problems getting worse. We know that having positive early years and childcare experiences leads to:

- Children having better relationships and attachments with the people around them;
- Children being healthier mentally and physically;
- Children being more resilient to negative things that may happen in their lives;
- **Children becoming responsible for their actions;**
- Children doing better in their education and being more likely to gain fulfilling jobs that enable them to be financially stable and resilient; and
- Children being kept safe from harm, including being less likely to engage in harmful and offending behaviour.

All these things lead to children having more positive experiences in adulthood, being able to make positive **and accountable contributions** to society and their communities, and to being less likely to need to draw on the support of services like social care and the welfare system, including when and if they themselves become parents.

Most children in Essex have positive experiences in their early years and are well prepared for starting school, however we know nationally there are large differences in outcomes between children from different backgrounds and these differences generally continue in later life. We want all Essex residents to be given equal opportunities to have positive and fulfilling lives and are committed to targeting enhanced support to families at as early a stage as possible to remove this outcome gap. If we leave this support to a later stage it can be too late.

During the early years the support that children get from their parents is the most important thing and we are therefore committed to enabling all parents to provide good quality 'home learning environments' for their children. This is not just about helping children to learn specific things like how to count, it is about ensuring children are happy, confident, curious, have good relationships with key people in their lives, **being responsible for their actions** and that they are given the skills to communicate and acquire knowledge. This process begins before a child is even born as there are many things that a parent can do to give their child an optimum start while in the womb. Working with colleagues in health services who support parents in the prenatal and antenatal period is key to this Strategy. We want to work with parents to raise their aspirations for what they can achieve for their children and better support them in realising these aspirations.

4. Executive Summary

This Strategy has been developed through engagement with a variety of people who work with children and young people in Essex. We also spoke to families through a survey, to which 1262 parents responded. We have used this engagement to develop our thinking and have shared back what we have been planning to do to ensure it makes sense to everyone and reflects what they think are the things we should be focusing on. As we implement this Strategy, we will continue to engage with parents, professionals, volunteers and with children and young people to ensure we continue to do the right things to address need and to check if what we are doing is having an impact.

4.1 Our Vision for Early Years and Childcare

We have used this understanding of our strengths and challenges to inform our new Vision for this Strategy:

In Essex there will be no barriers to children achieving the best they can be and realising their full potential.

To achieve this Vision, we will ensure:

- There are sufficient affordable, quality and inclusive early years and childcare places for all children in Essex
- All schools in Essex are inclusive and provide quality education for children no matter what their needs are
- All children in Essex are supported through all their transitions in Early Years
- All families are supported to be the best they can be
- Families understand the services available to them and how they can access these
- All children in Essex can express themselves in their individual way and are confident in how they communicate with others
- Essex County Council provides access to the support and expertise needed to fulfil this vision

4.2 Principles for the Early Years System

When implementing our Vision, we will work to the following principles:

Targeted

We will effectively target resource to those in greatest need - be that cohort or local area

Early Intervention

We will ensure families receive the right help, at the right time, in the right place as early as possible in the development of a problem

Place Based

We will understand the unique assets, resources and challenges of different localities and tailor our approach to these

Co-designed

We will engage with children, young people, parents and carers, and partners in developing and designing solutions

Innovation and flexibility

We will trust and enable our partners and staff to take new and experimental approaches to identified problems and will not be afraid to flex and adapt our approach if things are not working out

Strengths Based

We will focus on the strengths and assets in families and communities

Whole system

We will consider all opportunities and challenges from the perspective of how they could best be responded to by working in partnership across the system rather than in isolation

Evidence informed

We will develop our approaches based on an understanding of 'what works'

Family Focused

We will put the lived experience of families and what more we can do to improve their experiences and outcomes at the heart of all we do

Childhood First

We will value and promote the importance of early years and childhood in all that we do

Inclusive

We will develop solutions and responses which take account of the needs of all and enable improved equality of opportunity and outcomes

When engaging with partners and with families we also strongly advocate for the principles of the Essex 'Trauma Perceptive Practice' approach:

kindness, compassion, connection, hope and belonging.

4.3 Our Strategy Aims

To implement our Vision, we have agreed the following six Aims:

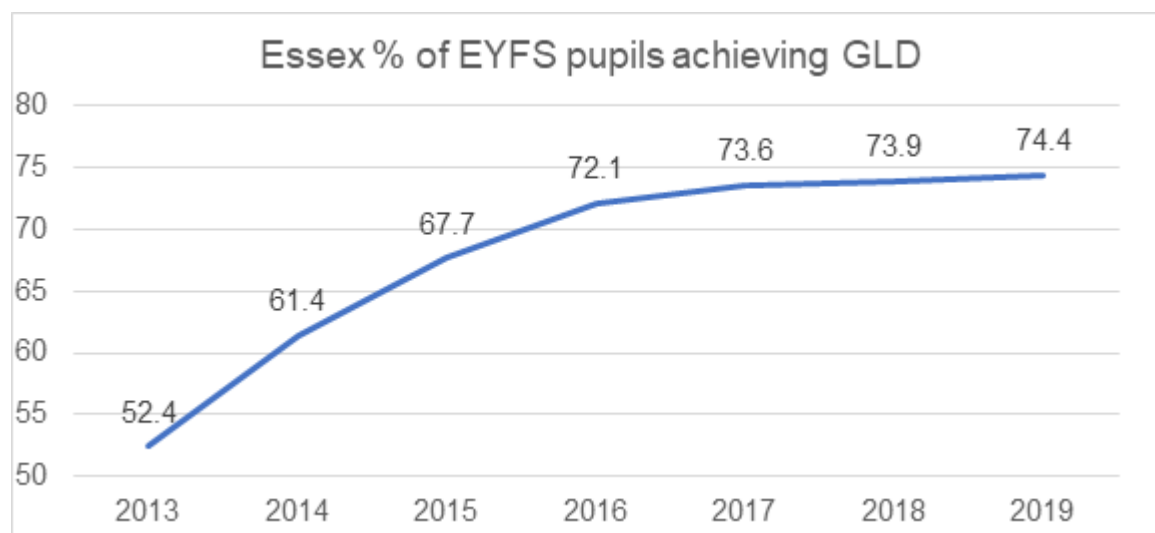
- 1) Children and their families achieve their potential with support from an effective and connected early years system that has a clear vision, purpose, and direction
- 2) All children have a positive journey through their early years and are well supported to transition to Reception and start Year 1
- 3) Children who may be at risk of poor outcomes are prioritised for high quality targeted support
- 4) Children's early learning and development is expertly supported by a strong, skilled, and knowledgeable early years and childcare system workforce
- 5) Parents can access affordable, sufficient, high quality and fully inclusive childcare places that support early learning and working parents
- 6) Families are enabled to be the best they can be

5. Performance Overview¹

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was introduced nationally in 2013. It sets out key areas for learning and development for children between birth and 5 and sets out 'goals' which children should achieve or be working towards during that time. Pupils are assessed against the EYFS at the end of the school year when they turn 5. The assessment is done by class teachers using observation rather than testing. The outcomes of these tests are used to determine how many children have achieved a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD). In Essex we recognise this is only one way to determine outcomes for children, nevertheless nationally this is one of the key performance measures that is used. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic GLD data was not collected in 2020 or 2021.

Since 2013 Essex has gradually improved the proportions of pupils achieving GLD. In 2016 72.1% of pupils achieved GLD and over the last four years, improvement has continued, but has been more gradual, settling at 74.4% in 2019. This is performance compares well to that of other local authorities with similar pupil numbers.

¹ Early years and school readiness: Exploring the 25% of Essex early years pupils not achieving 'Good Level of Development' (GLD): Trends in GLD 2016 – 2019 (Essex County Council, March 2020)



Of the 25.6% of children who did not achieve GLD the following characteristics are most prominent:

- **SEND status:** in 2019, only 28.3% SEN support pupils and 6% Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) pupils achieved GLD (the requirements of the EYFS are extremely difficult to achieve for children with complex needs)
- **Disadvantage status:** while 76.7% of non-disadvantaged pupils achieve GLD, only 56% of disadvantaged ones do
- **Term of birth:** overall, Summer born pupils are twice more likely not to achieve GLD compared to those born in the Autumn.
- **Gender:** in 2019 80.6% girls achieved GLD, compared to 68.4% boys.

This Strategy seeks to sustain our already good performance in GLD while seeking to increase the levels of children achieving GLD in the above identified groups, or for those children that are unable to achieve a GLD implement a system that ensures we can support these children to make appropriate good progress. This has informed the actions we will take.

6. The Essex Early Years System

Throughout this Strategy we talk about our Early Years and Childcare 'System'. By system we mean parents, children and everyone who works in early years and childcare and in support of families in Essex either in an employed or voluntary capacity.

Parents and their children are the most important part of this system because it is around their needs that it should function. Parents are also the most important influence over the outcomes for their children. Other people and organisations who are part of the system include:

- Early Years and Childcare practitioners and teachers – e.g., people who work in nurseries, pre-schools, out of school provision, and as childminders
- Teachers, teaching assistants and other staff who work in primary schools
- Essex County Council – which has specific legal responsibilities to support parents and the early years system, including Social Care who work with vulnerable children and at-risk children and young people
- District, Borough and City Councils – who provided services which families access such as housing, parks and play facilities
- Health Services – who provide vital services accessed by families such as midwifery, health visiting, inoculations, speech and language support, and support for children with special educational needs and disabilities
- The Voluntary and Community sector – charities, faith groups and other organisations who work in and with communities to provide family support

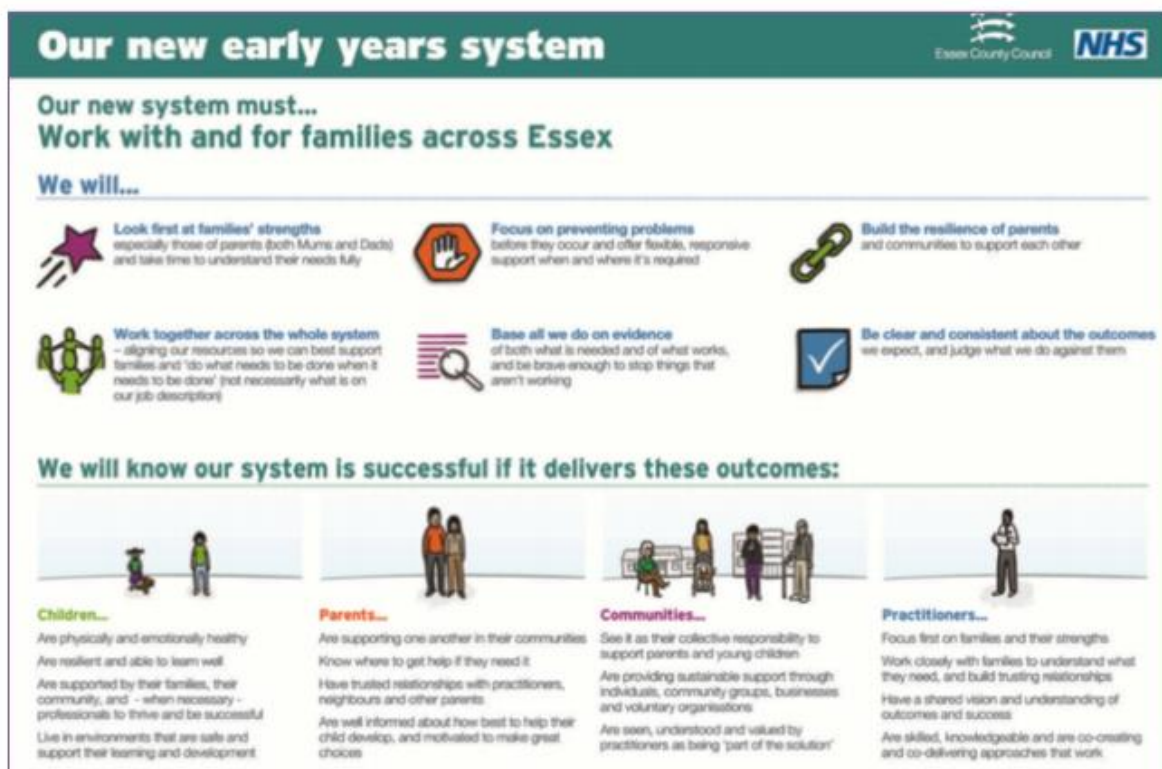
There are also other organisations who do not work directly in early years and childcare but who work with families and who benefit from children having a great start in their early years – for example the Police, The Youth Offending Service and employers.

We want to consider how everyone who works in the Early Years 'System' could work more effectively together around the needs of families. We know that there are certain aspects of our current system which are currently not meeting needs as well as they could, and we will target these areas in our approach – this includes how we work together to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities.

The Early Years system connects to the other 'systems' such as the school and education system (everyone who works in schools and education establishments) and the wider children's system (everyone who works with children and young people throughout their

lives). We will take forward this Strategy in partnership with those who work in these other systems to ensure we work together in a mutually supportive way and avoid duplication. We are aligned to the children and young people's plan to ensure we work with in conjunction with partners to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

In 2015 Essex County Council embarked on an ambitious whole scale review of the Early Years and Childcare System in Essex. This involved working with children and families to co-design a new vision for the system which put the needs of families at the centre. We have reviewed and updated this vision in preparing this Strategy and it does and will continue to influence the work we will undertake to implement it.



Essex County Council provides leadership to the Early Years System and has specific legal responsibilities to do the following:

- Ensure there is sufficient childcare available in Essex
- Secure sufficient children's centres that are accessible to all families with young children, and targeted evidence-based interventions for those families in greatest need of support (Family Hubs in Essex)
- Provide information, advice, and assistance to families (which we do through our Families Information Service)
- Secure information, advice, guidance, and training for childcare providers
- Support improvement in the quality of childcare
- Ensure that all children have access to up to six terms of high-quality nursery provision, as reflected in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, from the term after their third birthday
- Ensure sufficient and high-quality childcare is available for all 2-year-olds eligible for 'Free Early Education Entitlement funding'
- Meet the childcare needs of families with children over the age of five through out of school care and provision for children and young people up to the age of 14 (or to 25 for children with disabilities)
- Safeguard and promote the welfare of all children throughout all aspects of the work of Early Years and Childcare with specific regard to ensuring that early years and childcare providers understand their responsibilities and are accountable for their practice
- Ensure that all providers delivering funded early education places meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice 2015
- Participate in the identification and planning for the needs of children with SEND, including coordinating joint commissioning arrangements across Education, Health and Social Care and in other legal duties related to Education, Health and Care Plans and Preparing for Adulthood

Essex County Council can directly control some aspects of the Early Years System – for example we commission some of the services that are provided and can therefore build into contracts what we need people to do. Where we cannot do this are committed instead to influencing what people do by encouraging them to work with us and share our vision.

National Government is also part of the system. A lot of the things we may want to change in Essex that are outside of our direct control, for example the levels of funding that are available to childcare providers, and the type of training early years practitioners receive. Where this is the case, we will use opportunities available to us to lobby and influence national direction and policy.

7. Our Strategy Aims in Detail

Aim 1: Children and their families achieve their potential with support from an effective and connected early years system that as a clear vision, purpose, and direction

What we want to achieve:

- Wide collective ownership of this Strategy from a broad range of partners who are willing to make commitments to furthering its aims.
- All aspects of the system feel that their contribution is recognised and valued.
- Partners work in collaboration, identifying and exploiting opportunities for improved integration wherever possible.
- Transition across the system is well managed, contributed to by a high level of trust between partners.
- Parents are recognised as key contributors to the early years system and are supported by it to help their children achieve good outcomes.
- Parents' experiences of engaging with the system are positive, they have a good understanding of the help that is available, how they can access it and they experience good, joined up responses from agencies.
- The system effectively focuses on those who are in most need and enables them to receive effective early help, including a specific focus on improving the experiences of children with SEND.

What we need everyone to do:

- ✓ We need all partners in the Early Years System to sign up to this Strategy, consider the implications of this for their own practice and align what they do to the intended outcomes.
- ✓ We need everyone in the System to understand and appreciate the role of others and to identify ways in which they could work better with others around the needs of families, minimising opportunities for gaps and duplication and maximising on the benefits of effective multi-agency working.
- ✓ We need everyone across the system to target activity to the same identified groups who are most in need of support.

Summary:

- Successfully delivering this Strategy requires shared commitment, ownership, and contribution from the whole early years system.
- The early years system is complex and there are known areas where we need to improve how agencies work together, especially around transition, early identification and disadvantaged groups. There are also many strengths in the system and good opportunities to expand on these.
- We want to improve outcomes for all children by supporting our early years system to work better together.
- We will take a variety of actions to strengthen the cohesion and collaboration of the early years system, targeted at known weaknesses and building on existing strengths. We will exploit opportunities presented by Covid while also supporting the system to recover from its impact.

Aim 2: All children have a positive journey through their early years and are well supported to transition to Reception and start Year 1 ²

What we want to achieve:

- All children are well supported by their families and the agencies they work with and as a result receive lifelong benefits from having a great start in their early years **through to becoming responsible adults**.
- Everyone, including parents, understands the role they play in supporting children to prepare for starting Reception class at school and moving through this into Year 1.
- There is good quality information, advice, and guidance for parents on the options available when children are due to start Reception Year, and on how they can best support their children to start and benefit from this.
- Everyone has a good understanding of the groups of children who may be less likely than others to have good outcomes and targeted support is provided at an early stage to enable these children to reach their potential.
- All children who would benefit from accessing quality early education provision are encouraged and enabled to do so.
- There is an agreed system wide approach to, and acknowledgement of, the importance of early language and communication, and relationships and attachment to children's development.
- The system demonstrates an understanding of the latest research and insight about how to best support children in early years.
- The system adopts the following statement: School Readiness: A child's early years journey from birth through to the end of reception.

What we need everyone to do:

² Work is currently on-going to redefine and redevelop the definition of 'school readiness' in Essex, the terminology in this aim will be updated to reflect the outcomes of this work in due course.

- We need everyone who works with children under five and their parents and carers to understand the importance of this early period, what needs to be in place to enable children to be well prepared to start Reception class at school, to move through Reception into Year 1, and the options that are available to parents.
- We need everyone to support children in understanding how and why it is important they become responsible and accountable for their actions.
- We need health agencies who provide support at an early stage to expectant and new parents to provide access to good quality information and support that enables them to make good choices in the ante and post-natal period.
- We need early years settings and schools to work effectively together to support children moving into school and schools to commit to providing a positive and inclusive early years' experience through Reception to Year 1, which can meet the needs of all children.
- We need everyone who works with children under five to be alert to children who may need extra support and to ensure that those children are able to access the extra support that is available.
- We need parents to make proactive use of the sources of information, advice and guidance that are available on how to provide quality home learning environments, to actively apply this from conception and to seek help and support when needed.

Summary:

- We want all children, whatever their individual needs and abilities, to have the lifelong benefits that result from having a great start in their early years, and to arrive at school well prepared to benefit from the experiences they will have in their Reception Year and when they start Year 1.
- We know that not all children benefit to the same extent from the good support we currently have in place. To ensure more children benefit, everyone across the system needs to work together to deliver the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

- We want our system to work together better to give more children and their parents/carers the support and tools they need.
- We will take a range of actions aimed at ensuring more children have a successful start to their school journey.

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Aim 3: Children who may be at risk of poor outcomes are prioritised for high quality targeted support

What we want to achieve:

- The system understands which children are less likely than others to achieve against standard measurements (such as GLD) and has an embedded understanding of how to support these children to achieve their individual potential.
- There are strong and effective system which identify children who need additional support at an early stage and once identified practitioners use a range of targeted early interventions to provide effective early support
- All children are supported to access high quality early years provision and are supported by skilled and knowledgeable early years practitioners.
- There is a high level of take up of our early help opportunities, including Free Early Education Entitlement.
- All early years services and provisions adhere to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- We understand our local communities and, in partnership with others, work towards removing disadvantage and inequality.
- We are committed to learning more about and from disadvantaged groups and to taking innovative approaches which we will learn from to inform our longer-term strategies.

What we need everyone to do:

- We need everyone who works in early years to agree to prioritise support and activity around the needs of certain identified children and families who need additional support.
- We need this prioritisation of certain children and families to be reflected in strategic and on the ground, decision making around where and how resource is targeted.

- We need everyone who provides services accessed by families to consider what more they can do to make their provision accessible to children with differing needs.
- We need everyone to commit to a shared high aspiring vision for what 'good' looks like for children with specific needs.
- We need parents whose children have identified additional needs or who are in disadvantaged groups to proactively engage with available sources of help and support – for example accessing additional early years entitlement.

Summary:

- Some children are disadvantaged or are at risk of disadvantage. This can make it harder for them to achieve the same outcomes as other children without these disadvantages.
- We have a good understanding of the children who generally do less well than others when using standard measures such as 'Good Level of Development'. We have access to a range of evidenced based approaches which can be used to better support these children to overcome barriers and ensure that all children achieve expected or better than expected progress for their starting points.
- While championing the achievements of all children we want to ensure that children who are at risk of poorer outcomes than others are identified and provided with effective support and opportunities which meets their individual needs at an early stage. We also want to work in partnership to address aspects of our system or society which puts families at disadvantage.
- We will implement a range of actions focused on the needs of individual disadvantaged groups, linking in with activity already on-going and which enable us to learn about which approaches work best.

Aim 4: Children's early learning and development is expertly supported by a strong, skilled, and knowledgeable early years and childcare system workforce

What we want to achieve:

- Careers in early years in Essex are well respected, valued and popular; recruitment and retention rates across diverse groups are good.
- Agencies, settings and practitioners work together across barriers and boundaries to share good practice, insight and training and development opportunities aimed at developing mutual understanding of each other's roles and strengthening the sector as a whole.
- There is a desirable mix and breadth of different skill levels across the sector including strong leadership and an increased number of practitioners holding higher level qualification at level 3 and above.
- The early years workforce is enabled to access a training and development offer which meets its needs and contributes to continued and sustained professional development.
- The training and development offer to the early years workforce is joined up and coordinated between the different agencies; it is clear for the workforce to see what is available and how and where they can access this.
- Training accessed translates into a positive impact, demonstrated through both the outcomes achieved by children, the quality of settings and changes in practice.
- There is good promotion of informal networks and opportunities that can be accessed by those working in early years to improve knowledge and get support from other agencies – for example early help drop-in clinics, local children's partnerships, networking meetings etc.

What we need everyone to do:

- We need everyone working in the early years system to actively commit to continually developing their skills and knowledge and to take an open-minded approach in how they do this.
- We need all providers of early education and childcare or help and support to families to actively commit to delivering and enabling their staff to attend more opportunities to learn together and alongside each other, focusing on the core skills which enable multi-agency working.
- We need all employers to recognise the value of training and development and to actively commit to enabling their staff to attend available opportunities.
- We need Government and other national agencies involved in the delivery and funding of training and development for the early years and childcare sector to recognise and respond to the challenges being faced in respect of funding and accessing quality support. We need training providers to proactively ensure that training is providing workers with the skills and competencies necessary to optimally support young children.

Summary

- The quality of the early years and childcare workforce is a key contributory factor to enabling children to achieve good outcomes in early years and beyond and to successfully implementing this Strategy.
- The early years workforce is complex and multi-faceted and there are many issues to contend with to enable it to be optimally supported. We have specific responsibilities to ensure those who work in early years settings are well trained, but it is also important that we consider those who work in other agencies such as health and in the voluntary sector. Ultimately, we want to give all those who have involvement with early years to work effectively together using core skills and around shared aims.
- We want to enable all aspects of the early years workforce to access continuous professional development through an expanded range of means. We want the training and development accessed to result in more children achieving good early years outcomes.

- We will take a variety of actions to ensure that the overall quality of the early years workforce in Essex is improved, focused both on what practitioners can access and how we enable them to do this.

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Aim 5: Parents can access sufficient, high quality and fully inclusive childcare places that support early learning and childcare needs

What we want to achieve:

- There is sufficient pre-school and school age childcare in Essex to meet the needs of working parents and those wanting to access funded entitlements.
- All settings are inclusive and so capable of meeting the diverse needs of all children.
- Childcare businesses in Essex are well managed, plan effectively and are financially robust reflected both in their financial security and the quality of care they provide.
- We effectively support the long-term sustainability of our early years and childcare sector, including working with providers to manage the short, medium, and long-term impacts of the pandemic.
- We recognise the strains on working families and seek to help them manage their childcare needs.
- There is good quality information, advice, and guidance for parents on finding, accessing, and affording suitable early education and childcare.
- We work with parents who want to access early education and childcare to help remove barriers to them doing so.
- We recognise the importance of informal childcare to parents and support those both using and providing informal childcare.

What we need everyone to do:

- We need childcare providers to work in partnership with Essex County Council address areas of low childcare sufficiency and to consider how provision could be made more accessible and affordable to families.
- We need childcare providers to work in partnership with Essex County Council to help develop better understanding about the challenges of delivering quality childcare within the existing financial and other restraints.

- We need the whole of the system to support ECC and childcare providers in considering innovative approaches that could be taken to address the problems that exist and in supporting our lobbying on the issue at a national level.
- We need all partners, including community organisations and venues and businesses to consider what more they could do to support those delivering and seeking informal childcare, including ensuring there are places that carers can go to access quality learning experiences for the children they are looking after.
- We need schools to consider what more they could potentially do to assist with parents needs for out of school provision. We need parents to proactively make use of the information that is available on the different types of childcare that can be accessed and how this can be made more affordable.

Summary

- Being able to access the right early years and childcare provision is a key contributory factor to enabling parents to work and children to achieve good early years outcomes. Essex County Council is required by law to ensure both pre-school and school age childcare meets parents' needs by being sufficient, accessible, and high quality.
- There are a wide variety of options for early education and childcare, but these do not always meet the needs of all parents. Covid is likely to have long term implications on the sector which may make this worse. Childcare, particularly its cost, is a considerable source of stress for working parents.
- We want to reduce the barriers to parents accessing the early education and childcare and make childcare less of a source of stress for parents while also supporting the sector to stay sustainable.
- We will take a range of actions aimed at developing a sustainable early years and childcare sector in Essex which better meets the needs of more working parents and those entitled to funded hours. We will ensure that parents are well informed about options and are supported in making decisions.

Aim 6: Families are enabled to be the best they can be

What we want to achieve:

- Parents in Essex are supported to be resilient and to have high aspirations for themselves and their children.
- Parents know what information, advice and guidance is available, from whom, and how to access it.
- Agencies across the early years system have a good understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of other agencies in supporting parents and work well together to sign post parents to the most appropriate sources of information, advice and guidance.
- Our offer reflects a good understanding of the types of information, advice and guidance parents require and how they would best like this delivered.
- Parents feel well supported by strong social networks and can access a good range of support in their local communities.
- Parents, children and young people can access a range of resources to meet individual need, including those to help recovery from the impact of the pandemic.
- The support we offer to parents is evidence based and reflects insight and learning.
- Our information, advice and guidance offer contribute to the delivery of effective early support.

What we need everyone to do:

- We need everyone to prioritise the needs of parents and consider what more could be done to deliver quality support.
- We need everyone to consider the information they provide and how this could be better aligned with that available from other agencies, including how we could make best use of collective information resources, websites etc.
- We need community and voluntary organisations and commissioned services to consider what more they could do to empower parents to develop peer support

networks and how we can best enable parents to feel confident to make use of these opportunities.

- We need local councils and business owners to consider what more they could do to make their services and spaces more 'family friendly'.
- We need parents to actively seek out and make use of sources of information and support in their communities, for example that provided by local Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service Hubs.
- We need parents to support one another both informally and where possible through volunteering their time where needed.

Summary

- Essex County Council has statutory duties to provide information, advice, and guidance to parents. This is a complicated area with many different agencies involved but doing this well has potential to make a large impact on parents' ability to optimally support their children and achieve their own ambitions.
- We need to consider parents' widely varying needs to access information, advice, guidance and support. There are a lot of options available and to best support parents, we need to better coordinate what is available across the system and listen to parents to ensure it is meeting their differing needs.
- In addition to being able to access information, advice, and guidance we want parents to feel well supported by their communities and other parents, so they have strong networks to draw on when needed and enjoy bringing up children in Essex.
- We will undertake a range of actions to ensure that we are effectively meeting our statutory duties, to engage with parents to ensure their needs are being met, and to broaden the available support.

8. Our Agreed Actions

Working in partnership with partner organisations and parents we will:

1	Promote the importance of early years and childcare and improve recognition of the value of the early years and childcare workforce in delivering outcomes for children and young people across their lives
2	Ensure that Essex County Council is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities to support the early years and childcare sector and is providing leadership to the early years and childcare system aligned to the aims of this Strategy
3	Build on the way in which the early years system works together around the intentions of this Strategy, including supporting improved information sharing and multi-agency working around the needs of children and families, and increasing opportunities for joint training and development
4	Support the early years and childcare sector in Essex to be strong, well led and appropriately skilled to effectively support the needs of all children and families
5	Improve the positive outcomes already being achieved for young children in Essex by ensuring a continued focus on those things known to contribute to good outcomes, including early language and communication and strong relationships and attachment
6	Ensure all children are well prepared and supported to start reception class and to move through reception into year 1, by maximising how agencies work together around the needs of families and how parents are supported and enabled to provide quality home learning environments from birth

7	Ensure the early years and childcare system is effectively focused on improving outcomes for those most in need of support and who are at risk of poor outcomes, and supporting children to become responsible adults by ensuring the workforce has the skills and understanding needed to effectively support these children and by maximising on opportunities for early intervention
8	Ensure effective inclusive early education, which is responsive to individual need, with a specific focus on improving outcomes, experiences, and opportunities for quality early years education for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
9	Increase the range of options for inclusive, high quality childcare ensuring that parents are aware of what is available to them, and seeking to address the specific problems faced by working parents and areas where sufficiency is low
10	Improve the Essex County Council information, advice and guidance (IAG) offer for parents, working in conjunction with partners and our commissioned services to ensure IAG offers are aligned and mutually supportive
11	Maximise opportunities for parents to access support in their communities through our commissioning arrangements (for example Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service Family Hubs), through working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector and with parent forums
12	Improve and embed internal Essex County Council systems and processes which enable a good understanding of the early years sector in Essex, areas of strength and required improvement and the impact we are having, including developing effective mechanisms for continual engagement with parents and stakeholders
13	Ensure effective contribution to the development and implementation of other strategies and initiatives which have impact on early years and childcare, both those owned by Essex County Council and by other agencies and partnerships

14	Support the early years system with learning from and mitigating the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, including identifying opportunities for building on learning moving forward
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9. Measuring the Impact of this Strategy

As part of our planning for the delivery of the Strategy we have developed a performance framework which will enable us to demonstrate its overall impact. Through this framework we will:

- Monitor the actions we have or have not taken
- Review the impact of these actions on performance, e.g., have we made a positive difference to selected performance measures
- Engage with key stakeholders to seek feedback on the impact our actions have had

Importantly, the review of impact will include engagement with families. We will develop and embed mechanisms through which this will occur on an on-going basis.

Reports on progress and impact will be made to the Education Sustainability Board on a regular basis. Periodic updates will also be made to relevant Partnership Boards and stakeholder groups, such as the Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Links to the Essex County Council Organisation Strategy

This Strategy will contribute to delivering against the priorities of *Everyone's Essex*, the Essex County Council Organisation Strategy for 2021-2025.

A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy

- We will support the sustainability and development of the Essex Early Years and Childcare Sector
- We will enable parents to work and train by supporting them to access high quality, affordable and accessible childcare options
- We will work across the system to deliver good early years outcomes for children which will enable them to have successful educational journeys and go on to access fulfilling employment opportunities and contribute to the growth of the Essex economy

A high-quality environment

- We will support the early years sector in educating young children about the world and environment and how they can protect this, promoting the use of outdoor learning and environmentally friendly resources
- We will encourage retrofitting of early years settings where possible and deliver net zero buildings for new capital projects
- We will encourage providers, through our Early Years Charter, to adopt environmentally sustainable practices
- We will support parents to make ethical and environmentally friendly choices, for example upcycling baby and children's resources and encourage active travel

Health, wellbeing and independence for all ages

- We will provide and facilitate the availability of information, advice, guidance, and support for parents which enables them to be physically and emotionally healthy – including working across the system to ensure expectant parents make positive choices regarding diet, exercise and substance use and working together to identify and support parents who may be at risk of mental ill health and social isolation
- We will support providers to educate young children about their health and wellbeing and how best to promote this, setting positive foundations for good health outcomes in later life

A good place for children and families to grow

- We will work across the system to deliver good early years outcomes for all children, with a specific focus on improving outcomes for our most vulnerable groups
- We will promote the importance of relationship and attachments across families and family networks and work across the system to support families to develop these
- We will seek to lessen the demands and strains on working families which can threaten family security and stability
- We will work across the system to deliver a range of family support services from early help through to those most in need of support
- We will work with communities to expand the range of opportunities in Essex for families to spend time together including more play space for young children

Service Excellence

- By the earliest identification of children that need additional support this Strategy will contribute to addressing the causing that drive demand.
- Strengthening the Early Years system will improve partnership working leading to more effective collaborating between agencies
- Investing in early intervention for our youngest children will create the conditions to give all children the best possible opportunity to succeed; to thrive in school and be able to make a positive contribution throughout their lives.
- The oversight of this Strategy will ensure continued focus on delivering the best outcomes for our youngest children

Levelling Up

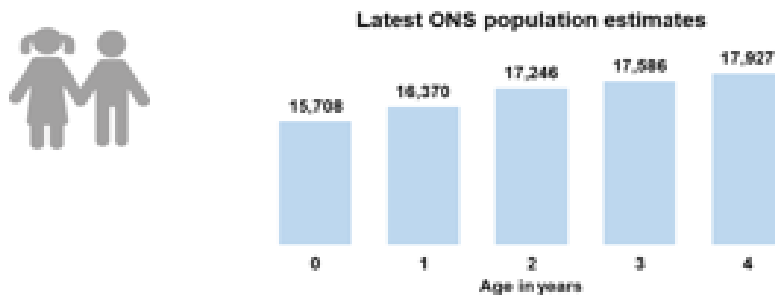
- This Strategy will contribute to the Strong Foundations in Early Year Levelling Up goal
- The focus will be on providing the right level of support at the right time for families and their children that most need it
- We will develop solutions and responses which take account of the needs of all and enable improved equality of opportunity and outcomes

This Strategy also makes an important contribution to the delivery of the outcomes of the **Essex Children and Young People's Plan**:

- Resilient Children and Young People
- Stable and Thriving Families
- Inclusive and Supportive Schools and Communities
- Safe and Accessible Neighbourhoods

Appendix 2: Early Years and Childcare in Essex

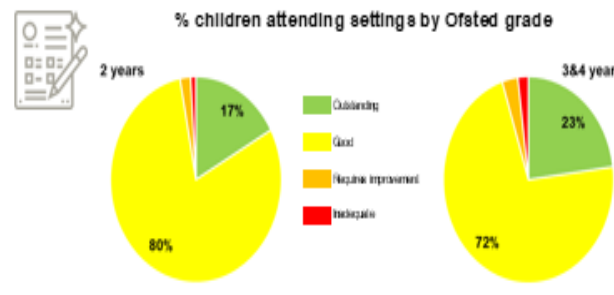
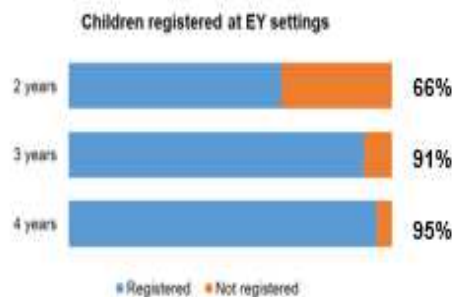
Numbers of under 5s in Essex (Office for National Statistics (ONS) Data)



The estimated number of 0–4-year-olds in Essex **increased by 2.3% between 2012 and 2019.**

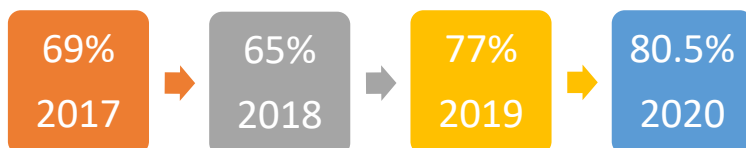
ONS have projected that between 2020-2040 the number of 0–4-year-olds is projected to increase by 5.1%. **This means plans need to be put in place to ensure there are enough childcare places for all children**

Numbers of children who are registered to attend an early year setting (a private or voluntary sector nursery, childminder or a maintained nursery or school)



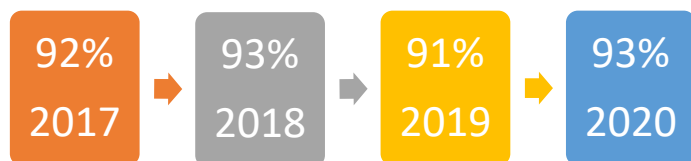
Almost all settings attended are rated **Good or Outstanding by Ofsted** (97% for 2-year-olds and 95% for 3- & 4-year-olds).

Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE)



Take up of FEEE2

24% of 2-year-olds in Essex are entitled to FEEE2, this is 15 hours per week in term time Free Early Education Entitlement for children whose families are in receipt of certain benefits, where children have SEND or are looked after by the Local Authority. This has increased from 16% in Summer 2019. **Take up of FEEE2 was 80.5% in 2020. The strategy will focus on increasing this take up further**

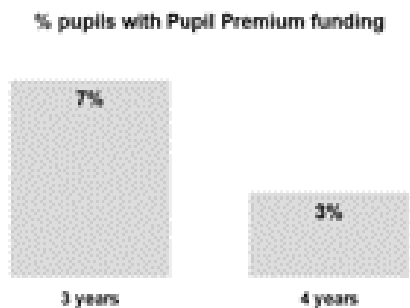


Take up of FEEE3&4

All 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours of FEEE a week in term time and working parents who meet certain criteria are entitled to 30 hours. **The take up in 2020 was 93%. The strategy will focus on increasing this take up further**

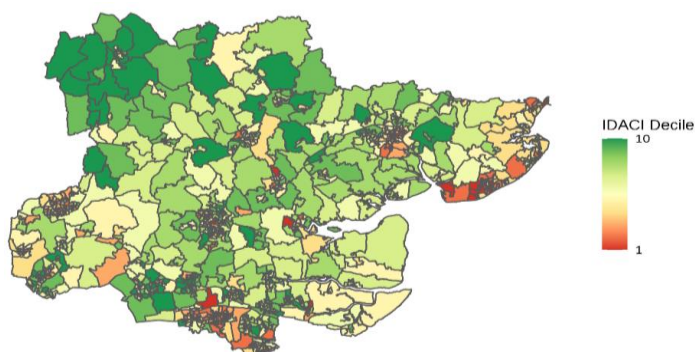
Not all settings offer FEEE but **1447** offer FEEE2 and **1350** offer the extended 30 hours (out of 1866). **The strategy will seek to increase the number of settings offering funded places**

Children eligible for Pupil Premium Funding



Early Years Pupil Premium Funding is additional funding for early years providers to improve outcomes for children by providing them with enhanced learning and development support. For children from low-income families accessing the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE), providers are entitled to receive additional funding of up to £300 per eligible child per year.

Deprivation in Essex



Families who are deprived, lack the income and other things needed to enable them to have a decent standard of living. 42% of Lower Super Output Areas in Essex fall within the lower 5 deciles of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) (1 is most deprived, shown in red, 10 is least deprived, shown in green). There are **significant areas of deprivation** in both the South and North of the County and **significant diversity between different areas in Essex**, with some areas in Tendring being amongst the most deprived in the Country and some in Uttlesford being amongst the least.

Working Families

Most families in Essex live in the middle of the scale of deprivation and are likely to fall into the category of 'Working Families'. Working Families who are 'just about managing' are defined with reference to the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) using 'people who earn 25% below the MIS after childcare/housing costs'. Working families who are 'just about managing' are a significant proportion of the population in Essex and are not typically eligible for targeted support. Before the pandemic an estimated **180,000 of the county's population of nearly 1.5m were in this cohort.**

Early Years Providers

The number of early years and childcare providers in Essex varies throughout the year as settings open and close, however in June 2021 there were a total of **2,438** providers as follows:

Primary school nurseries (including academies)	105
Independent schools	32
Day nurseries	326
Preschools	401
Childminders	1297
Breakfast clubs	15
After school clubs	80
Holiday clubs	180
Wrap around care (before and after school)	2

Appendix 3: Developing this Strategy

Some of the important things we heard from parents were:

- Bringing up children is challenging, not just in the early years but also as they get older; parents need to be supported to 'learn on the job'
- Parents with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities face specific challenges and would like more and improved support
- Parents feel stressed by juggling work, finances, and family life – the cost of childcare puts strain on some families
- While a lot of families feel well supported and acknowledge that there is a lot of information out there for them, many also feel that understanding what is available is too complicated, they find it difficult to know where to go for information or who to speak to. They feel they can get different and conflicting messages from different professionals, their family and friends, and from the internet and they are unsure of who to trust
- Many parents would like more opportunities to engage with other parents and would like more things to do in their communities

Some important things we heard from people who work in early years and childcare are:

- Everyone is committed to working together to improve experiences in the early years, particularly for families and children with specific challenges, such as special education needs and/or disabilities
- Everyone agrees that a lot of benefit can be achieved through supporting families better and earlier

However:

- People don't always work well together – there can be a lack of understanding between different organisations, people do not always talk to each other or share information well and there can be a lot of duplication in how we work and what we do
- Points of transition (e.g., when children and families move between the different services provided by different agencies) are times when there is the greatest opportunity for people not to work well together and the needs of families to get missed
- People working in the system do not always feel well supported or valued for the work they do

Appendix 4: The Context

4.1 Our Strengths and Challenges

How we work together as a system

- Essex has a strong and diverse early years and childcare sector including private and voluntary sector settings, childminders, maintained nursery schools and primary schools, in addition to hundreds of voluntary and community sector organisations and commissioned services working in support of parents. Services are also provided by health agencies and local councils. This gives parents a large amount of choice; however, it is also difficult to bring everyone involved together behind one clear vision and to effectively support the sector when the needs across it are so diverse.
- Professionals across our system work together well, they share information and do what they can in partnership to best support families, however parents often feel like the system is not working for them and that professionals are not engaging well and that there are 'gaps'. This is especially so when children have specific needs, for example special educational needs and/or disabilities
- In Essex we understand the importance of early intervention – that is providing support to families early in the development of a problem. There are a lot of opportunities across our system to provide good quality early intervention and we understand the groups of children most likely to benefit from this. In most cases this works well and results in good outcomes, however for some children we are not making the most of these opportunities, we are not picking up problems early enough and the support we are providing is not effective. This is because different parts of the system are not effectively engaging with one another.

The outcomes we achieve for children

- In Essex most children achieve good outcomes in early years. They are already achieving well against early learning goals and arrive in the school Reception class ready to make a great start. We have made positive progress in this over the years and want to continue to sustain this in taking this Strategy forward.

- There are some children who generally need more support to help them make good progress, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, children from financially disadvantaged households, children who are looked after or whose families are involved with social care. Some children can be impacted by multiple disadvantages and for these children and their families there is more we can do to provide more and better coordinated support.
- Essex is a large and diverse county – different parts of Essex have different strengths and challenges and have access to different resources. As a result of this outcomes for children and families across Essex differ a lot. To level up access to opportunities we need to understand the differences between different places and come up with solutions which address the specific needs of each local area.

How we support those working in early years and childcare

- Most early years settings and childminders in Essex are rated good and outstanding by Ofsted which is a good indication of our workforce being strong and skilled. Essex provides information on how the workforce can access a diverse training and support offer and provides training and support itself. There are however specific challenges in optimally supporting all settings, in ensuring recruitment and retention is good, and that our workforce is diverse and appropriately skilled, especially when it comes to supporting the needs of the most vulnerable. Funding and release staff to access training is a challenge for providers.

How we support parents accessing early years and childcare

- Most parents can access the early education and childcare that they want and need. Parents find childcare expensive but are aware of support they can access and often use informal childcare (for example provided by family members) as an alternative.
- There are however persistent problems for some parents finding childcare which meets their needs, including parents whose children have special educational needs and / or disabilities, parents seeking care outside of standard working hours and parents who have school age children.
- The costs to providers of providing childcare are considerable and this is exacerbated by the funding levels including for Free Early Education Entitlement. Balancing the needs of parents for more affordable care alongside supporting the sustainability of the market is a challenge.

How we support parents and families

- We have good engagement of families with our services and there is a wide variety of support available for parents, however we know that not everyone is well engaged in this and for a lot of parents they are still confused about where to go for support or are unaware of what is available, often this is parents are most in need of support.
- The way our provision falls across the county also means that services are unevenly available to all and that, especially in rural areas, people feel they cannot access provision that meets their needs.

4.2 The Impact of the Pandemic

Like nothing before the Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of early years and childcare. There have been significant negative impacts on the experiences of children and their families and on how schools and settings have been expected to work. There have also been positive opportunities to think about how we could do things differently, and some positive impacts on families as they have had more time to spend together. This Strategy is timely in enabling us to consider how we can help families and those who work in the system to recover from the impacts and while also 'building back better'.

Some of the key things about which we are concerned which we either know to have already happened or which may impact in future are:

- Negative experiences for those who have become parents during the course of the pandemic
- Disruption to normal activity to support children starting school or childcare
- Disruption to standard development checks
- Lost opportunities to pick up and support with concerns in respect of both children and parents – e.g., developmental delay, potential indicators of SEND, mental health concerns in parents
- Delay in support and assessment for children with SEND
- Disruption to support normally provided to children with additional needs
- Children living in stressful family situations resulting from the economic impacts of the pandemic and parents juggling working alongside lack of childcare
- Economic impacts of the pandemic increasing financial pressures on families, potentially increasing the numbers of families who are deprived
- Lack of opportunities for children to interact with other children and family members and people outside the home

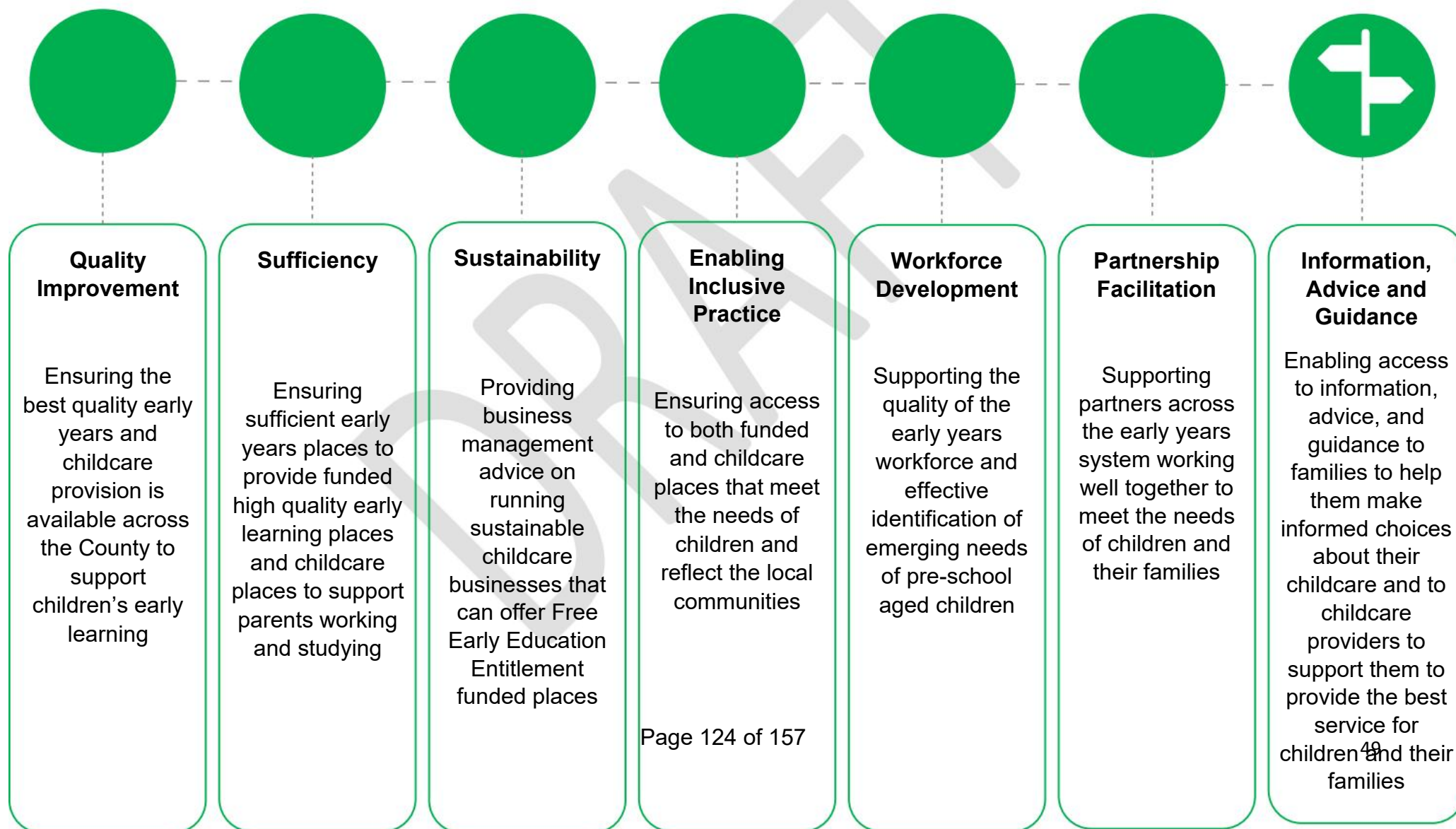
- Parents not being able to access face to face support opportunities, including meeting other parents
- Lack of data on some groups of children where formal assessments have not taken place
- Financial pressures on childcare providers impacting on longer term sustainability and the ability to invest in training and development
- Destabilisation of our childcare sector as parents' needs for childcare change
- Losses in the early years workforce, especially within the childminding sector
- Move to virtual working causing some disruption of how agencies and practitioners have been able to work together

Some opportunities we would like to build on across the course of this Strategy:

- Virtual working offering opportunities for greater participation in multi-agency working and training and development
- Developing an expanded virtual support offer for parents (alongside a face-to-face offer)
- Continuation of the enhanced focus given by the system to the needs of vulnerable children
- Exploiting the enhanced leadership and support that Essex County Council has been able to provide to the sector throughout the pandemic
- The enhanced focus and awareness of the importance of early years and childcare nationally

The longer-term impacts of the pandemic, or even how these will continue to play out across the course of this Strategy, are currently unknown. We, therefore, in all our areas of activity, **commit to continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic, seeking feedback from parents and practitioners, to inform our future plans. We will keep these plans flexible to enable us to reflect our learning.**

Appendix 5: The Essex County Council Early Years and Childcare Service



Appendix 6: Legislative Framework

Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989 is key legislation in ensuring that children are safeguarded, and their welfare promoted. Section 17 of this Act places a duty on every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need within their area. Section 47 of the Act requires local authorities to make enquiries to enable it to decide whether the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and assess whether action is required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The Children Act also places a general duty on local authorities in relation to children with disabilities.

Education and Inspections Act 1996

This Act places a duty on local authorities to promote high standards, and the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. It also places a duty on local authorities in England to promote fair access to educational opportunity.

Children Act 2004

The Children Act 2004 focuses principally on improving the effectiveness of safeguarding through promoting better inter-agency co-operation and improved information sharing.

Childcare Act 2006

The Childcare Act 2006 provided legal duties on local authorities to improve outcomes for the under 5s, to ensure the availability of sufficient childcare and to provide information to parents and families covering childcare and a range of other areas. The Act introduced the Early Years Foundation Stage and reformed regulation and inspection for early years providers. It introduced the availability of 15 hours free early education provision for eligible 2,3 and 4-year-olds. The Act also made included provisions for local authorities to ensure sufficient children's centres in their local areas and various other stipulations about how children's centres should be run.

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009

The key elements of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act include reform of 14 to 19 education and training, the establishment of Children's Trust Boards and enabling the Government to set statutory targets for children's services authorities in England for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The Act makes provision about children's centres which updates requirements originally set out in the Children Act 2006.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act brought together multiple separate pieces of legislation into one single Act which provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality and opportunity for all. It provides protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation for anyone using public services, businesses or providers of goods and services, clubs and associations and for anyone in the workplace. This includes all local authorities, schools and early years and childcare providers. The Public Sector Equality Duty, established by the Act, provides a legal requirement on public bodies to consider the impact of their decisions and policies on anyone who has a protected characteristic – including age, pregnancy and maternity. It so provides specific protection to women who are breastfeeding.

The Children and Families Act 2014

The Children and Families Act 2014 includes sections on childcare, children's welfare and changes in local authority statutory duties in relation to the Local Offer for children with SEND. The Act brings together the separate arrangements for children with SEND in schools and young people in post-16 institutions and training up to their 25th birthday, and the integrated Education, Health and Care Plan to replace the statement of Special Educational Needs.

SEND Code of Practice 2015

The SEND Code of Practice provided statutory guidance on the SEND system for children and young people from 0-25. It outlines the legal requirements and statutory guidelines for schools, academies and local authorities, as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014. The Code requires educational establishments to identify and address the needs of their pupils with SEND.

The Childcare Act 2016

The Childcare Act 2016 provided for an extension of Free Early Education Entitlement so that working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds can access up to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks per year (or equivalent time).

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Statutory guidance setting out responsibilities that everyone must safeguard and promote the welfare of children and the expected arrangements that local areas should establish to enable collaboration between professionals and agencies.

Appendix 7: Useful Links

Childcare Choices <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

Children with SEND <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help>

Development Matters <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2>

Early Years Foundation Stage <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Equalities Act 2010 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

Essex Child and family Wellbeing service <https://essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk/>

Essex Children and Young People's Plan
<https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/v89y1/essex-children-and-young-peoples-strategic-plan>

Essex Childcare Search <secureweb1.essex.gov.uk/FIS>

Essex Childcare sufficiency assessment www.essex.gov.uk/childcare-sufficiency-assessment

Essex County Council www.essex.gov.uk/

Essex Early Years and Childcare <https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/>

Essex Family Information Service www.essex.gov.uk/family-information-service

Essex Local offer www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/

Essex Organisational Strategy <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/v89y1/essex-children-and-young-peoples-strategic-plan>

Essex Safeguarding Children Board <https://www.escb.co.uk/>

Minimum Standards <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-minimum-standards>

Office for National Statistics <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

Ofsted <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

Public Health Best start <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days>

Special Education Needs Code of Practice
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Appendix 8: Glossary of Terms

Best start for life - *Giving children the best start in life is a fundamental part of improving health and reducing inequalities*

Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board – *Brings together representatives from different agencies who work with children, young people and their families to focus on working together to improve outcomes*

Development Matters - *Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

Early Years and Childcare System – *By system we mean parents, children and everyone who works in early years and childcare and in support of families in Essex either in an employed or voluntary capacity*

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) - *EYFS is the standards that school and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to 5*

Early Intervention – *Identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes or need more help to do well*

Education Task Force – *An independently chaired Board that will focus on driving and overseeing the Essex response to the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people's education*

Education Disadvantage Strategy – *The aim of the strategy is to focus on an effective system wide approach that understands the impact of disadvantage on children and young people and actions needed to take to reverse these*

Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – *EHCPs are for children and young people aged up to 25 years old that have specific identified needs. It will include identification of educational, health and social care needs and sets out the additional support required to meet those needs*

Education Sustainability Board - *A board consisting of the wider Essex County Council Education Leadership team with the aim of progressing the implementation and change management of the directorate's key strategies and our highest priority projects*

Early Years Charter – *A set of principles and values on how to best work together to improve outcomes for children to be agreed and adopted across the whole Essex Childcare system*

Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service Family Hubs – *One in each district of Essex that have integrated teams providing a range of child and family services throughout Essex that are free at the point of delivery to families from pregnancy up to 19*

Formal Childcare – *Formal childcare refers to an Ofsted registered childcare provider. A childcare provider can be one of the following.*

- *Primary school nursery (including academies), Day Nursery, Preschool and Childminder.*
- *Wraparound care for school age children includes Breakfast, Afters School and Holiday Clubs.*
- *Independent school (registered and inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate)*

Good Level of Development (GLD) - *Is a national measure of a child's attainment at the end of the reception year and focuses on the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (personal, social, and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language) and the early learning goals in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy*

Healthy Child Programme - *Healthy Child Programme offers every family an evidence-base programme of interventions, including screening tests, immunisations, developmental reviews, and information and guidance to support parenting and healthy choices. It focuses on the contribution of health visiting and school nursing services leading and co-ordinating the delivery of public health for children aged 0 to 19*

Home learning environment - *Home learning environment is the combination of everything you and your family do and the spaces your child has access to that contributes to your child's development and learning*

IDACI – *Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index measures the proportion of all children aged 0-15 living in income deprived families / communities*

Inclusion Framework - *The Inclusion Framework is a life-planning, skills-based tool, which allows for identification of barriers and approaches for early intervention*

Informal Childcare – *Informal childcare is an arrangement where care is provided by grandparents, relatives, friends, or a babysitter outside of Ofsted registered childcare providers*

Office for National Statistics (ONS) – *Are responsible for collecting and publishing statistics related to the economy, population and society that are shared with organisations such as Essex County Council to enable planning of service levels and needs and to evaluate performance*

Ofsted - *Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. They also inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people*

Ofsted grades – *Ofsted Inspectors use a 4-point grading scale to make judgements on the quality of a childcare setting during inspections. There are 4 grades: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate*

Levelling up Agenda – *By levelling up we mean tackling the root causes and impacts of inequalities existing in Essex*

Looked after Children by the Local Authority – *Means children in public care who are placed with foster carers or in residential homes*

Lower Super Output Areas – *Super output areas are the lowest geographical level at which the census estimates are provided*

Minimum Income Standard (MIS) – *MIS produces budgets for household types based on what members of the public think you need for a minimum acceptable standard of living in the UK*

Parents – *Someone who looks after a person in the same way a parent would, this includes but not limited to parents, legal guardian, foster carers, primary and secondary care givers*

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy - *the aim of the strategy is to improve the educational, health and emotional wellbeing outcomes for all of Essex's children and young people with special Educational Needs*

Sufficient Childcare – *Is a local authority duty to provide enough childcare places to meet the needs of parents to help them to take up work or access education or training as well as providing enough early learning funded places for eligible 2-year-olds and all 3- and 4-year-olds*

Transition - *When children and families move between the different services provided by different agencies such as an early year setting into a reception class*

Trauma Perceptive Practice – *The Essex approach to understanding behaviour and supporting emotional well-being and focuses on Compassion and Kindness, Hope and Connection and Belonging*

Working Families Programme – *To gain a deeper understanding of the families who are just about managing to identify how they can receive better support*

Forward Plan reference number: FP/136/08/21

Report title: Extension and Tender of local bus contracts	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor Lee Scott - Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport	
Date: 24 November 2021	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Andrew Cook, Director, Highways and Transportation email andrew.cook@essex.gov.uk or Helen Morris, Head of Integrated Public Transport Unit email helen.morris@essex.gov.uk or Karen Saunders, Lead for Community & Education Travel karen.saunders@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

Confidential Appendix

This report has a confidential appendix which is not for publication as it includes exempt information falling within paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex sets out four strategic aims and twenty commitments for the Council to deliver over the next 4 years. As part of the 'High Quality Environment' strategic aim, a key commitment is to deliver a step change in sustainable travel across the county, by growing passenger transport and connecting people and places with economic opportunity to create sustainable and healthy communities.
- 1.2 This report proposes the renewal of contracts for local bus services (as shown in Appendix A), subsidised by Essex County Council, which are due to expire over the course of 2022 and 2023.
- 1.3 Extending, tendering, and awarding of these local bus contracts to maintain a strong bus network is a crucial foundational part of delivering our organisational goals, and supporting people to switch to a more sustainable travel option- such a bus journey instead of a car - will also help us achieve our targets for net zero carbon emissions. Enabling connectivity to places that the market may not be able to deliver without subsidy also supports our ambitions to level up outcomes for residents across the county. It supports our high streets, local employers and enables those accessing training and looking for work.
- 1.4 The Government has published a national bus strategy entitled 'Bus Back Better' which has been the subject of previous Cabinet reports and which is the mechanism by which Government and ECC will seek to recover and improve the bus network to improve sustainability. The work we will carry out for Bus Back Better, will include reviewing the local bus network in Essex , - including

interchange points, introduction of an enhanced bus partnership with bus operators, working with Operators on marketing and promoting services

- 1.5 It is anticipated that the new network arrangements, which will include the new shape of the local bus network for Essex, will be on stream by 1 August 2024.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree that, subject to 2.2, arrangements are made to continue the local bus network in its current form until 31 July 2024 by:
- (a) undertaking a procurement exercise using the ECC Dynamic Purchasing System to competitively tender 47 contracts (set out in Appendix A, Part I);
 - (b) Extending those contracts which allow for extension until 31 July 2024;
 - (c) Undertaking a procurement exercise using the ECC dynamic purchasing system for those contracts which cannot lawfully be extended or where the operator will not agree to them being extended.
- 2.2 Agree that the contracts for services in the Uttlesford area as listed in part (iv) of Appendix A are consulted on and re-tendered, commencing on 31 January 2023 with the possibility of extension for up to two years in total.
- 2.3 Agree that nothing in this decision allows the cost of the local bus network to exceed the budget as set out in the medium term resource strategy, or the sum in the confidential appendix.
- 2.4 Agree that the Director, Highways and Transportation is authorised to extend contracts where possible, retender if extension is not possible and award contracts is delegated to the Director, Highways and Transportation.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 ECC is a significant investor in local bus services which support safer, greener and healthier alternatives to the car. The Council provides the local bus network of supported bus services which provide public transport for communities who otherwise would not have a service, or at times when services cannot be provided commercially. Good bus networks help people live all aspects of their lives. They also support the renewal of the local economy, enable people to access work, improve the environment and support communities by enabling people to access a wide range of services. Bus services support equality, as they are disproportionately used by those on lower incomes, women, older and younger people and people with a disability.
- 3.2 We tender for these bus services to make sure we get the best value for the taxpayer. In normal times, when a contract is approaching its expiry date officers will review passenger usage data and, provided the route is performing with a subsidy of less than £5 per passenger journey the contract will be re-tendered or, if allowed within the terms of the contract, extended. If a bus route fails the '£5 test' then we will seek to re-configure the service to bring it below or if that is not possible to consult on withdrawing the route.

- 3.3 The impact of the pandemic means that bus usage is significantly lower than previously, meaning that applying the £5 figure would result in withdrawal of a significant number of services. We do not yet know when or if passenger numbers will recover to pre-covid levels.
- 3.4 The Government has published a national bus strategy entitled 'Bus Back Better' which has been the subject of previous Cabinet reports and which is the mechanism by which Government and ECC will seek to recover and improve the bus network. As part of this we are seeking to introduce an enhanced bus partnership and review the network across Essex.
- 3.5 This is consuming the resources of the Passenger Transport Team and there is limited merit in reviewing the local bus network until we have a clearer picture of the future of bus services and how the local bus network will fit in with them.
- 3.6 The proposal is to put measures in place to continue with all current ECC commissioned services, either by extending contracts or where that's not possible - either because the contract doesn't allow for the extension or because the operator doesn't agree to an extension - tendering them on the same basis as the current contract. With the exception of the Uttlesford services (see next paragraph), we will put arrangements in place so that contracts will expire on 31 July 2024.
- 3.7 With respect to services relating to the Uttlesford district which are listed in part (iv) of Appendix A we propose to take a slightly different approach. This is because in 2023 we anticipate receiving funding from planning agreements section 106 agreements which, we believe, will enable us to redesign the local bus network across the district. It is therefore proposed that these contracts will be re-tendered with a break clause in January 2023 to give us the opportunity to make any changes to the network that we wish to make. Should any routes be unaffected by the proposed redesign then we will be able to extend the contracts for a further period of up to 2 years.
- 3.8 It is anticipated that the new network arrangements, which will include the new shape of Local Bus will be on stream by 1 August 2024.
- 3.9 Detailed information about the contracts which are the subject of this report are in Appendix A.

3. Options

Option 1 – recommended

- 4.1 Procure arrangements so that all current local bus services continue until 31 July 2024 as set out above with the exception of the Uttlesford contracts which will be dealt with as set out above.

- 4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030:
- maintain the existing passenger transport services after an unstable 18 months,
 - allow ECC the necessary time to consider options and undertake reviews surrounding these services as part of our wider network review following publication of the DfT "Bus Back Better: National Strategy for England" published on 15 March 2021.
 - Ensure communities retain access to key services such as employment, education, shopping and health services reducing the need for car travel
 - Maximise funding opportunities to develop sustainable travel across the county
- 4.3 Although final prices cannot be known, the proposal to award these contracts will result in an annualised cost increase (£1.784m) and estimated net budget pressure to ECC (£1.011m 2022/23 and £1.651m, 2023/24) however, this is a more cost-effective option than retendering all contracts as in option 3.

Option 2 – Do nothing – Not recommended

- 4.4 Local Bus Services are discretionary and there is an opportunity for savings if the contracts are not extended or tendered as proposed. If the proposals set out in this report are not agreed, services (as set out in Appendix A) would cease as and when existing contracts reach the date of expiry. This would result in many communities having no access to key services. Whilst there would be a potential cashable budget saving of £9.121m from 2022/23 if this option were taken forward, these local bus services would cease to operate.
- 4.5 In addition:
- removal of services in an unplanned way would be likely to be contrary to the aims of Bus Back Better, making it more difficult to attract funding from Department for Transport (DfT) to progress other improvements
 - ECC have not consulted on any potential withdrawal of these services and therefore this option does not meet the objectives of the current ECC Passenger Transport Strategy
 - there is a risk of legal challenge if services are withdrawn without consultation.

Therefore this option is not recommended.

Option 3 – Tender all contracts – Not recommended

- 4.6 If ECC were to tender all contracts without extending those which may be extended, there could be an increase in costs. Although tendering the contracts may attract more competition from bus operators, there is still the risk of no bids being received, service withdrawals and increased costs.
- 4.7 Although it cannot be known, it is considered unlikely that there will be a cashable budget saving by tendering all contracts rather than just those which

cannot be extended, indeed, due to the high cost increase expected we could be in a position where these local bus services would cease to operate.

Therefore this option is not recommended.

5. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

5.1 This report links to the following strategic priorities in 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high quality environment
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

5.2 This also aligns with the wider Essex objectives in Essex Vision

6. Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The existing budget provision included in the Medium Term Resource Strategy (MTRS) for local bus is set out in the table below:

	MTRS	
	2022/23 £	2023/24 £
Bus Fare income (including concessionary fares fixed pot allocation)	(664,277)	(664,277)
Bus Service Operators Grant	(1,120,991)	(1,120,991)
Expenditure	10,906,832	10,906,832
Net Expenditure	9,121,564	9,121,564

6.1.2 The current annual contract price for the contracts listed in Appendix A is £10.9m. A number of assumptions have been made in order to calculate the equivalent new total annual contract price for these contracts:

- All contracts are assumed to either be re-tendered or extended on the same basis as the current contracts. There is no expectation that there will be contract conversion on re-tender. If any contracts are converted from 'net cost' to 'gross cost', ECC will take on the financial risk of variances to patronage and ticket sales.
- On bus revenue and English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) income applies to gross contracts only.

- Concessionary fare income revenue has been estimated on the basis that payments for concessions remain at the level distributed in 2020/21.
- Annual on bus revenue assumptions have been extrapolated from the average on bus revenue per service received between March and August 2021.

6.1.3 Under the most likely scenario incorporating the income assumptions set out in paragraph 6.1.2, a net budget pressure of £1.011m in 2022/23 and £1.651m in 2023/24 against the existing MTRS. Under the worst case, albeit unlikely, scenario whereby zero income is received, a net budget pressure of £1.962m in 2022/23 and £2.602m in 2023/24. This pressure is not containable within the existing MTRS and mitigations would have to be sought elsewhere within the sustainable transport budget or the wider organisational budget.

6.1.4 If contracts extensions cannot be negotiated within the agreed parameters and are re-tendered, there is a risk that the tender would result in a contract being awarded on a 'gross cost' basis whereby ECC bears the financial risk of the service rather than paying a fixed subsidy. If this happens there would be transference of significant financial risk to ECC.

6.1.5 The income risk that ECC currently holds in relation to gross contracts in addition to baseline contracts costing more with no additional outcomes being delivered for that investment means that value for money is being eroded. In the short term at least, contract costs for many services will likely exceed £5 per passenger journey (which represents the current policy threshold for intervention). However, the impact of COVID has meant that no services are currently able to operate within the £5 policy threshold. Maintaining the current network for the next two years will allow for strategic development and consultation to be undertaken in line with the Bus Back Better Strategy whilst providing continuity of the existing service to communities in the intervening period.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 It is lawful to extend and procure contracts as set out in this report. It should be noted however that the Council will be maintaining the network at a time when the 'value for money' criterion of £5 per passenger journey is not currently being met. That does not affect the lawfulness of the decision but clearly this may be more difficult to justify in the longer term.

7. Equality and Diversity Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful

- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8. List of appendices

- Appendix A – List of all local bus contracts
- Appendix B - EQIA
- Appendix C - Confidential appendix

9. List of Background papers

Bus Back Better Strategy

Appendix A part I - Tender to July 2024

Contract number	Service number	Contract Type	Contract Start Date	Contract Expiry Date	Days of operation	Supported Journeys	Origin	Destination	No. Days Annually
VL1106	14	Gross	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		Wickford	The Wick	253
AL1108	21	DM Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Saturday		North Benfleet	Basildon	52
AL1111	21	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		North Benfleet	Basildon	253
AL1208	16	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Wethersfield	Chelmsford	305
AL1216	30	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Beckers Green	Marks Farm	305
VL1227	DaRT 3	Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Braintree	Braintree	305
AL1404	21C	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		Canvey	Hadleigh	253
VL1607	16A	Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Schooldays		Canwick Grove	St Helena School	190
VL1608	17	Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Schooldays		West Bergholt	Stanway	190
VL1610	50/50A/50B/69/69A/79/84B/85/92	Gross	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Colchester	Tollesbury / East Mersea / Layer Breton / Tiptree/ Little	305
VL1618	80/80A/81/81A	Gross	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Colchester	Boxted / Dedham	305
VL1812	505	DM Gross	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Saturday		Harlow	Chingford	52
VL2004	63	Gross	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Wednesday & Friday		Rayleigh	Great Wakering / Landwick	103
AL2007	60/60A	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Southend	Paglesham	305
VL2109	118	Gross	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Schooldays		Parkeston	Ramsey	190
VL2111	9/101/105/107/115	Gross	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Walton / Weeley/Point Clear	Gt Holland / Colchester / Thorpe le Soken/Brightlingsea	305
AL1102	552	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		Ramsden Heath	Billerica Station	253
AL1103	104/106	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		Langdon Hills	Basildon	253
XL1106	1A	Gross	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Saturday		Basildon	Pitsea	52
AL1107	12	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Wickford	Billerica	305
XL1210	DaRT3 (F315)	Nett	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Sudbury	Halstead	305
AL1314	71/72	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Stondon Massey	Warley	305
XL1506	3	Nett	22/01/2018	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Southend	Chelmsford	305
AL2003	14	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Southend	Shoeburyness/Barling	305
YL1105	10	Nett	01/04/2018	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Shotgate / Wickford	Basildon	305
YL1111	94/A/B	Nett	01/04/2018	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		South Woodham	Basildon	305
YL1502	13/13a/14	Nett	01/04/2018	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Chelmsford	Wickford	305
YL1511	47/73	Nett	01/04/2018	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Chelmsford	Springfield-Broomfield/Maldon	305
YL1605	15/82/A/B/83/A/B	Nett	30/03/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Colchester/Lexden	Marks Tey/Colne Engaine/Bures	305
YL1620	174/175	Nett	01/04/2018	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Colchester	Fingringhoe	305
YL1704	46	Nett	01/04/2018	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Chelmsford / Epping	Ongar	305
YL2115	115	DM Nett	01/09/2016	30/07/2022	Schooldays	Sch	Clacton	Tending Tech	190
AL1308	269	Gross	25/07/2021	30/04/2022	Monday to Saturday		Brentwood	Grays	305
ZL1907	91/92/ 95/95A	Nett	30/01/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Tollesbury / Maldon	Witham / Tollesbury / Colchester	305
AL1209	9/9A	Gross	25/07/2021	31/03/2022	Monday to Friday		Great Saling/Great Bardfield	Great Notley	253
ZL1315	61	Gross	30/08/2020	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Blackmore/Dodd inghurst	Brentwood	305
ZL1113	256	Gross	26/07/2020	30/07/2022	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday		Basildon/Ramsden Heath	Billerica	156
ZL1604	4	Gross	26/07/2020	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		Hythe Tesco/Highwoods	Stanway Sainsburys/North Station	253
ZL1605	11	Gross	26/07/2020	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		Hythe Tesco/Highwoods	Stanway Sainsburys/North Station	253
ZL2101	2/2a	Gross	26/07/2020	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Clacton	Mistley	305
ZL1205	345	Gross	26/07/2020	30/07/2022	Wednesday		Fuller Street	Braintree	52
ZL1714	13	Gross	30/08/2020	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Waltham Cross Bus Station	St Margaret's Hospital Epping	305
ZL1609	19/63/63A	Nett	30/04/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Colchester Cowdray Centre/Rowhedge	William Harris Way/Monkwick School	305
AL1231	40	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Mon / Wed / Sat		Witham Town	Witham Town	152
AL1219	SB21	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday		Fuller Street	Braintree	48
AL1706	804	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Schooldays		Debden	Chigwell	190
AL1741	418	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday - Saturday		Loughton	St Margaret's Hospital Epping	305

Total number of contracts 47

Appendix A part II - Extend

Contract number	Service number	Contract Type	Contract Start Date	Contract Expiry Date	Days of Operation	Supported Journeys	Origin	Destination	No. Days Annually
ZL1513	59	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Chelmsford	Harlow	57
ZL1806	1	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Harlow	Harlow	57
ZL1801	2	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Harlow	Harlow	57
ZL1802	4	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Harlow	Harlow	57
ZL1803	6	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Harlow	Harlow	57
ZL1804	8	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Harlow	Harlow	57
ZL1805	10	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Harlow	Harlow	57
ZL2007	7/8	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Rayleigh	Rochford	57
ZL2006	4a	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Southend	Shoeburyness	57
ZL1809	1	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Harlow	Harlow	305
ZL1807	2	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Harlow	Harlow	305
ZL1816	3	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Saturday	evenings	Harlow	Harlow	52
ZL1808	4	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Harlow	Harlow	305
ZL1810	6	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Harlow	Harlow	305
ZL1811	8	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Harlow	Harlow	305
ZL1812	10	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Harlow	Harlow	305
ZL1104	8/8A	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Pitsea	Laindon	57
ZL1110	25	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Basildon	Wickford	57
ZL1211	21	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Bocking	Black Notley	57
ZL1506	57B	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Chelmsford	Galleywood	57
ZL1523	57C	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Chelmsford	Galleywood	57
ZL1512	54C/56	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		North Melbourne	Beaulieu Park	57
ZL1622	1A/2A/67B/66	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Colchester	Colchester	55
ZL1715	418B	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Loughton	Harlow	57
ZL1311	37	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Warley	Brentwood	57
ZL1302	351	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Chelmsford	Brentwood	57
ZL1306	80A/80C	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Brentwood	Hutton	57
ZL1723	66 a/b	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Waltham Cross	Debden/Upshire	57
ZL1305	251	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Wickford	Warley	57
ZL1504	31C	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Chelmsford	Southminster/South Woodham Ferrers	57
ZL1501	36	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Chelmsford	Southminster/South Woodham Ferrers	57
ZL1502	94C	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		South Woodham	South Woodham	57
ZL1522	42A	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Chelmsford	Stansted Airport/Boreham	57
ZL1509	45A	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Oxney Green	Chelmer Village	57
ZL1514	70	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Colchester Mason Rd	Chelmsford	57
ZL1518	42b (previously 352)	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Chelmsford, Broomfield Hospital only	Halstead	57
ZL1905	75	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Maldon	Colchester	57
ZL2105	76	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Clacton	Colchester/ Thorpe le Soken	57
ZL2112	102/106	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Colchester	Harwich	57
ZL1619	88	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Friday	evenings	Halstead	Colchester	253
ZL1103	8/8A	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Pitsea	Laindon	305
ZL1210	21	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Bocking	Black Notley	305
ZL1402	21B	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Canvey	Southend	305
ZL1511	57A/57C	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Chelmsford	Galleywood	305

ZL1901	31/33	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Chelmsford	Maldon/South Woodham Ferrers	305
ZL1903	36	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Chelmsford	Maldon/South Woodham Ferrers	305
ZL1904	73	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Chelmsford	Maldon/South Woodham Ferrers	305
ZL2104	74B	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Clacton	Colchester	305
ZL1505	45	nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Moulsham Lodge	Oxney Green	305
ZL1713	418B	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Loughton	Harlow	305
ZL1515	71A	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Chelmsford	Colchester	305
ZL1601	1A	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Ambrose Avenue	Greenstead	305
ZL1603	2A	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Highwoods	Great Horkesley	305
ZL1611	64/A	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Greenstead	St Michaels Estate/ Shrub End/Layer De La Haye	305
ZL1612	66	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Colchester North Station	Rowhedge	305
ZL1615	66B	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Old Heath	West Bergholt	305
ZL1617	68	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Highwoods	West Mersea	305
ZL2108	102	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Harwich	Colchester	305
ZL1607	88a	Nett	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Colchester	Halstead	57
ZL1710	211/212	Gross	26/07/2020	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Waltham Cross	Breach Barns/Roundhills	305
ZL1725	SB10/11/13	Gross	26/07/2020	30/07/2022	Monday & Thursday		Moreton/Matching Green/Stanford Rivers	Epping	100
ZL1817	SB12	Gross	26/07/2020	30/07/2022	Wednesday & Friday		Toot Hill	Harlow	103
ZL1788	542	Gross	30/12/2020	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Debden	Loughton	305
AL1206	77/77A	Gross	25/10/2021	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		St Osyth Beach	Tufnell Way	253
XL1301	565	nett	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Grays	Brentwood	305
XL1501	32	nett	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Chelmsford	Ongar	305
XL1502	10	Nett	01/01/2018	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		Temple Grove	Pleshey	253
XL1805	14	Gross	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Harlow	Pinnacles	305
XL1808	5	nett	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Sumners Farm	Harlow Bus Station	305
XL1904	99a	Nett	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Friday		Chelmsford	Woodham Walter	253
XL1911	D1/D2	Gross	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Maldon	Bradwell	305
XL1918	DaRT 5	Nett	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Maldon	Stow Maries/Nth Fambridge/Althorne	305
XL1920	DaRT 4	Nett	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		St Lawrence	Burnham on Crouch	305
XL2101	2	gross	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Harwich	Harwich	305
ZL2008	7	Gross	29/03/2020	26/03/2022	Monday to Saturday	evenings	Southend	Rayleigh	305
AL1801	381	Gross	25/07/2021	30/07/2022	Monday - Saturday		Harlow	Coopersale	305

Total number of contracts

76

Appendix A part III - DM Arrangements

Contract number	Service number	Contract Type	Contract Start Date	Contract Expiry Date	Days of operation	Supported Journeys	Origin	Destination	No. Days Annually
VL1225	SB28	DM Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Wednesday		Stisted	Braintree Freeport	52
VL1228	90	DM Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Maldon	Witham	305
VL1230	21	DM Nett	01/08/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Bocking	Gt Notley	305
VL1518	17/18	DM Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday		Great Dunmow	Chelmsford	207
AL2005	7/8	DM Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Golden Cross / Rayleigh	Hockley	305
YL0033	21	DM Nett	17/06/2019	30/07/2022	Saturday		Ongar	Brentwood	52

Total
number of
contracts 6

Appendix A part IV - DM Uttlesford

Contract number	Service number	Contract Type	Contract Start Date	Contract Expiry Date	Days of operation	Supported Journeys	Origin	Destination	No. Days Annually
VL1226	DaRT 2	Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Braintree / Uttlesford	Braintree / Uttlesford	305
AL2201	5	Gross	25/07/2021	28/02/2022	Monday to Saturday		Bishops Stortford	Stansted Airport	305
AL2202	6	Gross	25/07/2021	26/01/2022	Monday to Saturday		Stansted Airport	Saffron Walden	305
VL2211	132	DM Nett	10/04/2016	26/03/2022	Sunday & Public Holidays		Saffron Walden	Cambridge	57
AL2212	301	Gross	25/07/2021	31/12/2021	Monday to Saturday		Bishops Stortford	Saffron Walden	305
VL2215	313/313A	Gross	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Great Dunmow	Saffron Walden	305
VL2227	DaRT 1	Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Uttlesford	Uttlesford	305
AL2228	Citi 7	DM Nett	10/04/2016	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Cambridge	Saffron Walden	305
XL2210	34	Gross	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Tuesday and Thursday only		Saffron Walden	Saffron Walden	104
XL2211	306	Gross	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Schooldays		Wicken Bonhunt	Bishops Stortford	190
XL2212	7/7A	Gross	27/08/2017	30/07/2022	Monday to Saturday		Bishops Stortford	Stansted Airport	305
AL2216	59/60	Gross	25/07/2021	31/03/2022	Monday to Saturday		Haverhill	Saffron Walden/Newport	305

Total number of
contracts

12

Forward Plan reference number: FP/138/08/21

Report title: Concessionary Fares Settlement 2022/23	
Report to: Cabinet.	
Report author: Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport	
Date: 24 November 2021	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Andrew Cook, Director, Highways and Transportation email andrew.cook@essex.gov.uk or Helen Morris, Head of Integrated Passenger Transport Unit, email : helen.morris@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 A strong bus network is a core part of Everyone's Essex. It helps to encourage public transport use which reduces carbon emissions and helps achieve our net zero ambitions. It helps our residents to go about their daily lives in a sustainable way.
- 1.2 A strong bus network complements our ambitions to improve public transport as part of the 'Bus Back Better' plans, including Essex's Bus Service Improvement Plan, which was published in October 2021. Concessionary journeys are also disproportionately made on local bus services that are supported by ECC.
- 1.3 This report sets out how ECC will decide how much to pay bus operators for carrying those concessionary fare passengers in 2022/23. Passengers using the national concessionary fares represent a third of all bus journeys so they provide a major part of bus operators' income. Concessionary fares also help improve health, wellbeing and independence for all ages
- 1.4 This report, and the proposal elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting to continue to support services for a further two years are complementary. ECC is continuing to work with bus operators to enhance the network and promote the good quality sustainable travel options it provides, including through the Enhanced Partnership proposals which are being developed which include proposals for joint marketing, measures to start to improve ticketing and better information.
- 1.5 Bus services are disproportionately used by older people, younger people, women, and those with a disability. A key way in which we fund bus services is the concessionary bus pass scheme which enables those who qualify on grounds of age or disability to travel free at certain times, with the costs of the revenue foregone by the bus operators met by taxpayers.

- 1.6 Bus operators are carrying fewer passengers because of the impact of the pandemic. To protect the bus network from large scale service withdrawals and, subject to a temporary change in the law, the Council is likely to follow Government guidance and invest in services by paying at rates that are based on pre-Covid levels of patronage and revenue foregone so that services are supported to give passenger numbers the opportunity to recover.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to proceed as in option 3 below and that for 2022/23 we will keep the same discretionary elements of concessionary fares in as for 2021/22.
- 2.2 To authorise the publication of a draft reimbursement scheme for concessionary bus fares in 2022/23 based on the DfT default Calculator Scheme on or before 1 December 2021.
- 2.3 To agree that ECC's preference is to agree a fixed cost scheme that is consistent with Government advice, subject to this being lawful.
- 2.4 Agree that a further report be made to the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport with respect to negotiation of reimbursement arrangements once the Department for Transport guidance on concessionary fares payments for 2022/23 has been assessed in order to set out our negotiating parameters for the scheme.
- 2.5 Agree that if the Cabinet Member authorises negotiations with operators and a final negotiated scheme is recommended and it meets the terms set out in Option 3 then he is authorised to make a final decision on issuing the final scheme.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 Operation of the National Concessionary Fare Scheme is a statutory duty placed on the County Council by the Transport Acts 1985 and 2000 and the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007.
- 3.2 The legislation for the Scheme requires that each responsible local authority (known as a Travel Concession Authority or TCA) must compensate bus operators who carry Concessionary Pass Holders (the customers) with a level of reimbursement such that they are neither better or worse off than they would have been had the scheme not existed.
- 3.3 Setting the reimbursement arrangements is a two-stage process:
 - We must publish a draft scheme no later than 1 December before the start of the relevant financial year

- We must then publish a final scheme no later than 1 March, with the scheme coming into effect on 1 April
- 3.4 If bus operators are dissatisfied with the reimbursement arrangements they can appeal to the Secretary of State for Transport or, in some circumstances, seek a judicial review.
- 3.5 The Council has historically set the reimbursement arrangements by reference to a fixed pot agreed with the operators. This means that the cost is known at the start of the year, regardless of passenger numbers. This has managed risks for the Council and for operators. However, the impact of Covid-19 has in essence broken the link between the level of reimbursement and passenger numbers. With respect to the 2021/22 financial year DfT issued guidance and changed legislation to allow 2021/22 reimbursement levels to be set at pre-Covid levels despite passenger numbers being significantly below pre-Covid patronage levels.
- 3.6 In late October 2021 DfT published guidance recommending that authorities reduce guaranteed support to operators over 2022/23 so that in April 2022 support is at least 90% of pre-covid levels, ending in March 2023 with support being guaranteed at 65% of pre-covid levels. The guidance leaves it to authorities and operators to agree what pre-covid levels means and makes it clear that this can reflect a change in the services provided by an operator, although most operators are maintaining services at 90% of pre-covid levels.
- 3.7 If we follow the advice then it's expected that at some point during the year the number of concessionary journeys will exceed the guaranteed minimum of pre-covid levels.
- 3.8 Any final scheme will therefore need to
- Agree general principles of what 'pre-covid levels' means for each operator
 - Agree how to reimburse operators when concessionary fare usage is less than pre-covid levels
 - Agree how to reimburse operators if/when concessionary fare usage exceeds pre-covid levels – which is likely to occur at different times for different operators and most likely not to occur at all
 - Agree how to measure the recovery of concessionary fare usage
- 3.9 In order to achieve this there will need to be a change in the law for 2022/23. DfT guidance has only recently been published and ECC will need to assess the options before making a recommendation for a 2022/23 scheme, which raises complex legal financial and computational issues.
- 3.10 In the meantime, we need to make a decision on the 'default' scheme to issue before 1 December before we can decide what scheme we would actually like to negotiate with the operators. It's proposed to issue a default calculator scheme based on the DFT model. A calculator scheme would mean that the cost of the scheme would depend on actual activity levels during 2022/23. This is the type of scheme that the Secretary of State has historically applies if bus

operators appeal against the final scheme determined by the council. It is not clear what approach will be taken for the 2022/23 financial year, but the DfT guidance encourages for this year encourages local agreement and discourages appeals.

- 3.11 The Council has historically preferred to have a fixed pot scheme. For 2021/22 year we have agreed a fixed pot with operators based on a reduced version of the 2020/21 scheme.
- 3.12 It is therefore proposed that a further report will be prepared to the Cabinet Member once we have had chance to work up options following receipt of the guidance in late October. If the recommendations in this report are approved, the Cabinet Member will be authorised to agree the negotiating position for the authority if the recommended option meets the terms set in paragraphs 5.10, 6.1.8 and 6.2.4 of this report; and the Cabinet Member is authorised to approve a final scheme if that scheme continues to meet those terms.

Impact of COVID-19

- 3.13 The impact of COVID-19 on concessionary bus pass use, and indeed on all bus travel, has been significant following the restrictions placed on people during the first three waves of COVID, and once those restrictions were lifted, the public were advised to only travel when it was essential. Then, once there was no advice against travelling on public transport, social distancing measures significantly reduced capacity. Those measures have now been relaxed but with many people continuing to work from home and to return cautiously to previous travel patterns, patronage across the network and particularly amongst concessionary passengers has remained significantly lower than before Covid.
- 3.14 With respect to 2021/22, DfT issued policy guidance asking TCAs to continue to pay concessionary fares reimbursement at pre-Covid levels. They changed the law to allow this. ECC followed this guidance and as a result the 'fixed pot' reimbursement arrangements agreed for 2021/2022 will result in an over-compensation of bus operators for the concessionary journeys actually provided, but they will have received less than they received in pre-pandemic times. This measure has ensured that the network continued to operate at least 80% of pre-Covid levels.
- 3.15 Usually, the Cabinet would be asked to consider a report to publish a concessionary fare reimbursement scheme and then set negotiating parameters for an agreed scheme. At present we are not able to set negotiating parameters because DfT have only just issued their guidance. It is therefore proposed that we publish a default calculator scheme, as normal, on or before 1 December 2021 and then a further report is made to the Cabinet Member to decide on the detailed negotiation parameters once the DfT guidance has been assessed. In order to provide some assurance to Cabinet, however, these detailed parameters would have to meet the terms set out in paragraphs 5.10, 6.1.9 and 6.2.4 below.

- 3.16 Further, if, following negotiation in accordance with the terms set out below and also with the parameters set by the Cabinet Member then it's proposed that the Cabinet Member may take the decision to implement that scheme.
- 3.17 There is a potential difficulty with the anticipated requirement to allow operators to over-recover the costs of concessionary travel which is that the only way of doing it is to pay people using activity levels in 2019/20 as a base level. This means that:
- As time progresses the 2019/20 base level will become increasingly inaccurate. The published DfT guidance provides helpful guidance on how to deal with this
 - Guaranteed levels of reimbursement provides no incentive for operators to carry concessionary passengers as they will get the money regardless of how many such passengers they carry. Bus operators are required by law to carry concessionary passengers but some operators may no longer run services which attract such passengers.
 - Different bus companies are expanding or contracting operations at different rates and the number of passenger journeys is not changing at a uniform rate meaning that the approximation benefits some bus operators more than others – and this disparity increases the longer we rely on 2019/20 figures.

Proposed remit within which the Cabinet Member is authorised to set the 2022/23 negotiation parameters and final scheme

- 3.18 It is recommended that the parameters within which the Cabinet Member is authorised to a) approve negotiations with operators and b) approve a final scheme are as follows:
- The scheme should be consistent with the guidance issued by DfT and hence with Government policy on the level of reimbursement payments;
 - The scheme should be consistent with legislation or proposed changes to legislation made or committed to by DfT;
 - The reimbursement level should not exceed the reimbursement level for 2021/22.
- 3.19 If the recommended negotiating position and/or final scheme cannot meet these parameters, then the decision cannot be taken by the Cabinet Member.
- 3.20 The DfT guidance recommends payment continue at above actual levels of concessionary patronage and at a percentage of pre-Covid levels throughout the year. It should be noted that ECC are therefore likely to need to negotiate some form of fixed pot scheme because there is no historic data to make a calculation of what pre-Covid reimbursement rates would have been under a calculator scheme had one been in place. If a fixed pot scheme cannot be negotiated on this basis then the default calculator scheme this report authorises for publication, would become the scheme for 2022/23.

- 3.21 The DfT guidance proposes that the scheme starts at 90% of pre-covid levels reducing to 65% over the course of 2022/23, so it is likely that ECC will need to agree a series of fixed pots over that period. This means that ECC is likely in effect to need to agree a fixed pot maximum which sets reimbursement rates for monthly phases. We will need to consider what happens if concessionary fare use increases beyond size of the pot. These more detailed parameters will be set out in the report to the Cabinet Member once the impact of the guidance has been assessed. However, if the recommendations to Cabinet are approved they would need to be within the parameters set above or a further report to Cabinet would be required.

Basis of the Concessionary Fares Scheme

- 3.22 The mandatory scheme requires provision of free travel for eligible older and disabled people between the hours of 09:30 and 23:00 Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and on bank holidays. The current Essex County Council scheme covers the mandatory scheme but also provides:
- Concessionary travel between 09:00 and 09:30 Monday to Friday
 - Concessionary travel between 23:00 and 00:00 Monday to Friday
 - Provision of a companion pass for those disabled pass holders who require additional support when travelling.
- 3.23 There is no proposal to change the discretionary elements of the scheme. Changing the start time of the concessionary fares scheme to 09:30 for example could potentially lead to a sharp increase in passengers at 09:30 which could result in additional claims from operators for the cost of introducing extra capacity at that time under a calculator scheme.

Process

- 3.24 The Council is required to publish a default scheme by **1 December 2021** and publish a final scheme, preferably one agreed with bus operators, by **1 March 2022**.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions.

- 4.1 A strong bus network serves to support all areas of Everyone's Essex. Bus services offer access to education, employment, health and shopping and are heavily relied upon by those on lower incomes and more vulnerable residents. Bus services in rural areas in particular can act as a focal point for community interactions and a good public transport network can help attract inward investment in Essex's economy, by making Essex a more attractive location for businesses and employees. Promoting bus use also helps to reduce the pressure on the road network for both existing and new communities.
- 4.2 The ENCTS Bus pass scheme supports the commercial viability and stability of the network by drawing more passenger on to it and in doing so also helps to reduce congestion.

4.3 Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030: while it is not possible to quantify a direct impact, the bus pass scheme by giving taxpayer funded bus travel to a significant proportion of the population, encourages them to make use of bus journeys instead of making use of private car journeys. A journey made by bus is recognised as (on average) having a lower carbon emission level per person than an equivalent journey made by private car. As such, by promoting the use of bus services this proposal will help to reduce carbon emissions across the county. Additionally travel by bus reduces congestion, ensuring those journeys that can only be made by car are done so more efficiently – also reducing carbon emissions.

4.4 This report links to the following strategic priorities in 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high-quality environment
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

5 Options

5.1 The Council has a statutory duty to issue the reimbursement arrangement by 1 December 2021. The Council has considered the following three options:

Option 1: Issue a final scheme on 1 December 2021, based on variable costs determined by actual numbers of passengers (with or without a hybrid option of fixed payments to single operators) (a 'calculator' scheme).

5.2 This would follow the pre-Covid guidance set by the Secretary of State with reimbursement being directly related to passenger numbers and fares foregone. This option is often referred to as a 'floating scheme' or 'Calculator Scheme'. This model is set out in the Department for Transport's model reimbursement calculator.

5.3 The advantage is that the Council would benefit from reduced passenger levels (including those due to the impact of COVID-19 on passenger numbers). However, whilst the base passenger cost could be less, the other scheme allowable costs (including Peak Vehicle Requirement claims and Marginal Operating Cost claims) are difficult to predict and therefore their impact on financial expenditure is unknown, although the overall cost would be lower than the fixed costs of the 2021/22 scheme. In addition, there would be a significant impact on the viability of the commercial network. Given the fall in passenger numbers created by the COVID-19 situation, an unamended Calculator scheme would be likely to result in a significant fall in revenue for the commercial network and hence significant route withdrawals to re-establish financial sustainability.

- 5.4 Should a 'Calculator' Scheme be implemented, the authority would still need to continue to negotiate with bus operators individually to agree elements that can be adjusted within the calculator, such as Marginal Operating Costs and Fare Calculation (national or local values).
- 5.5 A calculator scheme would not meet the Government policy objective of continuing to reimburse operators for at least some period at pre-Covid levels. Therefore, while it is recommended that this is published as the default scheme, it is unlikely to be the recommended final scheme.

Option 2: Issue Fixed Total Cost Reimbursement Scheme on 1 December 2021 (with or without risk share) based on the likely cost of concessionary fares to the Council in 2022/23

- 5.6 This would be based on similar principles to a calculator scheme except that the overall cost of the scheme would be capped. The fixed reimbursement sum would be shared between participating operators based on activity levels and average fares. This means that the Council bears the risk that activity is less than anticipated and that operators bear the risk that activity exceeds their expectations.
- 5.7 Under this type of scheme bus operators would also collectively bear any risk of cost increases if they need to provide additional capacity if additional capacity claims also have to be met out of the fixed cost of the cap. In practice this may deter operators from providing additional capacity - since they are foregoing any additional capacity claims through the fixed reimbursement scheme. Essex County Council mitigates this risk by offering the 09:00-09:30 extension, which effectively spreads the morning concessionary pass peak travel (first journey) across the first hour of travel times.
- 5.8 If operators are dissatisfied with the reimbursement arrangements, then they can appeal. It appears from appeal decisions published by the Secretary of State that the Secretary of State would be unlikely to support any kind of fixed cost scheme on appeal, meaning that in practice this type of scheme can only be achieved if there is agreement between operators and the Council.
- 5.9 Given the huge uncertainty with respect to passenger numbers arising from the impact of COVID-19, it is not considered likely that an agreed outcome could be reached for 2022/2023. If there is no agreed outcome, then operators can appeal. It is also unlikely that this approach would achieve the Government policy objective of re-establishing the link between concessionary passenger numbers and reimbursement in a phased way over the course of the year.

Option 3: Issue a scheme based on variable costs determined by actual numbers of passengers (a 'calculator' scheme) on 1 December 2021 and bring back a report on the final scheme to the Cabinet Member following assessment of guidance issued by DfT, to be issued for 1 March 2022 (Recommended Option)

- 5.10 As outlined in this report, a calculator scheme is the recommended option with respect to a draft scheme issued on 1 December 2021 and a report will be brought back to the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport following consideration of the updated guidance from DfT. These recommendations will allow the Council to fulfil its statutory obligations, while allowing the final decision over the shape and cost of the scheme to be made taking into account DfT guidance. Given the high levels of uncertainty any decision by the Cabinet Member would need to be within the parameters set in paragraphs 6.1.9 and 6.2.3 below.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The Medium Term Resource Strategy (MTRS) indicative budget for concessionary fares for 2022/23 is £17.949m. The table below sets this out together with prior year expenditure and demonstrates how much of the total expenditure relates to the negotiated fixed pot arrangements:

	2018/19 (Actual £'000)	2019/20 (Actual £'000)	2020/21 (Actual £'000)	2021/22 (Budget £'000)	2022/23 (Budget £'000)	2023/24 (Budget £'000)
Concessionary fares total expenditure	18,451	18,376	17,986	17,949	17,949	17,950
Concessionary fare fixed pot operator re-imbursement	18,100	18,200	17,649	16,943	TBC	TBC

Note: Concessionary fares on Park and Ride services were removed from the re-imbursement scheme per decision FP/637/02/20 between 2019/20 and 2020/21 reducing the fixed pot by £574,000.

Financial implications of option 3 (recommended)

- 6.1.1 Implications of a calculator scheme are set out as per option 1 below. Negotiation will need to take place within the confines of the parameters set out in paragraphs 3.10, 6.1.9 and 6.2.3. Clear demonstrable value for money will be difficult in such an uncertain environment.

Financial implications arising from option 1 (not recommended)

- 6.1.2 During 2021/22, ECC negotiated a fixed pot arrangement in line with the DfT's issued policy guidance that requested TCAs to pay concessionary fare re-imbursement at pre-Covid levels. Operators were consequently re-imbursed in excess of the principle of an operator being no better, no worse off for carrying a concessionary passenger.
- 6.1.3 If ECC was to revert to the pre-Covid guidance and issue a calculator scheme, there is the potential for significant financial savings to be crystallized, the exact level of saving being subject to actual passenger numbers. Minimum expected

passenger number levels are at around 50% of pre-COVID levels and whilst this is expected to improve, there remains uncertainty in this respect.

6.1.4 DfT have recently published guidance that proposes to re-establish the link between passenger numbers and re-imbursement levels phased over 2022/23. However, legislation will need to be changed and a staged adjustment will need to take place to enable that to happen which would reduce any saving. Using reasonable, consistent assumptions with prior years regarding average fare price, an estimation of the calculator scheme liability can be made. In 2022/23, if passenger numbers fell to 6.3m, a calculator scheme would estimate payments at £8.56m. This would represent a substantial saving for ECC of over £8.3m on the 2021/22 fixed pot value of £16.943m.

6.1.5 Applying sensitivities to these estimates, even if passenger numbers were to increase by 50% to 9.5m, the calculator scheme would estimate payments of £12.84m, which still represents significant savings for ECC.

6.1.6 Due to the impact of COVID-19 on bus service use, there is significantly greater uncertainty than in previous years over passenger number forecasts. However, as the sensitivity analysis implies, there remains a significant financial saving opportunity from implementing a calculator scheme given the continuing large suppression in passenger numbers that is expected to continue in 2022/23.

6.1.7 Should this option be implemented, it should be noted that this would not be in line with the policy direction issued by DfT which outlines a transition to the link between reimbursement levels and passenger numbers over the 2022/23 financial year. Additionally, the authority would still need to continue to negotiate with bus operators individually to agree elements that can be adjusted within the calculator, such as Marginal Operating Costs and Fare Calculation (national or local values) which could impact upon the calculated payments.

6.1.8 Note that in previous years, ECC's position in respect of the fixed pot is negotiated with the understanding that fixed pot settlements are generally higher than that which a calculator scheme would enforce in a usual year as this serves to support the stability of the network. There is the risk that a reduction in payments from a move to the default calculator scheme could cause operators to withdraw currently un-commercial bus services across the network and the County Council coming under pressure to replace them with associated cost.

Financial implications of option 2 (not recommended)

6.1.9 The value of the fixed pot for 2021/22 was negotiated to be £16.943m. The expectation is that any negotiation for a fixed pot in 2022/23 would not exceed this level.

6.1.10 In October 2021 the DfT published guidance for ENCTS re-imbursement in 2022/23. ECC needs to assess the options within the guidance in order to negotiate effectively with all counterparties within this uncertain environment.

Clear demonstration of value for money would be very difficult with such uncertainty.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 Essex County Council, as the Travel Concession Authority, is required to issue a proposed scheme by 1 December 2021. It is proposed to publish a 'calculator' scheme as its draft. The proposed scheme can be amended – but only in a way which is more favourable to operators - no later than 1 April.

6.2.2 The operators can appeal to the Secretary of State no later than 27 May 2022, 56 days after the commencement date. Operators will not, however, appeal if a scheme is agreed with them.

6.2.3 Under the law as it currently stands, the Council is required by law to make reimbursement arrangements which ensure that every operator:

- (a) is financially no better and no worse off as a result of providing a concession; and
- (b) receives appropriate reimbursement for providing concessions to the persons eligible.

6.2.4 There was a temporary change in the law for reimbursement in 2021/22 which removed this requirement, but that change was a one-off and doesn't apply to 2022/23. The Department of Transport will need to change the law for 2022/23 if they want local authorities to reimburse at a level which over-compensates bus operators for the concessionary passengers they have carried. It is likely, but not guaranteed that the law will change for 2022/23.

6.2.5 The DfT has published supplementary guidance requesting that TCAs pay concessionary fares at pre-COVID levels, however this recommendation is not in line with the current law so any payment by TCAs must be lawful. The DfT has agreed to review the legislative position in order to allow TCAs to reimburse operators at the pre-COVID levels as requested and has advised it will provide an update following this review. Any negotiation must be undertaken in line with the applicable law.

6.2.6 Failure to negotiate a scheme means that the operators can appeal to the Secretary of State, who can then impose a scheme. This would result in significant legal costs being incurred and, if the operators were successful, would result in a scheme which is more expensive. However, to date, the Secretary of State has decided appeals in line with the calculator scheme.

6.2.7 An agreed scheme, if it can be achieved at acceptable cost, reduces the likelihood of any legal challenges.

6.2.8 It is important to note that by paying more than the revenue foregone the Council will be allowing operators to receive more money from carrying concessionary fare passengers than the money they are losing. This

potentially amounts to a subsidy to the bus operators falling within the European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020. The aim of paying in a way which seeks to do no more than limiting the damage caused by the pandemic, is likely to be an acceptable subsidy. The Council is likely to have to publish the final scheme as a potential subsidy. Such publication is likely to have to be placed on the website of the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy.

7 Equality and Diversity Considerations

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. As the ENCTS (Bus Pass) scheme offers free travel to older people and people with disabilities, it has an overall beneficial impact on them and has a neutral impact on all other protected groups.

8 List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

None

Forward Plan Ref No. FP/176/10/21

Report title: Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members	
Report author: Secretary to the Cabinet	
Date: 24 November 2021	For: Information
Enquiries to: Emma Tombs, Democratic Services Manager, 03330 322709	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

The following decisions have been taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members since the last meeting of the Cabinet:

Leader of the Council

- *FP/142/08/21** Active Travel Fund 2 Schemes
- FP/200/10/21** Association of South Essex Local Authorities – Proposed Joint Committee

Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance

- FP/181/10/21** Allocation of the Household Support Fund and agreement to direct award for free school meal vouchers
- FP/182/10/21** Adoption of The Essex Plan for Working Families
- FP/192/10/21** Household Support Fund: Increase in support to those aged 2-4 in October 2021
- *FP/152/09/21** To procure and award contracts from the Eastern Shire Procurement Organisation Framework Agreements for Library Stock

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and early Years

- *FP/135/08/21** Decision to adopt and publish Essex County Councils Domestic Abuse Commissioning Strategy

Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning

FP/199/10/21 ECC Response to the Southend-on-Sea Local Plan – Refining the Plan Options (Regulation 18 consultation), September 2021

Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability

***FP/155/09/21** Adoption of schemes to co-ordinate pupil admissions to primary and secondary schools in 2023-24 and management of in-year applications from 1 April 2022

FP/193/10/21 Appointment and Re-Appointment of School Governors by Essex LA - Schedule 384

FP/201/10/21 Appointment and Re-Appointment of School Governors by Essex LA - Schedule 385

FP/208/11/21 Appointment and Re-Appointment of School Governors by Essex LA - Schedule 386

Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

FP/184/10/21 Drawdown from Technology Solutions Reserve: Cloud Migration Programme

***FP/993/02/21** Addition to Capital Programme in 2021/22 through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding Scheme

FP/195/10/21 Procurement Resource to Support Transformation Projects

In consultation with Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

***FP/186/10/21** Adult Social Care Workforce Support Fund

Cabinet member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

FP/187/10/21	Proposed Disabled Parking Bay, 9 Sussex Road, Brentwood
FP/196/10/21	Charges for Temporary Traffic Regulation Notices
*FP/189/10/21	Participation in the 2022 Ride London cycle event including hosting two stages of an elite women's cycle race
FP/211/11/21	B1008 Essex Regiment Way/ B1008 Dunmow Road/Main Road Post Fatal Collision Remedial Measures
FP/214/11/21	Amendments to the Essex County Council Maintenance and Inspection Strategy

Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

*FP/001/03/21	Provider of Last Resort Arrangements 2021/22
*FP/087/06/21	Allocation of Funding to Support the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable
*FP/202/10/21	Adult Social Care Workforce Retention and Recruitment fund

Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling

*FP/162/09/21	Integrated Waste Handling Contract Service Delivery - Materials Marketing Procurement
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*** Key Decisions 11**

Decisions published exempt from call in and 28-day period 2

Decisions published exempt from call in 2