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# Essex County Council

## 12 October 2021

### Order Paper

#### Agenda item 9                      Motions

The following amendments to Motions have been received:

#### **Motion 1      Encouraging making decisions and scrutinising local matters closer to local people**

An amendment to be moved by **Councillor Steptoe** and seconded by **Councillor Gudlielmi**.

*(The words deleted are shown ~~struck through~~ and additions are shown underlined)*

‘Council calls attention to the ability of committees to hold meetings outside County Hall subject to funding being available, ~~and~~ a safe venue being located, suitable technology for live streaming and the availability of ECC Officers to support the meeting.

Council notes that a local member or members may also submit a written request for meeting outside County Hall to the Chairman of the committee. ~~;~~ ~~who may work with officers to seek an alternative location.~~ In this instance the Chairman will decide whether to permit the meeting to take place outside of County Hall.

Council considers that holding a meeting in County Hall, for example, to determine a planning application affecting communities distant from Chelmsford may deter have in the past deterred affected residents from ~~attending.~~ following the meeting. However as all ECC’s Committee meetings are now live streamed, this is unlikely to be the case.

Depending on requirements of the constitution or any process followed by the Committee, local residents and elected Borough/District/City/Town/Parish councillors ~~should be~~ are able to address a local meeting of the committee concerned, so as to ensure the views of the community be fully heard. This is in accordance with the agreed Public Speaking Protocol.

Council further notes that the Chairman of a Committee may, at times, allow additional speakers, while ensuring that that the right balance of speakers is struck especially if the Committee has a Regulatory Function.'

*(The motion, if amended, would then read:)*

'Council calls attention to the ability of committees to hold meetings outside County Hall subject to funding being available, a safe venue being located, suitable technology for live streaming and the availability of ECC Officers to support the meeting.

Council notes that a local member or members may also submit a written request for meeting outside County Hall to the Chairman of the committee. In this instance the Chairman will decide whether to permit the meeting to take place outside of County Hall.

Council considers that holding a meeting in County Hall, for example, to determine a planning application affecting communities distant from Chelmsford may have in the past deterred affected residents from following the meeting. However as all ECC's Committee meetings are now live streamed, this is unlikely to be the case.

Depending on requirements of the constitution or any process followed by the Committee, local residents and elected Borough/District/City/Town/Parish councillors are able to address a local meeting of the committee concerned, so as to ensure the views of the community be fully heard. This is in accordance with the agreed Public Speaking Protocol.

Council further notes that the Chairman of a Committee may, at times, allow additional speakers, while ensuring that that the right balance of speakers is struck especially if the Committee has a Regulatory Function'.

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## **Motion 2 Pay for Care Workers in Essex**

First amendment : An amendment to be moved by **Councillor Mackrory** and seconded by **Councillor Cory**.

*(The words deleted are shown ~~struck through~~ and additions are shown underlined)*

~~'This council recognises the fantastic work of carers across the county, and the important role they played during the pandemic working on the frontline. This council also recognises that most care workers earn below the 'Real Living Wage' despite the vital role they perform.~~

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Therefore, ~~†~~This council, regarding care workers, resolves to ask the Cabinet to make sure that the employers of all care workers in the ECC supply chain (including ECC itself)

- pay Covid related sick pay (including whilst isolating),
- pay at least the Real Living Wage (currently £9.50 an hour),
- pay occupational sick pay.'

*(The motion, if amended, would then read:)*

'This council resolves to ask the Cabinet to make sure that the employers of all care workers in the ECC supply chain (including ECC itself):

- pay Covid related sick pay (including whilst isolating),
- pay at least the Real Living Wage (currently £9.50 an hour),
- pay occupational sick pay.'

Second amendment: to be moved by **Councillor Hardware** and seconded by **Councillor Mackenzie**.

*(The words deleted are shown ~~struck through~~ and additions are shown underlined)*

'This council recognises the fantastic work of carers across the county, and the important role they played during the pandemic working on the frontline. This council also recognises that most care workers earn below the 'Real Living Wage' despite the vital role they perform.

Therefore, this council, ~~regarding care workers,~~ resolves to ask the Cabinet to: acknowledges the laudable proposal for Essex County Council to:

- pay covid related sick pay (including whilst isolating),
- pay at least the Real Living Wage (currently £9.50 an hour),
- pay occupational sick pay.'

However, this Council notes that this proposal would have financial impact and believes that this should be raised as part of the 2022/23 budget process where its impact can be debated in the context of the whole 2022/23 Budget.

*(The motion, if amended, would then read:)*

'This council recognises the fantastic work of carers across the county, and the important role they played during the pandemic working on the frontline. This council also recognises that most care workers earn below the 'Real Living Wage' despite the vital role they perform.

This council, acknowledges the laudable proposal for Essex County Council to:

- pay covid related sick pay (including whilst isolating),
- pay at least the Real Living Wage (currently £9.50 an hour),
- pay occupational sick pay.

However, this Council notes that this proposal would have financial impact and believes that this should be raised as part of the 2022/23 budget process where its impact can be debated in the context of the whole 2022/23 Budget.'

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#### **Motion 4      Government's White Paper on Adult Social Care**

An amendment to be moved by **Councillor Henderson** and seconded by **Councillor Harris**.

*(The words deleted are shown ~~struck through~~ and additions are shown underlined)*

'Essex County Council spends over £600 million each year on Adult Social Care, which represents over 40% of Essex County Council's total gross revenue budget.

~~This Council therefore welcomes the courage of the Government in seeking to address the longstanding issues of adult social care funding and reform.~~  
This Council therefore notes with deep concern the Government failure to address the long-standing issues of adult social care funding and reform.  
The Council calls for publication of the White Paper which was promised by the Prime Minister over two years ago.  
~~The Council calls for publication of the White Paper as soon as possible.~~  
which was promised by the Prime Minister over two years ago.

This Council also calls on Government to:

1. Deliver a multi-year settlement which will enable local government to plan properly and resource for the new regime.
2. Provide assurance that the funding announced will be additional and will be both timely and sufficient to meet the increased running costs of the new regime.
3. Consider the funding needs of working age adults in need of social care.
4. Undertake extensive consultation with regard to the new charging models to ensure that they are fair, practical and affordable.

5 Raise the necessary funding to meet the demands of the reforms by taxing those with the broadest shoulders, not from low earners and young people.

*(The motion, if amended, would then read)*

'Essex County Council spends over £600 million each year on Adult Social Care, which represents over 40% of Essex County Council's total gross revenue budget.

This Council therefore notes with deep concern the Government failure to address the long-standing issues of adult social care funding and reform. The Council calls for publication of the White Paper which was promised by the Prime Minister over two years ago.

This Council also calls on Government to:

1. Deliver a multi-year settlement which will enable local government to plan properly and resource for the new regime.
2. Provide assurance that the funding announced will be additional and will be both timely and sufficient to meet the increased running costs of the new regime.
3. Consider the funding needs of working age adults in need of social care.
4. Undertake extensive consultation with regard to the new charging models to ensure that they are fair, practical and affordable.
5. Raise the necessary funding to meet the demands of the reforms by taxing those with the broadest shoulders, not from low earners and young people.'

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## **Agenda item 12**

### **Written Questions and Answers**

#### **1. By Councillor Pond of the Chairman of the Council**

'Given that Sir Winston Churchill was a Member of Parliament for a County of Essex constituency between 1924 and 1964, and indeed represented my own town of Loughton from 1924 to 1955, will the Chairman please arrange for a portrait of him to be given a place of honour in County Hall, and his details to be added to the list of worthies under the public gallery in the Chamber?'

**Reply**

'Thank you for your question, I have discussed with the Leader, who is supportive of the idea and he will be making the decision in the near future.'

**2. By Councillor Bowers-Flint of the Cabinet Member for Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture**

'Essex County Council launched the Essex Forest Initiative in October 2019. Would the Cabinet Member make a statement on the progress being made?'

**Reply**

'In its first year the Essex Forest Initiative exceeded its target of 25,000 trees planted and managed to plant 36,000. This year the target is 50,000 trees and we are on track to achieve planting figures in excess of 80,000 trees in partnership with the city, boroughs, districts, parishes and private landowners. We are following the principle of planting the right tree in the right place and at the right time - planting taking place over the winter months rather than the summer. The team is expanding their partners to include the Thames Chase Community Forest, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, One Tree Planted, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Essex Wildlife Trust and all of the city, borough and district councils of the county, to make sure that we are working collaboratively to improve the treescape of the county.'

The Essex Forest Initiative is more than just planting trees to absorb carbon, it is part of our work to develop nature-based solutions not only to absorb carbon but as part of our approach to managing flooding and soil erosion. The team are also involved in projects which are creating nationally scarce wet woodlands, connecting existing fragments of mature woodlands through hedgerows and wildlife corridors and working to positively impact urban areas across the county with green infrastructure and has received £300,000 from the Forestry Commission to support tree planting outside of woodlands, focusing on hedgerows, parklands, urban areas, riverbanks, roads and footpaths. The fund will target areas with trees that have been neglected or suffered damage in the past, including disused and vacant community spaces and those affected by tree diseases. Essex County Council will be working with Colchester, Harlow and Epping Forest, to deliver the planting and maintenance of 5,595 trees, with more planned, concentrating on trees on the riverside, in urban areas and along roads, as well as the infilling of old hedgerows and creation of wood pasture across the county.'

**3. By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport**

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'With the council pursuing a greener agenda, what plans are in place to phase out the use of glyphosate weedkiller in Essex over the coming year'

## **Reply**

'There are no plans at the council to phase out the use of glyphosate weedkiller over the coming year because the only suitable and licensed chemical to use on the highway is Glyphosate. It works as a spot treatment directly on the weeds, other chemicals act as a barrier but must be sprayed over a larger area. It is therefore more cost effective and less damaging to the environment to spray a small area. For information, Essex County Council's (ECC's) Maintenance Strategy states the following:

### **Safety**

*Weed growth can impair safety for highway users by reducing available road and footway widths. The Weeds Act 1959 lists a number of weeds which can be injurious to human and animal health. It places a duty on controllers of land to eliminate the following scheduled weeds from their land to prevent seeds contaminating their neighbour's land:*

- *Spear thistle;*
- *Creeping or field thistle;*
- *Curled dock;*
- *Broad leaf dock; and*
- *Common ragwort.*

*The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 specifies control of certain plants such as giant hogweed or Japanese knotweed. The Ragwort Act 2003 and associated code of practice gives further information on treating the growth of this weed.*

### **Serviceability**

*Weeds can cause structural damage to the highway, disrupt drainage, obstruct pedestrians and appear unsightly.*

### **Sustainability**

*The following legislation controls the use of herbicides:*

- *Food and Environment Protection Act 1985*
- *Control of Pesticide Regulations 1986*
- *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974*
- *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988.*

### **Standards**

*All weed spraying should be carried out using approved pesticides all in accordance with the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. For all highway operations, a non-residual contact herbicide must be used, and currently the only weed killer which conforms to the Health and Safety Commission's Code of Practice and with the Environment Agency's requirements is glyphosate.*

*With the focus that the Council has and the requests that we receive to maintain the Public Rights of Way Network we have no choice other than to continue with glyphosate for the foreseeable future however please be assured that the Council keeps abreast of new developments by exploring and evaluating the use of new chemicals and techniques for weed control.*

*You may be aware that in several areas, in response to concerns raised by councillors and members of the public we are trialling alternative treatment regimes for grass verges to try to promote biodiversity, support rare plants which grown in Essex whilst maintaining safety for all road users.'*

**4. By Councillor Harris of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport**

'Could you share the news on LED street lighting; how many have been converted in Essex, what percentage of the whole is completed and still yet to do, and an estimate of energy savings since the department started fitting the LEDs?'

**Reply**

'LED Lighting Phase 4 which started on the 24th of May has seen the replacement of approximately 800 old streetlights each week and to date has installed more than 10,000 lanterns. This is in addition to the circa 45,000 that we have already replaced in earlier phases of this programme.

Our target for Phase 4 this year is to complete 27,000 by end of March and the most recent update provided from officers shows that we are on track to achieve this on time and within allocated budgets.

In terms of percentages by the end of this financial year, we will have replaced more than 56% of the streetlights in Essex for which Essex Highways are responsible, leaving 44% to be replaced over the next 3 years resulting in all ECC streetlights being LED lights.

By the end of Phase 4 it is estimated that ECC would save more than 6,500 tonnes of carbon per annum, with financial savings projected over the next 25 years of more than £40m due to energy savings and because LED lanterns last around 20 years, 3 times the life of the older-style lamps.'

**5. By Councillor Harris of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**

'So many of my residents are complaining about:

- Inability to get a place on lists at their doctor's surgery
- Huge waits for getting a doctor's appointment with times of over an hour waiting on the phone.



Bearing in mind that Doctors' surgeries are "businesses" what steps can Essex County Council take to persuade Government to improve the access to doctor services in our localities?'

### Reply

'As Councillor Harris recognises, this is ultimately an issue for the NHS, but we work closely with local partners to ensure the best offering across the county. The challenge of obtaining GP appointments was raised by us at a recent meeting. GPs in the county advised that they were operating a triage system, where those seeking appointment on telephone were first referred to nursing staff in the surgeries to see if their issue could be dealt with in that way. Those requiring appointments were then prioritised.

As reported by BBC Essex, the latest data record 63% of patients in Essex were then being referred to GPs for appointments in August against a national average of 58%.

We will continue to work with local partners on this topic.'

### 6. By Councillor Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

'The Portfolio Holder provided this quote in a recent press release on promoting the Council Walking Strategy:

"Our Walking Strategy is a plan to get more of us walking on our network of footways and paths in our rural areas, towns, cities and neighbourhoods and is a key component of our safer, greener, healthier campaign to encourage Essex residents to travel sustainably. Not only does this improve the environment but it helps us achieve our strategic priority to improve the health of people in Essex."

Can the portfolio holder provide the total budget savings since 2010 with reference to annual routine maintenance of Public Rights of Way?'

### Reply

'The table below refers to the capital and revenue budgets which allocated for maintenance of the Public Rights of Way since 2015. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide budget detail back to 2010.

Latest Budget	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000
Capital	403	394	400	400	400	400	400
Revenue	953	806	820	839	893	857	903
Total	1,356	1,200	1,220	1,239	1,293	1,257	1,303

For more information, the PROW webpage gives details of current and past works on the network at the following link: <https://www.essexhighways.org/prow-our-works>

I would also like to highlight that officers and I are discussing how we proactively review PROW management to support the Walking Strategy to encourage more sustainable and active travel. It is our intention to develop a PROW hierarchy which facilitates targeted management of routes to use resources as efficiently as possible and officers have already started work on this.

Revenue works are on-going throughout the year and include:

- May to September: the summer cutting schedule cutting 2,823,231m<sup>2</sup> of Public Rights of Way (cubic cutting of up-growth and side growth); and
- November to February: the winter cutting schedule cutting 173,535m of Public Rights of Way (linear cutting of side-growth)

Throughout the year maintenance includes replacement of assets including steps, bridges and signposts. From April 282 jobs have been completed with an anticipated year end (March 2022) job completion of 1,050.'

#### **7. By Councillor Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**

'Can the Portfolio Holder provide a financial impact assessment with reference to thousands of Essex residents already classified as living in extreme poverty and of which have now suffered an £80 a month cut in Universal Credit'

#### **Reply**

*The reply has been provided by Councillor C Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs.*

'There were c. 79,800 Essex households receiving Universal Credit in May 2021 (latest published data), with an average weekly payment of £188.49. The ending of the temporary £20 uplift represents a reduction in their entitlement of 11%.

There is, however, a lot of variation. Around a quarter of households (c.20,200) receive less than £92 per week. For this group the uplift accounts for at least 21% of their entitlement. Another quarter receive over £253 per week, for whom the uplift accounts for at most 8% of their entitlement. Variation in UC entitlement stems from households being in differing circumstances.

By far the most exposed group are single people without children, who are not paying rent. This represents around 21,400 households in Essex (27% of the total caseload). The average entitlement among this group is £89.66 per week - the removal of the uplift represents a 22% reduction in their entitlement.

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There has been direct support for the most financially vulnerable throughout the pandemic, not least through the Essential Living Fund, with a total of around £2.5m. The majority of this has gone to families with children and single parents, through the provision of food / fuel cards and essential items such as bedding, replacement fridges and ovens.

In addition, an announcement has been made for further support for vulnerable households through local government through the £500m Household Support Fund; Essex will receive £9.437m to support us through to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, of which at least 50% is to support family households. This will help us to continue to support the most financially vulnerable with essential household costs such as food and essentials linked to energy and water e.g. sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler repair.'

## **8. By Councillor Scordis of the Leader of the Council**

'What level of funding are we expecting from the government from the "Levelling-up fund" and which areas in Essex are likely to benefit from this?'

### **Reply**

*The reply has been provided by Councillor McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance*

'In March 2021 the Government announced its Levelling Up Fund (LUF), a £4.8bn fund to support places in greatest need across the country. The Fund is set to be spent over the next three to four years, with up to £20m available per constituency. City, districts and boroughs are able to submit one bid per MP constituency over the four-year funding period.

The LUF is a competitive process, and we expect that not all districts across the country will be able to secure funding. To inform the assessment of bids against levelling up priorities, districts have been assigned priority bands by central Government. In Essex, Harlow and Tendring are in the highest priority band, with Braintree, Castle Point, Colchester, Maldon in Band 2. The remaining districts and boroughs are in Band 3.

As a transport authority, Essex County Council will also be able to submit one (transport only) bid within the Levelling Up Fund spending period, and officers are currently looking at how best to prioritise this bid, taking into account the Government's funding parameters.

There has so far been one Levelling Up Fund bidding round, with ECC working with our partners on submissions made for Clacton and Harlow town centres in June of this year. Maldon District Council also submitted a bid – we are currently awaiting the Government's response. We expect to hear more details about how future

bidding rounds of the Levelling Up Fund may work, as part of the Levelling Up White Paper, due later this calendar year.

In June ECC also submitted a £6m funding bid for the Government's Community Renewal Fund, which is a pilot for the planned £1.5bn a year UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Our bid aimed at boosting skills provision, local business support, communities and place, and access to employment. Again, we await the response from Government, as well as details of the Shared Prosperity Fund, which we expect will be included in the white paper.

ECC has a strong track record of working with partners to bid for and secure external funding to support regeneration, growth and infrastructure investment. Most recently this includes:

- £0.5bn secured from the Government via Housing Infrastructure Fund, to support major growth in Chelmsford, Colchester and Harlow
- £42m funding secured in the last year for Harlow and Colchester Town Centre regeneration via the Towns Fund;
- £27m secured from the Getting Building Fund including support for Market & Commercial Space in Jaywick, Swan Modular Housing and Harlow Library refurbishment.
- Community Renewal Fund bids focussing on Tendring and Harlow that would be worth £6m (£3m per place)
- Levelling Up Fund round 1 bids for Harlow and Clacton-on-Sea that would be worth £40m (£20m per place).

Levelling up is a key priority for ECC, and the Levelling Up Fund could make a real difference for our communities. We await the Government's Levelling Up White Paper with interest.'

## **9. By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**

'Does the Cabinet Member agree that:

- The impact of the government's proposed reforms for adult social care, including a cap on care and the means-test threshold, whilst protecting people from catastrophic care costs, will not address existing challenges within social care. These include eligibility for local authority services - with 58% of requests in county areas last year resulting in no formal care being given to individuals requesting social care services?
- The government's commitment to move towards a 'fair rate for care' - a closer equalisation of fees between local authority rates and those of self-funders, will only increase current financial pressures in the Essex care market?

- The government has underestimated the costs of implementing this part of the reform - and unless it is fully funded, will cause destabilisation in the care market and undermine the economic viability of care providers?’

### **Reply**

‘We still await the full detail of the Government’s proposed changes to adult social care charging from October 2023. A consultation is expected to be launched in October 2021 and a white paper on these and further reforms is expected to be published later this year. We welcome the commitment of the Government to tackle funding challenges in adult social care and to protect individuals from unlimited costs. However, as you point out, there are a number of different dimensions that need to be considered in the round to ensure that adult social care is sustainably funded and that the care sector is properly supported and funded. There are also challenges that need to be planned for in terms of implementing such reforms. We hope this is the start, rather than the end, of the proposed reforms. The Council will be engaging with the consultation process once it is published, and I would welcome the opportunity to seek input from the People and Families Scrutiny Committee to get cross-party input to the Council’s response. I will also bring through Cabinet at the appropriate time any formal decisions that are required for the Council to implement the reforms.

Finally, the concerns of Essex County Council are fully reflected in the motion we are bringing to this council meeting.’

### **10. By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Early Years**

‘NHS Digital have published a report which shows an alarming rise in the number of children and young adults suffering from mental health issues including isolation, eating disorders, sleep deprivation, anxiety, depression and loneliness. A significantly higher number of girls than boys aged 11 to 16 have seen their mental health deteriorate since 2017. The Liberal Democrat Group has consistently raised concerns over mental health issues experienced by young people in Essex and in particular the high suicide rates which at last have been acknowledged. Can the Cabinet Member give details of the actions taken by this Council to address this worrying trend?’

### **Reply**

*The reply has been provided by Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care*

‘Thank you for this question. You are right to point to a rise that is certainly of concern; Essex County Council takes the mental health and emotional wellbeing of our children and young people incredibly seriously. We are well aware of the

pressures that NHS colleagues are facing, and it is critical that we approach this on a whole-system basis.

We work in very close partnership with our colleagues in the health system, mental health trusts, providers and community and voluntary sector to ensure that we can support children and their families as early as possible and deliver the support that they need to be resilient, recover from episodes of mental ill health and sustain this recovery.

Essex County Council commissions a range of support for children, young people and families across a broad spectrum of need. Our early help offer includes the Family Innovation Fund (FIF), which provides emotional wellbeing support in both individual and group settings for the whole family. This has been enhanced with the 'FIF-Xtra' service, which was put in place in the very early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver virtual support. Both of these services can be accessed via an easy self-referral mechanism by families who are not being supported by statutory services and have little or no waiting list.

In terms of support for a higher level of need, the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS) delivers support to children and young people who are facing a range of mental health difficulties, including low mood, anxiety, obsessional thoughts, eating difficulties, trauma and loss and behavioural and emotional difficulties. The service offers a variety of both individual and group talking therapies. This service is jointly commissioned by Southend, Essex and Thurrock Local Authorities and the seven CCGs, ensuring that there is a consistent service across the County, with a single point of access. The EWMHS service has also launched a dedicated Instagram account which has a growing number of young people accessing this for support.

In addition to the collaboratively commissioned EWMHS service, the following are examples of a growing number of other recommended services which are now available to children and young people at no cost.

- *Togetherall*, an online community for young people aged 16-18 with a forum offering support from trained professionals 24 hours a day
- *Milife*, which is an online service designed by young people from Essex with useful information and links to other organisations working with young people
- *Kooth*, which is an online mental health service for children and young people offering counselling and emotional wellbeing support. We know that 4,536 have registered this year and there have been 39,000 logins
- *SilverCloud* which is an evidence based on digital therapy platform

It is also crucial to highlight the vital role that our schools and settings play in supporting children's emotional health and wellbeing. Essex County Council's Educational Psychology Service and Social, Emotional and Mental Health team play an important role in supporting schools in the development of whole school approaches to promote strong emotional wellbeing and mental health, with a

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particular emphasis on developing greater mental health awareness and trauma informed environments. This is further backed up by an ever-growing number of Mental Health Support Teams, which are becoming operational across all 4 quadrants. These Teams deliver vital early help by supporting lower-level emotional wellbeing and mental health to children and young people in schools and colleges. With regard to the issue of suicide, we have been working closely with colleagues on the Health and Wellbeing Board. Following a recent review of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Suicide Prevention Board, we have moved to taking an all-aged approach to suicide prevention which will be reflected within the up-dated strategy and associated action plan. In addition, I am aware that Tendring District Council recently had an all-member suicide training event which was deemed to be very worthwhile and could be repeated elsewhere.

As we move forward, we continue to work closely with partners across the system, and most especially with children, young people and their families to understand their needs and challenges to ensure that the support we commission and provide is proactive and recovery focused so that children and young people can have the best mental health outcomes possible.'

**11. By Councillor King of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport**

'Essex residents back the aims of ECC's Safer, Greener, Healthier Active Travel campaign with almost three quarters (74%) supporting prioritising and increasing space for walking whilst 66% support more space for cycling, as essential for physical and mental health, for tackling emissions and climate change.

Will the Cabinet Member:

- (1) confirm that ECC will meet any funding shortfall for these SGH Active Travel schemes,
- (2) set out his plans to increase funding for cycling and pedestrian improvements, including school streets,
- (3) quantify how much funding for the next and future years this will be in total,
- (4) how much this will be per head of Essex's population and
- (5) how this compares with leading Local Authorities in the UK.'

**Reply**

'It is clear from the research that officers undertook for the most recent Active Travel schemes that residents and councillors across Essex want more ways to travel sustainably either using public transport, walking or cycling. With regards to the specific points raised:

- (1) Essex Highways along with every other directorate at ECC has to operate within agreed budgets and while we can reprioritise our planned spending to support initiatives I cannot commit the council to meeting *any* funding shortfall for these schemes at this stage. However we will look at each project and any shortfalls based on their individual merits to identify where it might be possible to

meet funding gaps;

(2) With regards to the plans to increase funding for cycling and pedestrian improvements and school streets the Active Travel Team have started work on the next round of Active Travel Funding (AFTs) funded by the Department for Transport.

ECC has put forward options funding focusing on the network planning required to inform prioritisation of future walking & cycling schemes, known as Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) or similar local strategies.

LCWIPs help ensure that schemes are integral to, and integrated with, long term investment plans and are driven by local demand for cycling and walking infrastructure. Developing plans to prioritise cycle and walking investment over a longer 10-year period will be a key component of attracting funding in subsequent years and will influence the allocation of active travel funding in the Government's next Spending Review. It is also expected to significantly improve district access to future funding opportunities.

Finally, we intend to put forward a bid to be part of a pilot to provide cycling and walking interventions as part of a social prescribing offer based on having seen the success of the Essex Pedal Power bike loan project in Clacton and Jaywick Sands. Points (3) to (5) are difficult to answer because much of the funding in the future is external funding which we cannot guarantee at this stage although we will be putting forward ambitious plans which we hope meet residents' aspirations around active travel and DfT's ambition around innovative schemes. Within Essex, there is huge diversity in terms of the appetite for walking and cycling and the different stages that districts are in terms of being able to successfully bid for funding and so to compare Essex to other areas is not a helpful comparison.'

## **12. By Councillor King of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance**

'Onside and their many patrons work at the heart of disadvantaged communities creating state of the art youth centres. Government has helped with funding and support recognising their work has been transformational and never more needed than now, given the pandemic's impact on mental health, confidence and sense of isolation. They and many other Local Authorities recognise that Youth Zones are a force for good. They help young people grow and reach their potential. They strengthen local communities by bringing young people together and supporting them, increasing confidence, friendships, skills and reducing isolation.

Will the Cabinet Member:

- (1) update Members on her visits to Youth Zones,
- (2) acknowledge that they can transform the lives of young people,
- (3) confirm they have been successfully integrated into other local authority's youth provision,



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- (4) set out her plans to welcome Onside and Government's support and funding for Youth Zones and
- (5) confirm a willingness to work with Colchester Borough Council to deliver together a Colchester Youth Zone.'

### **Reply**

'I enjoyed my visit the Youth Zone in Barking recently, where I had a chance to see first-hand the great facilities the centre provides to young people in the area. Inner city areas/London boroughs are well suited to this approach, due to the smaller locality and geography. In Barking, the Youth Zone model replaced the core of the Council's youth service.

Our priority here in Essex is to focus resources on targeted youth work and interventions in local settings, which includes both urban and rural. As you will appreciate, our county is vast in both size and geography, with varied communities and need across the county. Some of the most vulnerable young people who need support would not necessarily attend, or be able to attend, a Centre such as a Youth Zone, which is why we are focussing our investments and efforts on reaching out to them in their own environment.

We would of course work with any developed Youth Zone, however our investment both financially and in officer time is focused on delivering the style of local provision our young people have told us they want. This includes effectively utilising online and detached youth work, working directly in community settings to ensure a local offer is available across Essex.

We are incredibly proud of our Youth Services and our investment is focused on the continued development and growth of the Community Capacity Building Youth Work model that is a vibrant network of youth workers, community volunteers and local youth organisations who are working in partnership to meet the needs of young people across our county.

We are in discussions with Colchester Borough Council on youth provision and how we can work more closely together and these have been positive and are ongoing.'

### **13. By Councillor Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport**

'Last autumn/winter we had some days with exceptional amounts of rainfall which the gullies and drains just couldn't cope with. This resulted in a number of roads, properties and subways across Essex being flooded, including many in my division.

What lessons has this council learnt and what actions have been taken to alleviate any such problems for our residents this autumn/winter?

Is there productive partnership work being carried out with other agencies to ensure that all gullies and drains are regularly cleared and fit for purpose?’

### **Reply**

‘Exceptional rainfall is becoming a common occurrence in Essex, flooding our roads, causing damage to property, inconveniencing residents and eroding soil. In terms of lessons learned, following the elections in May 2021, flooding was moved from the Climate Action portfolio into the Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport portfolio, recognising the importance of flooding to our networks and to support working across the council to try to address these challenges in new ways. ECC is looking to fundamentally change the way we manage flooding, as our drains and gullies (regardless of their condition) will struggle to cope with the heavy rainfall that we have seen. A recent example is the Make Rain Happy project delivered in partnership with Anglian Water and residents in Castle Point to use a nature-based solution to retain water within the land. ECC also actively promotes the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in the Essex Design Guide.

We have a capital funded Surface Water Alleviation Budget of £2.5m that is available to fund drainage improvements across the county, available on an annual basis which will support schemes which will tackle flooding and/or capacity issues. Schemes put forward are evaluated and scored and then put into a programme for each year.

In terms of partnership work, ECC is a member of the Essex Flood Partnership Board, Essex Coastal Forum, ECC & Northumbrian Water Group / Essex Suffolk Water Forum, Thames Estuary 2100 Strategic Programme Board, and the Regional Flood & Coastal Committees for the Anglian and Thames areas where partners from a range of agencies come together.’

#### **14. By Councillor Thorogood of the Leader of the Council**

‘The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, earlier this year called on the Government to stop permitting the building of ‘archaic’ polluting waste incinerators as he outlined his opposition to a proposed incinerator in Bexley, which is set to raise harmful NOx pollution levels.

Mr Khan strongly believes that burning waste in incinerators worsens London’s already toxic air quality and hinders boroughs from reaching recycling and waste reduction targets.

He said the focus must be on reducing waste, particularly plastic, and protecting residents from pollution.

Mr Khan said: ‘London’s air is a toxic air health crisis and the last thing we need, in our modern green global city is another harmful waste-burning incinerator polluting

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our city. Emissions from incinerators are bad for our health, bad for our environment and bad for our planet. Instead of granting permission for an unnecessary new incinerator that will raise pollution levels in the boroughs of Bexley and Havering, the Government should focus on boosting recycling rates, reducing the scourge of plastic waste and tackling our lethal air. I am urging ministers to reject this proposal.'

Mr Khan said, and I stress, a new waste incinerator is "the last thing" that London needs.

Do you agree with me that the planned Rivenhall Airfield waste incinerator that will be capable of burning 600,000 tonnes of waste (some from outside of the county of Essex and all transported to the site by road) and will emit 600,000 tonnes of Co2 per year is the last thing that Essex needs?'

### **Reply**

'The planned facility in Rivenhall is not an Essex County Council proposal. It has planning permission, originally granted by the Secretary of State in 2010, and later implemented in 2016. The Environment Agency has granted an Environmental Permit that regulates emissions. Among the reasons why the EA granted the permit, it said: "Based on our detailed examination of air dispersion modelling, we believe the design changes will not result in any significant change to current local air quality and that no human health thresholds will be exceeded."

### **15. By Councillor Smith of the Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs**

'How much will the increase in employers National Insurance contributions cost Essex County Council during the 2022/23 financial year?'

### **Reply**

'As an employer, we face additional employer's national insurance contributions of £1.9m from 2022/23 as a result of the new levy. As published in "Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care" on 7 September, government has indicated it will recompense public bodies for direct employer costs, so we do not expect a direct cost increase as an employer. The plan states "The estimated public sector employer contributions to the Levy are subtracted, as the Government intends to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England at the Spending Review for the increased cost of the Levy". We have yet to see the mechanism for recompense but anticipate that it will form part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on 27 October, or the Local Government Financial Settlement in December.

There is the potential cost escalation due to national insurance rises in our supply chains, most significantly with social care providers. We have asked government,

through our lobbying on the CSR, to consider a mechanism to support the additional cost burden, not simply as an employer, but also as a contractor.'

**16. By Councillor Smith of the Leader of the Council**

'Basildon Borough Council has made it clear in both a recent EGM and in various correspondences, that the meeting to make a determination on the plans to build an incinerator in the Burnt Mills area of Basildon, should be held in the main hall of the Sporting Village of Basildon. However, Essex County Council has now refused this request.

Why won't the Leader allow Basildon residents to speak in person against this application?'

**Reply**

'I am not standing in the way of residents speaking against this application and I am surprised that you are unaware that it is not in my power to allow or disallow residents to do so. Basildon Borough Council did request that the Development and Regulation Committee hold the meeting in question in Basildon, however this committee is separate to my authority as Leader of the Council, and it is not in my gift to grant that request. Councillor Guglielmi, as Chairman of the Committee, did respond to the request from Councillor Baggott and assured him that residents who cannot attend County Hall will be able to stream the meeting online. He also said that he would consider a review of the protocol around the meeting if the strength of response to public consultation required it.'

**17. By Councillor Cory of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport**

'Due to the worsening weather conditions due to climate change, it is becoming apparent that our network of highways surface water drainage is outdated and inadequate. With intense rainfall, the drains simply cannot cope; residents are facing flooding of their properties and roads and footpaths become impassable. The current method of squirting the drains is not a viable future strategy. What can ECC do in the short term to protect properties and road users, and what solutions are being developed for the longer term?'

**Reply**

'Essex Highways operates a risk-based approach to cleansing on our priority road network which has been possible after analysis of the volume of detritus collected from each gully over a number of years. A more traditional cyclical based approach is applied to the local roads and this will continue until sufficient data is available to extend the risk-based approach into local roads. Typically, we are able to cleanse in the region of a third of our gullies across the county each year.'

In addition to this the service employs three high pressure jetting units across the county all year to help prevent or relieve flooding on the network. This defect led work can come from a range of places including gully crew reports, inspections, ad-hoc reports, weather related incidents and enquiries.

It should be noted that many of the highways drain or flow into systems or ditches which are managed by other agencies who would have their own separate maintenance regimes.

In terms of short-term solutions, we have a capital funded Surface Water Alleviation Budget that is available to fund drainage improvements across the county which is available on an annual basis. Now and in the longer term we also have the Sustainable Drainage Systems Guide (SUDS) as part of the Essex Design Guide, encouraging developers to nature-based solutions to manage flooding.'

**18. By Councillor Cory of the Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning**

'The infamous Ipswich Road Roadworks are finally finished after considerable delay and tremendous upheaval for Colchester residents, especially local businesses who have struggled greatly. Will the portfolio holder to carry out a member-led inquiry (with no external costs), to understand the procurement and contract issues, alongside the procedural failures which led to such oversight and delay?'

**Reply**

'I fully appreciate the frustrations of residents and businesses who have had to endure a significant disruption during these works. As you know, the A133 is a major east to west route in Colchester, running from Lexden in the west along Colne Bank Avenue and Cowdray Avenue to the junction with Ipswich Road, and then along St Andrew's Avenue to the Greenstead roundabout. The scheme objective was to reduce congestion and improve traffic flows on a stretch of the A133 in Colchester between the junction of Ipswich Road and Harwich Road, providing the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the significant housing growth that is planned for Colchester.

With regard to your suggestion that a member-led inquiry should be carried out in relation to the project delays and procurement, I do not believe that this is necessary. The nature of the delays are already fully understood, and the possibility of change occurring was always known to be likely given the complexity of the project. For the sake of clarity, please see below details of the various issues that impacted on the delivery of this scheme:

- **Additional unforeseen works to the Waitrose retaining wall:** This included additional sheet piling to maintain the structural integrity of the highway as the junction was widened. The impact of the disruption on site

was mitigated by postponing the start of the works while additional design work was undertaken.

- **Statutory undertakers' apparatus:** Variations and complications with the diversion of the utilities on site (including a water main failure) required extensive additional works to be undertaken to protect regional and locally significant services. These works had to be undertaken with extreme care so as not to cut off supplies to the town and wider area. Until the diversionary work was completed it was not possible to commence with the civil engineering works for the roundabouts and road widening.
- **Covid 19:** The pandemic had a significant impact on the scheme, resulting in a shutdown and working restrictions over a considerable period of the project.
- **Unforeseen bridge damage:** On uncovering the historic foundations of the A133 Cowdray Avenue bridge, cracks and undermining of the bridge abutment and foundations were discovered. A decision was made on the basis of safety (to both the highway and railway network) and even greater disruption to the network if the works were left to a later date, to add these additional works into the scope of the project. This added approximately six months to the project duration.

I should advise that throughout the duration of the scheme, Essex County Council has employed a full project team to administer the contract in line with best practice to ensure that any changes were mitigated wherever possible and subsequently resolved in line with the contract. The project was competitively tendered in line with public procurement guidelines and utilised the NEC3 Engineering and Construction Contract – Option C, for contract administration. This form of contract is recognised as stimulating good project management, used internationally, and reflects best practice for contract administration in infrastructure and highway project management. All matters of programme, cost and changes to scope were administered in line with the contract.

In conclusion, I do not consider it sensible or necessary to carry out a member-led inquiry as we already understand the reasons for delays to the scheme and it is clear they were not related to any issues with procurement, the contract, or its management.'

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# Extraordinary Meeting of Council

## **Agenda item 2      Appointment of Honorary Aldermen**

In addition to those persons listed in the report it is recommended that Mr John Aldridge be appointed an Honorary Alderman of the County of Essex.