



Essex County Council

Cabinet

10:15	Tuesday, 19 April 2022	Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
--------------	-----------------------------------	---

For information about the meeting please ask for:

Emma Tombs, Democratic Services Manager

Telephone: 033303 22709

Email: democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

Essex County Council and Committees Information

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to any items on the agenda unless the Committee has resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting as a result of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

ECC Guest Wifi

For members of the public, you can now access free wifi in County Hall.

- Please log in to 'ECC Guest'
- Follow the instructions on your web browser

Attendance at meetings

Most meetings are held at County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1LX. A map and directions to County Hall can be found on our website.

Access to the meeting and reasonable adjustments

County Hall is accessible via ramped access to the building for people with physical disabilities. The Council Chamber is accessible by lift located on the first and second floors of County Hall.

Induction loop facilities are available in most Meeting Rooms. Specialist headsets are available from Reception.

Accessing Documents

If you have a need for documents in, large print, Braille, on disk or in alternative languages and easy read please contact the Democratic Services Officer before the

meeting takes place. For further information about how you can access this meeting, contact the Democratic Services Officer.

The agenda is also available on the Essex County Council website, www.essex.gov.uk. From the Home Page, click on 'Running the council', then on 'How decisions are made', then 'council meetings calendar'. Finally, select the relevant committee from the calendar of meetings.

Livestreaming of meetings

In the interests of improving access to the Council's meetings, most meetings will be livestreamed on the [ECC Democracy - YouTube Channel](#). Recordings of the meetings once they have finished are also available on the Channel.

Should you wish to record the meeting, please contact the officer shown on the agenda front page.

Pages

*

Meeting Arrangements

In accordance with paragraph 14.7 of the Council's Constitution, the Leader has agreed that all members may take part in the meeting and vote if they are present via Zoom. The link to the Zoom meeting has been sent to members separately. Members of the public may watch on YouTube and there will of course be the normal public access to the meeting room in County Hall, from which any member of the public may observe the meeting and make representations.

1	Membership, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest	6 - 6
2	Minutes: 15 March 2022	7 - 13

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 or question shall 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 Chelmsford North East Bypass (FP/977/02/21) 14 - 33

The Equality Impact Assessment is available [online](#) - please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting Documents

5 Adoption of the new plan for libraries 'Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026' (FP/284/01/22) 34 - 133

The Equality Impact Assessment is available [online](#) - please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting Documents

6 Essex Renewal Fund (FP/245/12/21) 134 - 147

The Equality Impact Assessment is available [online](#) - please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting Documents

7 Procurement of contract(s) for bio-waste treatment, transfer and transport services (FP/230/11/21) 148 - 159

The Equality Impact Assessment is available [online](#) - please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting Documents

8 Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities Contracts 2023-2028 (FP/339/03/22) 160 - 205

The Equality Impact Assessment is available [online](#) - please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting Documents

9 Procurement of Additional Reablement and Bridging 206 - 213
Services Capacity (FP/327/03/22)

The Equality Impact Assessment is available [online](#) -
please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting
Documents

10 Colchester Rapid Transport System, 'Section A' - 214 - 221
Decision to Publish Tender for Main Works Contract
(FP/280/01/22)

The Equality Impact Assessment is available [online](#) -
please scroll to bottom of page, below Meeting
Documents

11 Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet 222 - 224
Members (FP/336/03/22)

12 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Cabinet will take
place at 10.00am on Tuesday 24 May 2022 at County
Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH.

13 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.**

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	Adult Social Care and Health
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 on Tuesday 15 March 2022

Present:

Councillor	Cabinet Member Responsibility
Councillor K Bentley	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
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 J Spence	Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor L Wagland	Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning
Councillor C Whitbread	Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs
Councillor L Scott	Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport (via Zoom)
Councillor McKinlay	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance (via Zoom)

Councillors M Mackrory, D King, I Henderson, and M Platt were also present. Councillor P Schwier attended remotely, 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 apologies for absence from Councillor Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Life-Long Learning and Employability.
3. In relation to agenda item no. 4 (Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package: Preferred Option for the junction improvement) Councillors Bentley and Butland declared code interests as Chairman and Board member respectively of Transport East and participated in full in the consideration of that item. In relation to agenda item no. 6 (Freeport East – Submission of the Full Business Case to HM Government) Councillor Henderson declared a code interest as a member of Tendring District Council's Freeport working party and participated in full in the consideration of the item.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2022 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions from the public

There were no questions from members of the public.

4. Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package: Preferred Option for the junction improvement (FP/274/01/22)

The Cabinet received a report containing matters related to the Army and Navy sustainable transport package: preferred option for the junction improvement for their consideration and approval.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning responded to a question from Councillor Mackrory in respect of the arrangements for utilising Community Infrastructure Levy monies.

Resolved:

1. Agreed that the Hamburger Roundabout option is taken forward as the preferred option for the junction improvements.
2. Agreed that the Director, Highways and Transportation, in consultation with the S151 Officer, should develop an Outline Business Case for this option and submit it to the Cabinet Member to approve for submission to the Department for Transport (DfT) for funding from Major Road Network (MRN) fund.

5. Essex Housing - Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 (FP/156/09/21)

The Cabinet received a report containing matters related to the Essex Housing – annual delivery plan 2022/23 for their consideration and approval.

The Cabinet Members for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning, and Adult Social Care and Health responded to a question from Councillor Henderson on the influence the Council would have to ensure specified services were provided in specialist housing units. The Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning would also provide a written response to Councillor Henderson in relation to the target numbers for the provision of different types of housing unit.

Resolved:

1. Agreed the Essex Housing Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 contained in the Confidential Appendix to the agenda report.
2. Noted that further formal decisions will need to be taken for each site for development, financing, and land disposal to Essex Housing Development LLP for 2022/23 as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the agenda report.

6. Freeport East – Submission of Full Business Case to HM Government (FP/282/01/21)

The Cabinet received a report containing matters related to Freeport East – submission of full business case to HM Government for their consideration and approval.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning responded to questions from Councillors Henderson and King in relation to:

- How the current freeports differed from those seen in the 1980s;
- The governance of the company limited by guarantee and its voting arrangements;
- The allocation of funds from the three ‘pots’ containing retained business rates monies and the priority to be given to training and skills programmes;
- The level of confidence that the identified significant funding gap could be met;
- Analysis into whether the economic case for freeports had been established.

Resolved:

1. Agreed that the Leader of the Council can sign a letter of support to accompany the Final Business Case (“Final Business Case”) for Freeport East to HM Government, providing provisional support for the Freeport East programme, making it clear that our support is subject to it providing benefits to Essex.
2. Agreed that the County Council is in principle prepared to participate in a company limited by guarantee.
3. Agreed that the Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning may make the final decision on participation in the Company as a member or by the appointment of a director or both, if she is satisfied that:
 - (a) Participating in the Company does not expose us to disproportionate risk of cost or to the council’s reputation.
 - (b) The Company has a governance model which is considered likely to deliver economic benefits to Essex by the distribution of income.
 - (c) The Freeport is likely to result in the delivery of the green energy hub at Bathside Bay.

7. Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme (FP/226/11/21)

Cabinet received a report containing matters related to the Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme for their consideration and approval.

The Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport responded to questions from Councillors Mackrory, Henderson and King in relation to:

- The importance of the reliability of buses when seeking to encourage usage;
- Contingencies should funding from central Government not be received;
- The ability to strengthen commitments from bus operators around environmental considerations and whether this could include contractual stipulations;
- The level of government funding necessary to complete the projects set out in Appendix A of the report;
- Whether the number of passengers currently seen was felt to be viable.

Resolved:

Agreed that the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme at Appendix A is made and takes effect from 31 March 2022.

8. Better Care Fund Plan and arrangements – 2022/23 (FP/286/01/22)

Cabinet received a report containing matters related to the Better Care Fund Plan and arrangements for their consideration and approval.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health took the opportunity to advise those present that it was World Social Work Day, and noted his thanks and appreciation to all involved in this vital work.

Resolved:

1. Agreed that the BCF Plan for Essex, approved by NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) on 12 January 2022 for the financial year 2021/22, continues to be implemented in the financial year until new arrangements are able to be agreed following the publication of BCF Policy Framework for 2022/22.
2. Agreed to vary the six section 75 agreements relating to the BCF entered into by the Council with the five Essex Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure that the CCGs' funding commitments to the BCF Pooled Fund continues at the same level as approved by NHSEI for the financial year 2021/22 into the financial year 2022/23 and until such time as NHSEI publishes the 2022/23 BCF allocations for Essex.
3. Agreed that the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health is Authorised to agree subsequent variations to the six BCF section 75 agreements if required to reflect the BCF Policy Framework for 2022/23.
4. Agreed that the Executive Director for Adult Social Care is authorised to Agree the terms of the deeds of variation required to vary the six BCF section 75 agreements pursuant to paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 above.

9. Procurement of accommodation-based support for people with mental health needs (FP/285/01/22)

Cabinet received a report containing matters related to the procurement of accommodation-based support for people with mental health needs for their consideration and approval.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health responded to a question from Councillor King regarding the pace of change and the consistency of care that could be expected by those using the service during that period.

Resolved:

1. Agreed to undertake a competitive procurement process using the open procedure to procure providers of Mental Health Supported Accommodation Services in four lots across North-East and West Essex as follows and as set out in paragraph 3.27 of the report. Volumes have been determined via historical referral data as per paragraph 3.28:
 - Intensive Assessment Beds (6 units in North-East Essex)
 - Complex needs (six units in North-East Essex and six in West Essex)
 - Medium and Low North-East Essex (70 units) Medium and Low West Essex (45 units)
2. Agreed that the new contracts will commence in October 2022 with a duration of five years within a budget envelope of £17.4m split between ECC and Health Partners.
3. Agreed to award a 12-month contract starting on 1 October 2022 to existing providers in Mid and South Essex for new placements whilst further work is undertaken to move towards extending the new model across Mid and South Essex.
4. Agreed that the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Executive Director for Adult Social Care, may award the contracts following completion of the competitive process once the necessary funding is in place.
5. Agreed to enter into s75 Agreements with Clinical Commissioning Groups or, once they are established, Integrated Care Boards, to delegate the necessary health functions to the Council for the purposes of commissioning Mental Health Supported Accommodation services.

10. Procurement of a new Integrated Community Equipment Service contract for 2023-2028 (FP/237/11/21)

Cabinet received a report containing matters related to the procurement of a new integrated community equipment service contract for 2023-2028 for their consideration and approval.

Resolved:

1. Agreed that the community equipment contract between the Council and Essex Cares Limited will terminate on the contract expiry date of 31 March 2023.
2. Agreed to terminate the contract between the Council and The Mayor and Burgess of the London Borough of Croydon known as The Integrated Procurement Hub (Croydon) for the provision of community equipment with effect from 31 March 2023.
3. Agreed to procure a contract for the Council, Thurrock Council, Castle Point and Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group, Basildon and Brentwood Clinical Commissioning Group, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, Essex Partnership University Trust, Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Mid Essex Hospital Trust and East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust for the provision of an Integrated Community Equipment Service for Essex residents, to support them to live safely and/or independently in the community, for a five year contract term commencing in April 2023, with an option to extend for up to a further two years.
4. Agreed that the new contract will have an expected expenditure of up to £83m over the five-year contract period (£57m for the Council and £26m for the Health and Local Authority Partners), based on forecast spend at current activity levels, which will be managed by the Council under a pooled fund arrangement with additional contributions from the partners if there is any over-spend.
5. Agreed that the contract will be procured using the competitive procedure with negotiation as outlined in section 3 of this report.
6. Agreed that the services will be procured using an evaluation model based on 30% price, 50% quality and 20% social value and climate action.
7. Agreed to purchase up to a maximum of £1.1m of equipment owned by Essex Cares Limited which can be reused at the expiry of the current contract, which will be purchased by the successful bidder if they are not the incumbent.
8. Agreed to enter into a section 75/101 partnership agreement with Thurrock Council, Castle Point and Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group, Basildon and Brentwood Clinical Commissioning Group, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, Essex Partnership University Trust, Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Mid Essex Hospital Trust and East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 and section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 (respectively) under which the Council

procures and purchases and manages the community equipment services and manages a pooled fund on behalf of such partners.

9. Agreed that the Executive Director, Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, is authorised to agree the detailed evaluation model for the procurement.
10. Agreed that the Executive Director, Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, is authorised to approve the final terms of the partnership agreement and service contract.
11. Agreed that the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care is authorised to award the contract to the successful bidder following completion of the procurement process.

11. Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members (FP/292/02/22)

The report was noted.

12. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Cabinet would take place on Tuesday 19 April 2022, at County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH.

13. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

14. Confidential Appendix: Essex Housing Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 (FP/156/09/21) (Public and press excluded)

The confidential appendix to report FP/156/09/21, to which minute 5, above, refers was agreed.

15. Confidential Appendix: Procurement of a new Integrated Community Equipment Service contract for 2023-2028 (FP/237/11/21) (Public and press excluded)

The confidential appendix to report FP/237/11/21, to which minute 10, above, refers was agreed.

16. Urgent exempt business (Public and press excluded)

There was no urgent exempt business.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.45am.

Forward Plan reference number: FP/977/02/21

Report title: Chelmsford North East Bypass	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor Lesley Wagland, Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning	
Date: 19 April 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Paul Crick Director, Performance, Investment and Delivery Paul.crick@essex.gov.uk or Mark Eves, Senior Project Sponsor mark.eves2@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: Broomfield and Writtle, Chelmer and Springfield	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex has the aim of creating a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy, a high quality environment and a good place for children and families to grow. The Chelmsford North East Bypass is part of creating a sustainable transport corridor, which would enable those who use it to access greater opportunities for all areas of their life. It is a critical piece of infrastructure to unlock potential for growth not only for the economy but also for the communities it serves, and as such will create great benefit to all projects in infrastructure and sustainable transport in central Essex, connecting regions of the county in a way that serves residents while taking into consideration our commitment to the climate.
- 1.2 Everyone's Essex includes a commitment to deliver and maintain high quality infrastructure to support a growing economy and the delivery of new housing and communities.
- 1.3 The proposed Chelmsford North East Bypass (CNEB) will play a key role in unlocking land to provide over 14,100 new homes, as well as business and commercial space, as part of the new Chelmsford Garden Community.
- 1.4 The North East Bypass will relieve congestion on local roads and enable existing routes into Chelmsford city centre, such as Broomfield Road and Essex Regiment Way to become Sustainable Transport Corridors (STC), providing easier, more reliable and resilient journeys in the region. Through enhanced cycle links between Deres Bridge Roundabout and Chatham Green Roundabout and the provision of new crossing facilities, cyclists and pedestrians will be able to safely access Braintree Road/ Essex Regiment Way which will become a STC. Similarly, road enhancements at Deres Bridge Roundabout will improve bus journey time reliability and improve access to Chelmer Valley Park and Ride. In this way, the bypass will continue to encourage transformational change to not only make sustainable modes a first choice for travel wherever possible, but also to ensure movement corridors work as hard as possible to bring communities together.

- 1.5 The road will support the commitments to climate action in Everyone's Essex by reducing traffic congestion on local roads and throughout Chelmsford City Centre, thereby reducing carbon emissions in sensitive locations. It will also facilitate a direct link to Beaulieu Park Station which will be situated on the Great Eastern Mainline (GEML) between Chelmsford and Hatfield Peverel stations. As well as providing easy access to public transport for residents of the Beaulieu Park development the bypass and new railway station will assist in relieving overcrowding at Chelmsford railway station and act as a transport interchange to encourage sustainable travel by bus, cycle, electric vehicles and on foot.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the Council procures works to provide the conveyor bridge using the Eastern Highways Alliance Framework to facilitate construction of the main bypass works.
- 2.2 To agree that Director for Highways and Transportation may enter into a Compensation Agreement with Hanson Quarry Products Europe Ltd (HQPE) to allow them to carry out advanced works to facilitate construction of the main bypass works subject to him being satisfied that the agreement represents value for money.
- 2.3 Authorise the Director for Highways and Transformation to award a contract for the conveyor bridge enabling works project to a principal contractor and agree compensation for silt lagoon works to HQPE (subject to finalising a compensation agreement), after consulting the Leader of the Council.
- 2.3 To agree that land negotiations continue for the land required for the Chelmsford North East Bypass (CNEB) alongside preparations for Compulsory Purchase Order, if required.
- 2.4 Agree that if the Director for Highways and Transportation is unable to acquire the land shown in Appendix 2.1 by agreement on reasonable terms he may, after consulting the Leader of the Council and the Director, Legal and Assurance, authorise:
- a) the making of one or more compulsory purchase orders to acquire land necessary for the construction of the Chelmsford North East Bypass
 - b) the undertaking of additional processes (Side Roads Orders and/or traffic regulation and speed limit orders) required for the changes to the existing road network as a result of the project, and
 - c) to pursue the Orders to confirmation.
- 2.5 Agree the Council launches a competitive procurement for the Chelmsford North East Bypass main works contract Phase 1 via the Crown Commercial Services Framework.

- 2.6 Agree that tender evaluation criteria to be used for the North East Bypass Phase 1 are 50/50 Price/Quality split with 15% of Quality represented by Social Value criteria to the extent that they are consistent with the most economically advantageous tender.
- 2.7 Note that a further report will be brought back to the Cabinet on the award of the main bypass contract Phase 1. This will confirm funding sources to inform the Cabinet's decision on awarding the contract.

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1 Essex County Council, working in collaboration with Chelmsford City Council has been awarded £93.36m by Homes England for the delivery of a north eastern bypass for Chelmsford providing a strategic link between Chelmsford, Braintree, London Stansted Airport and the wider area. The funding was awarded from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). The bid supports key projects in CCC's Local Plan and the development of a number of new housing developments including Beaulieu and Chelmsford Garden Community.
- 3.2 This HIF bid included the delivery of two key infrastructure components:
 - a. The Chelmsford North East Bypass. (£93.36m)
 - b. Beaulieu Park Station on the Great Eastern Main Line. (£124.53m)
- 3.3 This paper specifically relates to the delivery of CNEB bypass Phase 1. The new railway station on the Great Eastern Main Line and associated works are subject to separate approval by Cabinet etc, although both are funded by the same HIF agreement and so funding for the two is interlinked,
- 3.4 It is proposed that the CNEB will be delivered in a phased approach to meet the forecast traffic user demand and the current funding available. Phase 1 will provide a single carriageway bypass for the majority of its length as current traffic modelling (based upon pre-covid traffic volumes) suggests this will meet user demand within the current adopted local plan period (up to 2036). Phase 1 will also include the dualling of part of A131 Braintree Road between Deres Bridge Roundabout and the new roundabout at Chatham Green. Phase 2 will increase the number of traffic lanes to provide a dual carriageway between Chatham Green and the new Boreham Interchange however current traffic assessments suggest that Phase 2 will not be required until after 2036.
- 3.5 CNEB addresses a number of transport and access issues, enabling early implementation of sustainable transport options to stimulate behaviour change and address highways capacity constraints around Chelmsford city centre. The bypass will relieve congestion on local roads and enable existing routes into Chelmsford city centre, such as Broomfield Road and Essex Regiment Way to become Sustainable Transport Corridors (STC), providing easier, more reliable and resilient journeys.

- 3.6 The current scheme being developed will provide Phase 1 which is a new 8km length of bypass which will extend from the Beaulieu Park Radial Distributor Road in Chelmsford to Deres Bridge Roundabout (A131) at Great Leighs. The bypass will consist of a single lane carriageway between the new Radial Distributor Road (RDR) on the north-east outskirts of Chelmsford and a new conventional roundabout at Chatham Green. The new roundabout will link the new bypass to the existing A131. The existing A131 between Deres Bridge Roundabout and the new roundabout at Chatham Green will then be upgraded to provide a dual carriageway.
- 3.7 In order to maintain the local road network, two new road bridges will be constructed spanning the proposed bypass serving Leighs Road, Drakes Lane and Cranham Road. Additionally, a new roundabout will be constructed south of Cranham Road to provide a new access to the future Chelmsford Garden Community.
- 3.8 There will be enhancements to sustainable transport infrastructure through the provision of additional cycle paths and bus route improvements. A new walking, cycling and horse riding bridge will also be provided to the north of the scheme to enhance the existing Public Rights of Way network. A further Toucan Crossing will be provided on the A131 at Chatham Green.
- 3.9 The bypass will pass through Bulls Lodge Quarry to the south which is currently operated by Hanson Quarry Products Europe Ltd. It is expected that quarrying on this site will continue during construction and once the road is open. Indeed, it is currently anticipated that phased quarrying operations will continue until at least 2036 and possibly beyond. Eventually, the quarry will be reclaimed and will form part of the Chelmsford Garden Community development which will be delivered under a phased approach.
- 3.10 In order to maintain quarrying operations, there is a need to relocate an existing silt lagoon (including back filling the old lagoons) and provide a new conveyor bridge which will span the new bypass. Both elements of work must be completed as enabling works to ensure the quarry business can operate. The conveyor bridge needs to be completed by Summer 2022 and the silt lagoon relocation must be completed prior to construction of the bypass. Failure to provide the conveyor bridge and relocate the silt lagoons within the timeframes will result in additional accommodation works to facilitate the quarry operations resulting in increased costs and an impact upon the overall delivery programme. It should be noted that the enabling works will not be impacted by the CPO process.
- 3.11 The planning application (CC/CHL/85/21) for the bypass was approved by Essex County Council's Development and Regulation Committee on 25 March 2022 and is currently subject to a mandatory notification to the Secretary of State to allow him to review the application and to 'call it in' if he so wishes. It is anticipated that confirmation of the decision will be received by 15 April 2022. We will need to ensure that construction complies with the planning conditions attached to the planning permission. The contracts we procure will ask the contractor to carry out the works in compliance with the contract.

- 3.12 Before we can begin construction of the new bypass we need to secure ownership of the relevant land. Negotiations with landowners continue but are not complete. If these negotiations cannot be concluded in a timely fashion or at all then we will consider making compulsory purchase orders in order to provide assurance that the land will be acquired in time. It should be noted that the compulsory purchase process is complex and may itself take some time if it is necessary to make an order.
- 3.13 Land acquisition discussions and, if necessary, the compulsory purchase process for the main bypass works will need to run in parallel with the tender process. Tenderers are to be made aware that the land assembly process needs to be completed prior to Contract award. The Council will be unable to award the contract unless and until it is satisfied that land assembly will be completed in time.
- 3.14 Advertising the tender for the detailed design and construction of the bypass will allow the scheme to maintain programme momentum and meet the above aims. A further report will be brought back to the Cabinet so that a final decision on contract award can be made, informed by the state of the project at that time.
- 3.15 In order to meet the programme for scheme delivery, the council will need to invite tenders and award an advanced works contract for the Conveyor Bridge which will be delivered by ECC via EHA Framework. Additionally, a Compensation Agreement with HQPE will be required before land assembly is complete to allow HQPE to undertake some modifications to quarry operations which will be affected by the new bypass. The modifications will involve the 'like for like' relocation of a silt lagoon to maintain quarrying operations. The construction of a silt lagoon is a standard procedure for quarrying operations and HQPE have the necessary expertise to design and deliver the silt lagoon in the most cost-effective way. It is estimated that the total cost for the Conveyor Bridge and the Compensation Agreement is £8.0m and £1.0m respectively.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision
- Develop our County sustainably
 - Share prosperity with everyone

5 Options

Option 1 (recommended):

- 5.1 Procure a contract for the enabling works for the quarry conveyor bridge and conclude Compensation Agreement with Hanson Quarry Products Europe Ltd (HQPE) to procure and deliver silt lagoon enabling works to facilitate construction of the main bypass works.

- 5.2 There is a risk that construction of the conveyor bridge and the Compensation Agreement with HQPE will need to take place before land agreements or CPO is completed for the bypass. We are actively seeking to manage this through a phased compensation agreement with HQPE, however as identified within this paper, the conveyor bridge needs to be completed by Summer 2022 and the silt lagoon relocation must be completed prior to construction of the bypass. It should be noted that the enabling works will not be impacted directly by the CPO process but the works/ compensation agreement would need to be funded before land assembly is secure.
- 5.3 Launch a procurement for the main works contract via Crown Commercial Services. This will allow the scheme to maintain progress to meet the Identified completion date.
- 5.4 There is a land assembly risk for the main works which we are seeking to manage as set out above but we will not award the contract for the main bypass works unless land assembly is secure.

Option 2 (not recommended)

- 5.3 Delay awarding the Conveyor Bridge Contract and completing the land Compensation Agreement with HQPE until land assembly is secure. This will reduce the need for the scheme to progress at risk, however, failure to provide the enabling works within the timeframes will result in increased costs and impact upon the HIF funding deadline agreed with Homes England. This would subsequently require a further programme extension to be sought.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The total scheme cost of the Chelmsford North East Bypass is estimated to be £90.986m excluding risk. The residual risk allowance is £8.67m (8.7%). It is generally recommended that a risk allowance range of 10-15% should be available at this stage in scheme development. Through further Value Engineering and design scope changes, it is anticipated that an additional £3m can be deducted from the identified scheme costs through the removal of flood compensation areas and associated drainage works. If successful, the £3m will be reallocated to the risk allowance, thus increasing the risk allowance to 12%. If the £3m is not realised risk will need to be managed within the 8.7% contingency.
- 6.1.2 The current approved scheme budget is £99.658m. The approved budget is made up of the following funding sources. Agreements are in place for HIF, and S106 funding. A Memorandum of Understanding for the funding between ECC and Chelmsford CC is in the process of being drafted.

Funding Source £000's	Contribution £000's
HIF - Homes England	93,360
S106	2,224
ECC Contribution (sunk cost)	2,573
CCC Contribution	1,500
Total Funding	99,658

The table below sets out the latest position and profile over the financial years based on the budget approved by Cabinet in February 2022 plus sunk costs from 2013/14 which have been included to capture total project spend. The capital profiling is subject to change through the 2021/22 provisional capital outturn.

	Prior Year Actuals £000's	Forecast 21/22 £000's	Forecast 22/23 £000's	Forecast 23/24 £000's	Forecast 24/25 £000's	Forecast 25/26 £000's	Forecast 26/27 £000's	Total Forecast £000's
CNEB Expenditure Expenditure	8,149	3,650	10,000	47,474	29,728	-	-	99,002
Homes England (HE)	6,232	3,650	10,000	47,474	26,004	-	-	93,360
S106	-	-	-	-	2,224	-	-	2,224
ECC ASD	2,573	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,573
CCC	-	-	-	-	1,500	-	-	1,500
Total Funding	8,805	3,650	10,000	47,474	29,728	-	-	99,658

- 6.1.3 It should be noted that there will be a need to invite tenders and award an advanced works contract for the conveyor bridge and agree a Land Compensation Agreement with HQPE before land assembly is complete. It is estimated that the total value for the advanced works contract and the land Compensation Agreement is in the order of £9m.
- 6.1.4 Additional risks have been identified and should these materialise these will use up to £875,000 of the risk allowance identified above. Specifically, land acquisition is ongoing and therefore further costs may be incurred in finalising negotiations.
- 6.1.5 This paper is seeking authority to go to market to procure the main CNEB Bypass works programme via the Crown Commercial Services Framework as a Design and Build Contract. A further paper will be presented for consideration post tender and prior to contract award to update on the funding position, set out any mitigations required and seek any adjustment to the profile of spend over the life of the project.
- 6.1.6 The current approved budget and delivery programme assumes that a Public Inquiry (PI) is not required for this project. ECC is currently negotiating with several landowners and if a PI materialised the programme would be extended by an estimated period of 12 months to December 2025 with costs increasing by c. £1.5m. The slippage in the programme would reprofile expenditure beyond the current HE funding deadline, resulting in an increased risk of a grant shortfall unless an extension were granted. ECC would need to seek a programme extension or consider alternative approaches to funding unless there was a significant reduction in scope.

- 6.1.7 The initial HE funding bid included an allowance for Part 1 claims of £1.34m, to drawdown on the HIF grant; expenditure must be capital and incurred by 31 March 2025. ECC classifies part 1 claims as revenue expenditure and if these costs materialise it will certainly be post completion. ECC will need to engage in dialogue with HE to determine if additional revenue funding can be made available to cover these costs post completion, if this is not agreed there will be an unfunded revenue pressure. ECC will need to clarify with HE if the existing £1.34m of capital funding can be used to service other capital costs in the project.

6.2 Legal implications

- 6.2.1 It is important to ensure that the council is not committed to pay the construction contract for the main bypass works unless and until it is satisfied that:
- the land ownership issues have been resolved so that the council has the right to build the road.
 - the County Council has complied with terms of the HIF funding agreement with Homes England and that there is no reason to think that there will be future breaches
 - funding has been identified for any increases in cost or for anything that won't be funded by Homes England
 - planning permission has been granted for a satisfactory scheme.
- 6.2.2 The Council has signed a legal agreement with Homes England with respect to grant funding for the bypass. The agreement makes ECC responsible for cost overruns and if ECC does not meet performance milestones in the contract then Homes England is entitled to cease to pay any further funding for either project. Since the council is claiming in arrears this could leave the council in the position of having spent significant sums of money which it is unable to reclaim as well as being contractually committed to deliver the remainder of the scheme without being able to claim any further funding. The legal risks were clearly set out in the report to the Cabinet before agreement was signed and the risks remain the same, except that a cost risk has to some extent materialised in association with advanced works contract and the Land Compensation Agreement with HQPE.
- 6.2.3 Homes England are under no obligation to find further funding for any cost over runs. If the costs exceed the funding then ECC will have to either reduce the scope of the scheme, find additional funding or not award a contract for the road. If ECC does not award a contract it will not have to find the money but it will result in the non-delivery of the road scheme which will mean that we do not get the benefits outlined in section 1 of this report and relationships with others will be damaged.

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 - Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix B - CNEB - Phase 1 Scheme Plan

Appendix C – CNEB - Developing Estimate dated 26.06.21 - Summary Table

Appendix D – CNEB - Extract of Jacobs email Re Cost review for Conveyor Bridge Estimate and Overall Scheme dated 26.11.21

Appendix E – Procurement Strategy

9 List of Background papers

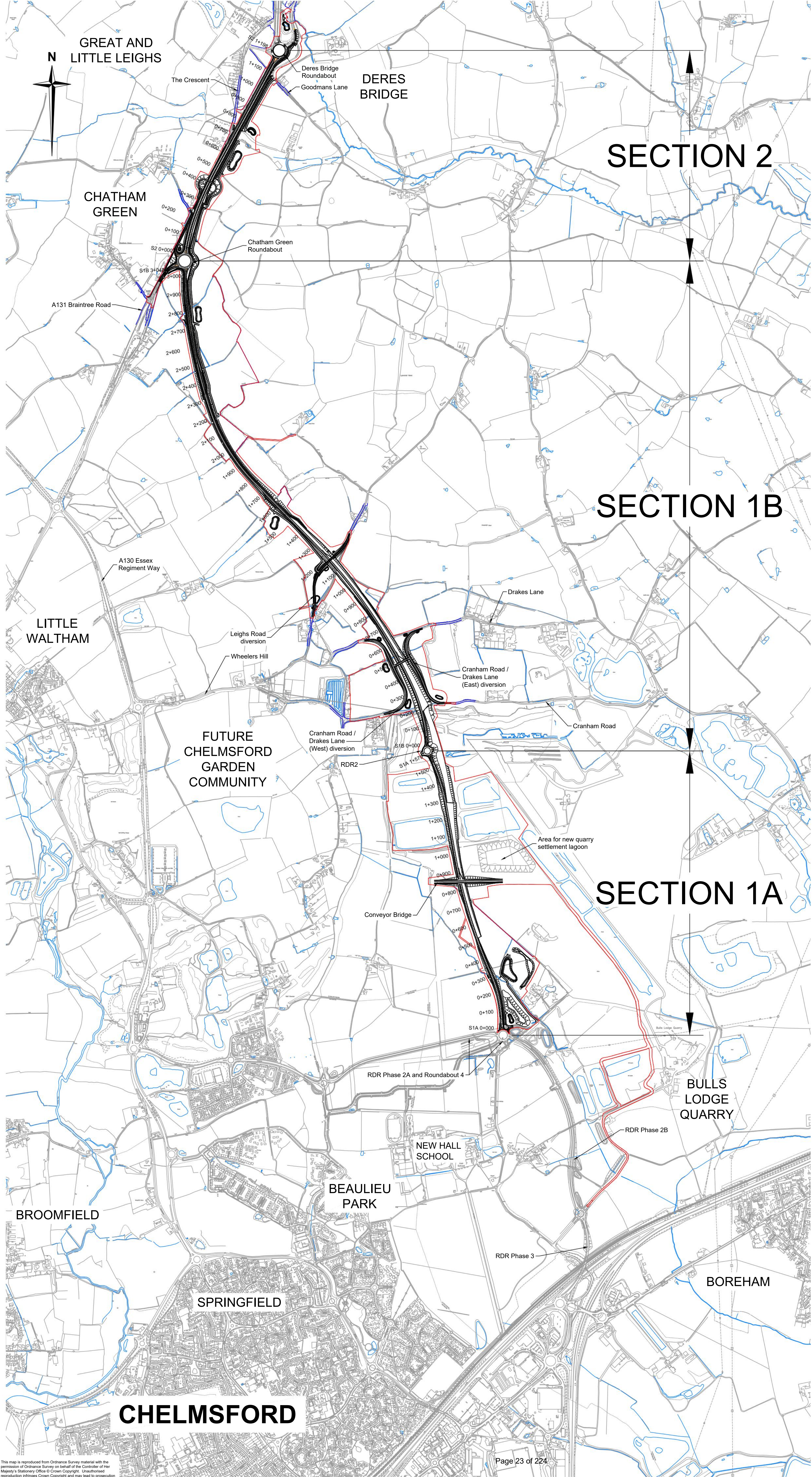
BP001 - CNEB - CAB01207 - Options Report

BP002 - CNEB - Route D & E options - Cabinet Report CP0027-P127A

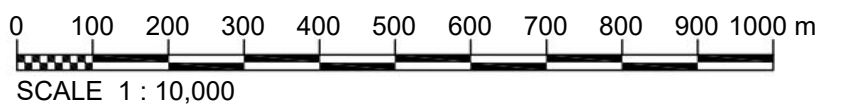
BP003 - CNEB - Cabinet Decisions Minutes

BP004 - CNEB HIF Cabinet Report

BP005 - Decision Notice on planning application Ref CC/CHL/85/21




- Notes
1. Do not scale.
 2. This drawing has been prepared for the submission of planning application. The design and construction of the CNEB is subject to planning approval as well as detailed design.
 3. Not all land owned by Essex County Council is shown. Only adjacent highway land is indicated.
- Key:
- Planning application boundary
 - Other land owned by the applicant



Rev	Date	Description of revision	Drawn	Checked	Review'd	Approv'd

DRAWING STATUS
S9 - FOR PLANNING APPROVAL



Essex Highways, Seax House, Victoria Road South,
Chelmsford, CM1 1QH.
Tel: 0345 6037631

© Essex County Council

SCHEME TITLE
**CHELMSFORD NORTH
EAST BYPASS**

DRAWING TITLE
SITE LOCATION PLAN

DESIGNED PT	DRAWN PT	CHECKED MA	REVIEWED GB	APPROVED CC
DATE MAY 21	DATE MAY 21	DATE MAY 21	DATE MAY 21	DATE MAY 21

DRAWING UNITS U.N.O.
DIMENSIONS IN METRES
LEVELS IN METRES

SCALE AT A1 (841X594mm)
1:10000

DRAWING No.
CNEB-JAC-GEN-P1_000-DR-Z-0100

REV.
P00.1



Integrated expertise



Essex County Council

The basis of the costs, assumptions and exclusions are listed in this report and a summary of the costs are as follows:

		Section 1A (£)	Section 1B (£)	Section 2 (£)	Quarry Bridge (£)	RDR Rdbt 4 Jct (£)	Project Costs (£)	Total (£)
Highway Works								
1	Preliminaries	2,057,445	4,532,901	3,735,206	808,343	10,787	Excluded	11,144,682
2	Roadworks	9,308,856	15,943,192	9,306,938	1,626,184	30,819	Excluded	36,215,989
3	Structures (Bridges, etc.)	N/A	4,171,340	1,680,000	2,531,052	N/A	Excluded	8,382,392
4	Structures (Retaining walls, culverts, etc.)	391,500	1,256,995	219,800	97,200	N/A	Excluded	1,965,495
5	Miscellaneous	97,004	213,715	112,067	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	422,786
6	Accommodation Works	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
7	Facilitating Works	1,026,900	N/A	N/A	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	1,026,900
	Sub-Total (A)	12,881,705	26,118,143	15,054,011	5,062,779	41,606	Excluded	59,158,244
Service Diversion Works								
8	Service Diversion Works	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	1,815,133	1,815,133
	Sub-Total (B)	12,881,705	26,118,143	15,054,011	5,062,779	41,606	1,815,133	60,973,377
Project / Design Team Fees								
9	Project / Design Team fees	587,842	1,295,115	679,128	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	8,869,071	11,431,156
Other Development / Project Costs								
10	Land Acquisition Cost and Part 1 Claims	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	4,329,588	4,329,588
11	Other Development / Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	See Project Costs	1,397,600	1,397,600
	Sub-Total (C)	13,469,547	27,413,258	15,733,139	5,062,779	41,606	16,411,392	78,131,721
Inflation								
12	Inflation	906,402	1,844,713	1,058,726	77,729	639	613,191	4,501,400
	Sub-Total (D)	14,375,949	29,257,971	16,791,865	5,140,508	42,245	17,024,583	82,633,121
Risk								
13	Risk	3,578,291	5,120,145	2,938,576	899,589	7,393	1,864,376	14,408,370
	Total (excl. VAT)	17,954,240	34,378,116	19,730,441	6,040,097	49,638	18,888,959	97,041,491

Details of the estimate have been included in Appendix B

Extract of Jacobs email - CNEB – Cost review for Conveyor Bridge Estimate and Overall Scheme Cost dated 26th November 2021.

Further to our conversation earlier this week, please see the below finance figures for CNEB. Please see the below assumptions and exclusions used in the production of this interim estimate.

Pre-tender Estimate (PTE) for Conveyor Bridge

PTE Construction Cost: £6,868,660

PTE Inflation (Tender and Construction): £144,237

PTE Risk allowance: £1,227,257

PTE Conveyor Bridge Total: **£8,240,154**

Developing Cost Estimate (June 2021) **£6,040,096** (including risk and inflation)

Assumptions/Exclusions

1. The Conveyor Bridge PTE is currently in draft however, it is envisaged any changes in the final version will be minor corrections
2. PTE Tender Inflation and Construction inflation applied using updated indices
3. PTE Risk allowance of 17.5%
4. PTE has increased (c. £2m) compared to the Developing Cost Estimate (June 2021) and this is attributed to the following;
 - a. Increase in number and length of piles as a result of detailed modelling, analysis and design following the receipt of the ground investigation information
 - b. Inclusion of construction activities in Section 1 (ground reprofiling, construction of drainage ditch, inclusion of site compound area, temporary culvert)
 - c. Additional volume of structural earthworks
 - d. Increased area of steel reinforcement
 - e. Increase in market rates
 - f. Increase in tender inflation

Overall Scheme Costs:

Cost excluding inflation and risk: £86,715,009

Inflation allowance: £4,271,532

Risk: £15,448,761

Overall Total: **£106,435,302**

Confirmed budget: £99,001,000

Budget deficit: £7,434,302

Assumptions/Exclusions

1. The figures presented are based on last months' actuals and forecasts as I am yet to receive this months' finance report.
2. Spend and forecasts not associated with the Task Order (i.e. ECC spend, utility payments, ECC sub-contractors) have not been updated for actuals since June 2021.
3. Cost includes for the flood Compensation Areas as per the Planning application (c. £3m excluding risk and inflation)
4. Total includes for 'sunk costs' prior to HIF bid as instructed by ECC
5. £1.062m risk allowance relation to quarry interface
6. Construction risk of 17.5%
7. Non-construction risk of 20%
8. Indices applied monthly (figures accurate as of 25.06.21)

Current activities to reduce budget deficit:

1. Remodelling of flood flows to reduce drainage and flooding infrastructure
2. Review of project risks and QRA to refine risk allowance to be more appropriate for current design stage (17.5% based on preliminary design and several risks have now either been realised or reduced following the last QRA)

Chelmsford North East Bypass

Procurement Strategy Note
July 2020

Document Control Sheet

Document prepared by:

Colin McHugh	Major Projects	T
	Victoria House	E Colin.McHugh@jacobs.com
	Chelmsford	W www.essex.gov.uk/highways
	CM1 1JR	

Report Title	Chelmsford North East Bypass Procurement Strategy Note
Project Number	B355361A
Document Number	CNEB-JAC-GEN-XXX-RP-ZC-0003
Status	For Comment
Revision	P00
Control Date	27 July 2020

Record of Issue

Issue	Status	Author	Date	Check	Date	Review	Date
P00	For Comment	CM	28/07/20	AW	28/07/20	MM	28/07/20

Approved for issue by	Date
Mansour Motlagh	28/07/2020

Distribution

Organisation	Contact	Number of Copies
Essex County Council	Mark Eves	1
Essex County Council	Laura Elliott	1
Essex County Council	Gary Macdonnell	1

© Copyright 2020 Jacobs U.K. Limited. The concepts and information contained in this document are the property of Jacobs. Use or copying of this document in whole or in part without the written permission of Jacobs constitutes an infringement of copyright.

Limitation: This report has been prepared on behalf of, and for the exclusive use of Jacobs' Client, and is subject to, and issued in accordance with, the provisions of the contract between Jacobs and the Client. Jacobs accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for, or in respect of, any use of, or reliance upon, this report by any third party.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Delivery Programme	1
3	Key Procurement Aims and Objectives.....	1
4	Key Procurement Constraints and Risks	2
5	Routes to Market	2
6	Procurement Options.....	4
7	Contract Strategy	4
8	Conclusion.....	4

1 Introduction

On the 15 July 2020 a Procurement Strategy update meeting was held for the Chelmsford North East Bypass scheme. The purpose of this meeting was to review and update the current procurement strategy notes.

This meeting was held via MS Teams and attended by;

Chris Cooper (Jacobs)	Laura Elliot (ECC)
Mark Eves (ECC)	Colin McHugh (Jacobs)
Ben Mills (Jacobs)	Terry Selfe (Jacobs)
Alex Woodgate (Jacobs)	

Due to being in the design development stages for the Chelmsford North East Bypass Scheme (the bypass) to date there has been no direct engagement with Contractors. However, internal discussions have continued to take place on a suitable procurement strategy, details of these discussions are provided below.

2 Delivery Programme

The meeting commenced with a high-level overview of the Project delivery programme and any updates.

Key milestone of the current delivery programme was identified as follows,

- Complete Construction in line with HIF Funding requirements of March 2024
- Approximate Construction duration 24months (to be reviewed / confirmed)

3 Key Procurement Aims and Objectives

In order to continue to develop options and identify and agree the most appropriate procurement strategy for the bypass, a review of the key procurement Aims and Objectives previously established was carried out. The key aims and objectives which ECC required to be achieved by a selected procurement strategy remain as follows;

1. Deliver the bypass to meet the 2024 spend / funding deadline
2. Provide Early Cost Certainty
3. Provide full design risk transfer

4 Key Procurement Constraints and Risks

Following the review of the key procurement Aims and Objective the meeting reviewed the previously established key procurement constraints and risks, which were identified as follows;

1. Deliver the bypass to meet the 2024 spend / funding deadline
2. Interfacing with the existing Quarry
3. Planning requirements early 2021

All these constraints were still considered relevant in the selection of an appropriate procurement strategy and will continued to be reviewed as the project progresses.

5 Routes to Market

The two Routes to Market still under consideration as previously identified for the bypass remain as follows:

Public Procurement Regulations

The Public Procurement Regulations 2015 (Regs) applies to public authorities including, amongst others, government departments, local authorities and NHS Authorities and Trusts. The directives set out detailed procedures for the award of contracts whose value equals or exceeds £4.733m for Works Contracts. Given the value of the works and the comments made above in relation to the suitability of the existing frameworks, this directive would be applicable to this scheme.

A standard approach of pre-qual and ITT, typically takes around 10 to 12months to complete and would currently meet the aims and objectives of this scheme, however this will require ongoing review of the delivery programme to ensure it continues to meet the objectives.

A key advantage of the Regs approach is that unlike the use of an existing framework it would not limit the potential contracting audience as it provides access to/from the Open market.

The Regs process offers an Open, Restricted and Competitive Negotiation options and it was agreed for the purposes of this scheme aims and objectives that the Restricted approach would be the most suitable. The Open procedure has been ruled out due to the high number of tenders that could be expected and the potential skills and experience that may be required of potential bidders. The Competitive Dialogue option is considered more appropriate for complex contracts where contracting authorities are not objectively able to define the technical means capable of satisfying their needs or objectives, which does not apply here.

It was also agreed that this route to market would not necessarily be suitable for the delivery of any advanced works packages due to the time constraints.

Crown Commercial Services Construction Works and Associated Services Framework

The Crown Commercial Services Construction Works and Associated Services Framework is a fairly new industry Framework, which is arranged in 11 lots of varying levels of complexity and value of work from £0-£3m up to £80m+. Individual lots are divided into regional sub-lots appropriate to the market sector and value. The Bypass would fall under Lot 4.1 Construction Works & Associated Services £30 - £80m England & Wales, which there is 14 contractors.

This framework cannot currently be assessed as ECC have yet to complete a tender under this framework. ECC are currently tendering the A127 Fairglens Interchange scheme using this framework and feedback could be provided soon as tenders are due for submission within the next month.

Considerations regarding using this framework are:

- Various forms of contract available including NEC3 & NEC4
- Tender evaluation is based on 75% quality and 25% price splits, which can be adjusted by 25% to a ratio of 50% Q / 50% P.
- Tenders can either be invited from all contractor on the Lot or short listed by use of mini-PQQ.
- The framework does not dictate the format of tender documentation which will enable use of previous documents developed by ECC.

The framework may also be suitable for the delivery of any advanced works packages as there is no need for the prequalification process.

Advance works

The meeting then discussed various advance works packages that are required for or could aid the delivery of the Bypass scheme. The packages are:

- Quarry Conveyor Bridge
- Quarry Lagoon Relocation
- Statutory Undertaker Diversion Work along existing A131
- Water Main Diversion Works along Cranham Road
- Environmental Mitigation Works (within existing highways boundary)

The advance works packages required ahead of the main bypass contract as those relating to the quarry. These items are part of the on-going land negotiations with the quarry owner and are required in order to maintain operating of the quarry once the bypass works commence.

The remaining items are being investigated as to whether there would be any advantage to the project if these works were undertaken ahead of the main Bypass contract.

These advance works packages could be either procured via the Eastern Highways Alliance Framework (EHAF3) or the CCS Construction & Associated Services Framework.

The Eastern Highways Alliance Framework, which ECC is a leading Board Member, is a wide-ranging framework which covers structural work, surfacing, road works and capital schemes for highways, divided onto 3 lots with an upper project value limit of £30m. The latest framework is due to become operational in Autumn 2020.

Both these frameworks would offer a reduction in the procurement programme as not requiring a prequalification. In addition, the EHA Framework has advantages as ECC are familiar with its processes and procedures.

Programme

A review of the programme for the delivery of the main works & the advance works packages is being undertaken to ensure the overall programme is achievable within the constraints of the scheme.

6 Procurement Options

As agreed previously, the procurement option selected for the Bypass contract is that of Design and Build (D&B) as it meets most of the procurement aims and objectives while potentially being best placed also to deal with the constraints / risks identified. It is also ECC preferred route for procurement of schemes of this size and nature.

Design and Build provides early cost certainty and accelerates scheme delivery where the project is relatively low risk. As the Contractor is responsible for the design a great deal of time can potentially be saved as the design and construction elements will be run concurrently. However, there may be a cost premium to pay for the transfer of the full design risk to the contractor at this stage of the project.

The bypass main technical risk relates to the ground conditions of the existing backfilled quarry, which will require a suitable risk management strategy to be developed. The remainder of the works would be built over primarily arable farmland and compared to many road schemes, is not complicated.

An 'illustrative' design would provide sufficient information to the contractor to provide reasonable cost certainty, stimulate innovation and ensure thinking on construction phasing happens at the optimum stage of the project. Developing a design to 50 to 60% before going to D&B would also get the works to market quicker. This approach is considered of interest to many contractors. It should be noted however, that changes to the scope during the contract could be costly.

7 Contract Strategy

It was discussed and agreed that the form of contract to be utilised in successfully delivering the schemes would be the NEC4 Engineering and Construction Contract.

It was acknowledged and agreed that the decision on the proposed contract option would not be made until later, but it was likely to be one of the following main option clauses for the bypass or any potential advanced work packages;

- Option A – Priced Contract with Activity Schedule or;
- Option C – Target Contract with Activity Schedule.

8 Conclusion

The current preferred procurement strategy for the bypass, based on the aims, objectives and constraints identified remains as a Design and Build contract using an NEC4 Option A contract via either Public Procurement Regulations or the Crown Commercial Services Construction & Associated Services framework.

This strategy will require ongoing review and updates as the scheme develops and particularly in relation to the delivery programme and the key constraint in relation to the 2024 spending deadline.

Forward Plan reference number: FP/284/01/22

Report title: Adoption of the new plan for libraries: 'Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026'	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Cllr Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships, and Performance	
Date: 19 April 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Suzanna Shaw, Director Customer Services, (email: suzanna.shaw@essex.gov.uk or Juliet Pirez, Head of Libraries, (email: Juliet.Pirez@essex.gov.uk)	
County Divisions affected: All	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1. As part of the Everyone's Essex, a refreshed strategy for the Library Service has been developed, which covers a range of agendas, but with a specific focus on Levelling Up and Climate Change. The new plan, "Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026", sets clear outcomes to support the wider ambitions of Essex County Council (ECC) for its residents.
- 1.2. The high-level aims set out in the plan are built on three pillars: Library Service and Literacy; Communications and Infrastructure; Supporting Communities and Levelling Up.
- 1.3. Underpinning these, are themes of equality of opportunity, empowering communities, harnessing technology, and making the most of our resources, to deliver a service that is modern, vibrant, and sustainable. It commits to keeping all 74 libraries open with investment in training and the upskilling of library staff.
- 1.4. The plan is ambitious in its aims to improve literacy for all as a source of pleasure and a key life skill, to encourage more people to use their library services for leisure and learning, to create safe welcoming spaces and to be a service which helps people on their way to fulfil their goals and aspirations.
- 1.5. There are no additional climate impacts created by the plan. Through its aims to improve infrastructure, develop electronic resources, and its contribution to recycling initiatives and the Circular Economy, it will support ECC's net zero commitments.
- 1.6. The full draft plan is in Appendix 1

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Adopt the plan for Everyone's Library Service 2022- 2026 as at Appendix 1.
- 2.2. Agree that the plan supersedes Essex Future Library Services Strategy 2019 – 2024, and the remaining Transformation Reserve funds set aside for that previous strategy (£2.4m) should be directed towards Everyone's Library Service.
- 2.3. Approve the drawdown of £800,000 from the Transformation Reserve to support delivery of the elements of Everyone's Library Service set out in paragraph 6.1.2. The profile of spend for financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24 is set out in paragraph 6.1.3. Further formal requests will be made against the remaining £1.6m allocation as the detailed business cases are prepared.

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1. The current libraries strategy, Essex Future Library Services Strategy 2019– 2024, (FLS) has three main elements:
 - Library refurbishments,
 - Refresh of the library management systems (LMS) and
 - Community Run Libraries (CRL).
- 3.2. Since 2019 this strategy has delivered some important refurbishments, including improvements to Wi-Fi and technology. The LMS work is nearing completion with highlights including a new staff system, joining the Libraries Consortium and launching a new content platform later this spring. However, the strategic decision to not close any libraries along with the global pandemic suppressed any appetite to establish community run libraries, and this element has not been delivered.
- 3.3. With a new Cabinet in place and the adoption of Everyone's Essex as well as the changes brought about by what we could see during and after the pandemic, we needed a new plan.
- 3.4. In September 2021, we drafted ideas for what a new plan would look like. The Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member engaged with stakeholders and held public webinars, where she outlined the direction. A draft plan was then developed for consultation.
- 3.5. An 8 week public consultation was launched on 26 November 2021 and closed on 21 January 2022. Essex residents and organisations gave their broad support to the Plan. Key internal and external stakeholders were also engaged and gave broad approval and helpful feedback. A summary of the feedback appears later in this section. The Consultation Analysis Report is in Appendix 2.

- 3.6. The draft plan has been updated to take account of the consultation feedback. While there were no major changes, the insight told us where individuals feel most passionately, helping us to prioritise the ambitions.

Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026: the three pillars

Pillar 1: Library Service and Literacy

- 3.6.1. Working to improve literacy for both children and adults is our top priority. Alongside families, schools, internal and external partners, we will help with school readiness, education catchup and literacy for life. By having up to date, appealing book stock, resources in a wide range of formats and delivering a programme of exciting events, we will encourage reading for pleasure and as a life skill.
- 3.6.2. Giving our staff the right skills and support while also exploring roles for volunteers to enhance our service will be part of delivering service excellence.

Pillar 2: Communications and Infrastructure

- 3.6.3. Our top priority in this pillar will be to improve communications with Essex residents to tell existing users and new audiences about the full range of services. We will look specifically at how we can focus communications by locality, interest or audience and we will do more to advertise library events.
- 3.6.4. Library buildings will be improved to ensure they are fit for purpose, accessible, and flexible spaces, in the right locations, where families feel comfortable and welcome. Any new library buildings or improvements will take account of the environmental impact for example by using natural light and other options for low-cost heating and air cooling, like solar panels and LED lighting. And we will look at our library spaces to see if there are opportunities to co-locate with other complementary services.

Pillar 3: Supporting Communities and Levelling Up

- 3.6.5. Expanding our outreach to those who can't access our physical sites and involvement of our communities in shaping the service are prominent in our plan.
- 3.6.6. The library service will play a crucial role in helping to support our communities to connect with each other and partners to enhance employability, wellbeing, culture and arts. We are keen to drive up use of library buildings and increase footfall to encourage greater use of library facilities, and so we are exploring options for some chargeable activities to run alongside and complement free activities. Hosting these activities could enable us to provide an enhanced offer, service or experience to appeal to our existing customers, new users and to raise awareness of libraries as a potential partner and venue for other organisations.

Summary of the Consultation Feedback

- 3.7. The consultation was hosted on Essex County Council's consultation portal for 8 weeks and was publicised extensively across the county. Social media activity reached hundreds of thousands of local people through posts on ECC and Essex Libraries social media channels as well as a Facebook advertising campaign. The survey was also prominent on both the ECC and Essex Libraries websites and social media channels throughout. The draft plan and survey were also shared directly with residents through resident and library newsletters. Prior and throughout the consultation, engagement was carried out with local, regional and national press, generating coverage in many local newspapers and on local radio stations.
- 3.8. Posters, popup banners and postcards were displayed in libraries and staff met with people in town centres to encourage participation. Every school was contacted and there was direct engagement with other groups including Young Essex Assembly, schools, faith leaders, and library clubs and groups.
- 3.9. We also engaged with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, The National Literacy Trust, and Libraries Connected.
- 3.10. We received 2,213 responses to the consultation - 2,185 from individuals and 28 responses from organisations. The analysis showed good support for the proposals in the Plan, with many showing strong agreement. There is significant alignment between individuals and groups.
- 3.11. Feedback from the key national bodies, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), The National Literacy Trust (NLT), and Libraries Connected (LC) was positive.
- NLT felt it was a very positive message. They particularly supported links to levelling up and the ambitions around partnerships.
 - DCMS noted the ambitions to do more in the digital space.
 - LC were pleased to see infrastructure and a focus on the environment.
- 3.12. All organisations gave pointers to help Essex Libraries make the implementation of the plan successful and were pleased to be engaged as part of our consultation. The Summary of engagement from other organisations is in Appendix 3.
- 3.13. In March we reported the outcomes of the consultation, together with proposals to revise the draft plan in line with the feedback, to a joint meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee and the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

Consultation Results

- 3.14. Pillar one: Library Service and Literacy
- There was at least 90% agreement from individual respondents with the aims to support children to be school-ready and develop their reading

skills, keep stock and resources up to date, help adults improve their literacy, ensure staff have the right skills, and provide books and resources in formats that meet changing need.

- Support to deliver a new and exciting programme of events and activities and to get more residents involved in shaping the service is also high at over 80%
- The aims to explore new opportunities to generate additional income, and new roles and opportunities for volunteers received around 70% agreement.
- 638 individuals made comments about the aims for Library Services and Literacy. The most common theme from 25% of those making comments, is that well trained staff are critical to the library service, with 18% noting that volunteers should be in addition to paid staff rather than replace them. 14% of the 638 who made a comment (equating to 89 individuals) also wanted to flag a concern that digital alternatives should not replace physical books.

3.15. In the final plan we have therefore:

- stated more clearly the importance of our skilled paid workforce alongside volunteers and emphasised the important link between the two, recognising that volunteers support the work of the service and allow us to do more
- made it clearer that our ambition to keep our stock up to date and appealing includes hard copy stock and electronic resources.

3.16. Pillar two: Communications and Infrastructure

- Developing the mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement and improving communications to help engage with existing users and new audiences were the best supported aims by individual respondents with at least 83% agreement.
- Improvements to buildings, including reducing our carbon footprint, and improving engagement with the staff gained 75% agreement and had strong support.
- Aims with agreement of 60% and above were: Roll out better mobile technology for staff and volunteers; Update printing services on offer to customers; Launch a new online library platform.
- 485 individuals made comments in this section. The most common theme from 21 % of those making comments in this section was the need to promote the library service better and improve communication. 13% noted having well trained staff who were proficient in Tech support. And, consistent with comments under the first pillar, 11% of the 485 (equating to 53 individuals) commented on retaining physical books alongside electronic alternatives.

3.17. As a result of this feedback, we have given more prominence in the final plan to outreach, communications and involvement of our communities in shaping the service. We will specifically look at how we work with targeted groups and organisations to localise communications and adverts of library events. Detailed demographic data, including that from the consultation, will inform how we focus services. Changes to the plan to emphasise the importance of

skilled staff and keeping hard copy stock up to date mentioned in paragraph 3.15, also apply here.

3.18. Pillar three: Supporting Communities and Levelling Up:

- At least 85% of individual respondents agreed with the aims to help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills, connect residents with other services, expand outreach services, and provide employability support. 80% agreed with supporting residents with their health and wellbeing.
- The proposal to explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities had 50% agreement. A significant proportion (31%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this aim.
- 379 individuals commented on this pillar. The most common theme from 22 % of those making comments here was concern about moving outside the core offering and getting involved in services which are provided elsewhere. 14% thought all services should be free. And 12% suggested the library could act as a community hub or for socialisation.

3.19. We have therefore given more context in the plan as to why we might charge for some new additional activities and provided assurance as to how these could run alongside and complement free activities. Hosting these activities could enable us to provide an enhanced offer, service or experience to appeal to our existing customers, new users and to raise awareness of libraries as a potential partner and venue for other organisations. We are keen to drive up use of library buildings and increase footfall, which we hope will encourage greater use of library facilities.

3.20. Full details of the changes made to the draft plan are in the Changes Report in Appendix 4.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

4.1. This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision

- Enjoy life into old age
- Provide an equal foundation for every child
- Strengthen communities through participation
- Connect us to each other and the world

4.2. The principles, themes and commitments of Everyone's Essex: our plan for levelling up the county 2021 to 2025 are woven through Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026.

Economy

4.3 With the focus on literacy for all age groups, whether to encourage reading for pleasure or as part of skills development, this plan supports ECC's ambitions to tackle education inequalities - a driver in levelling up the economy. There are also plans to support people to improve employability skills helping them

in the job market.

Environment

- 4.4 Through library refurbishments and rebuilds, optimising the use of technology for staff and residents, and supporting partnership recycling initiatives, the plan will contribute to the commitments to Net Zero and minimising waste.

Family

- 4.5 The commitment to support children to become school ready and develop their reading skills contributes to the education outcomes for families. As an example, we commit to work with early years providers, parents, schools, charities, and the Essex Education Task Force to support children to be school ready, and every library will have an Everyone's Literacy area by the end of June.

Health

- 4.6 By engaging with residents and communities to shape the service and events, working in partnership with other organisations, and continuing our outreach services, we can help to reduce social isolation and contribute to the wider health commitments.

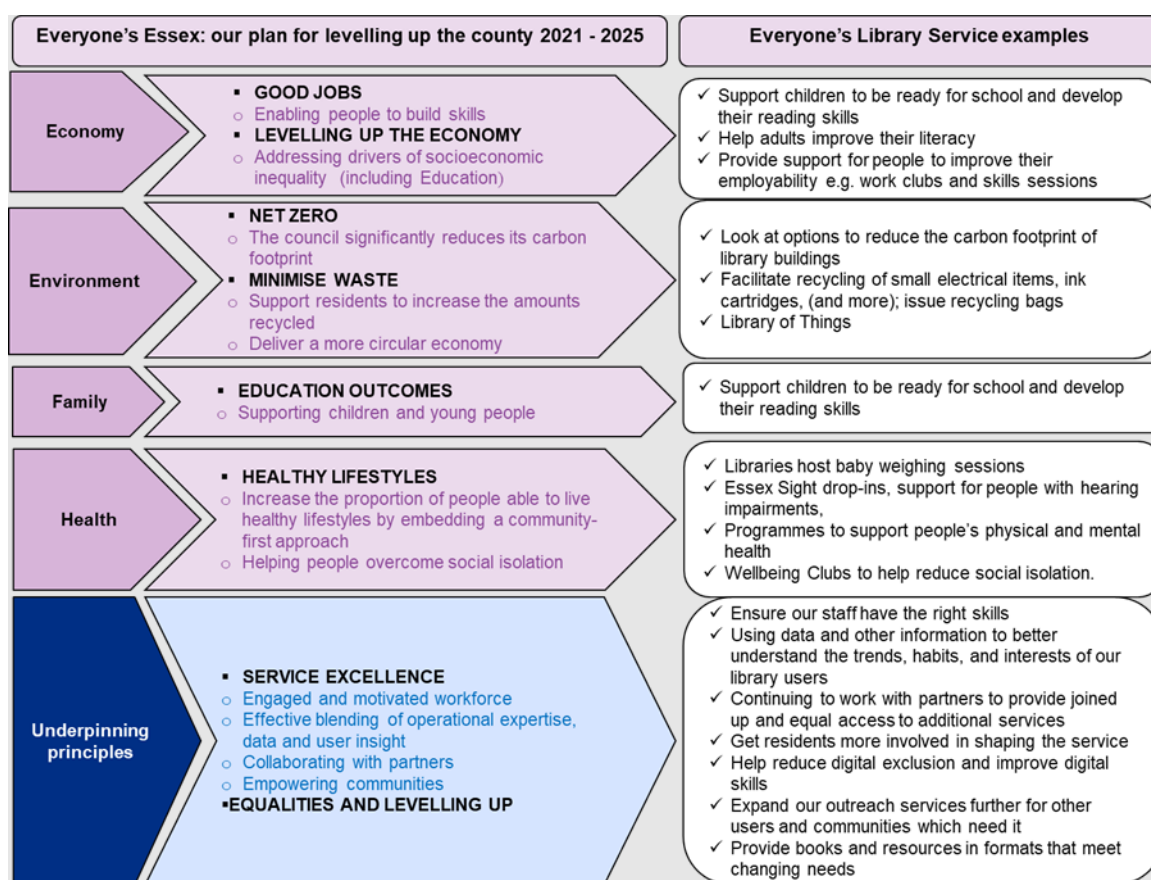
Service excellence

- 4.7 This is written into the plan which seeks to ensure that the workforce is equipped with technology and skills for the future, while also developing further volunteering opportunities. We will also use data and insight to better understand how we can enhance services for library users and make more use of digital platforms for marketing and outreach.

Supporting ECC's climate change objectives

- 4.8 Any planned new builds or refurbishments will take account of environmental issues in the design and materials, for example through maximizing the use of natural light or using LED lighting and exploring environmentally friendly options for heating and air cooling, like solar panels and LED lighting for example, Shenfield Library.
- 4.9 The Plan also aims **to help residents address climate change** by identifying opportunities and resources to educate and inform and continuing to develop waste reduction activities. Libraries are distribution and collection points for recycling bags, batteries, ink cartridges, and care equipment. The "Library of Things" promotes borrowing seldom-used household and garden items, rather than buying new and is part of the Circular Economy project.

4.10 Figure 1 shows some examples of where these links are made.



5. Options

5.1. Recommended Option 1: to adopt the Plan

5.1.1. The proposed plan has been developed with feedback and input from key internal and external stakeholders and aligns with Everyone's s Essex: our plan for levelling up the county.

5.1.2. We have worked creatively to develop an outline of how this plan can be developed within a limited budget and are ready to mobilise that, bringing about changes to impact the lives of our residents for the better as soon as we can.

5.1.3. We propose to recruit to six fixed term posts to bring in the skills we need to develop the delivery framework and achieve quick wins and early implementation. This allows time to upskill our existing workforce and recruit new talent through natural turnover of staff, who will then be able to deliver the activities on a long-term, sustainable basis.

These posts centre around:

- the literacy ambitions
- community engagement and outreach, and
- delivery planning and implementation.

- 5.1.4. The delivery planning and implementation role will have responsibility for turning the ambitions and proposals in the strategy into tangible deliverables, which are flexible, responsive, and tailored to the needs and ambitions of localities. The role will be responsible for prioritising, planning, sourcing funding and ensuring there is a governance process in place which validates any spend.
- 5.1.5. Our plan also includes proposals to bring in and complete some of the refurbishment initiatives within FLS Strategy which are consistent with the aims of Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026. These include investing in the mobile library service supporting the community outreach ambitions, and completing some planned library refurbishments, which supports our plans to make sure libraries are welcoming spaces.
Any specific refurbishments which require additional engagement or governance will proceed through the appropriate channels in due course.
- 5.1.6. An example of a key initiative we will put in place straightaway is to create an Everyone's Literacy areas in all 74 libraries. These dedicated spaces are developed in consultation with teachers, Adult Community Learning and other experts in literacy skills. They will have books and resources to support children, families and adults to improve their reading skills and also help to develop a love of reading for pleasure. Everyone's Literacy areas contain:
- books for adults on how to support your child to read
 - phonics and learning-to-read books
 - books for children and adults who have literacy difficulties
 - easy-read books for adults and children
 - fun resources to help children improve their vocabulary and reading skills
 - signposting to other areas of support for reading skills.
- All areas are clearly branded and identifiable in each library.
- 5.1.7. We will ensure there are processes in place to measure success of any initiatives implemented to meet the outcomes of the plan. The metrics for this are currently being developed and will dovetail with the broader Everyone's Essex Plan and the Levelling Up agenda.

5.2. Option 2: to amend the draft plan further

- 5.2.1. This option is not recommended. The public and stakeholders have been engaged in the development of this plan and we have received strong support and approval from them. We want to translate that appetite for the proposals into delivery so that the residents of Essex can start to benefit from it as soon as possible.

5.3. Option 3: to reject the draft plan

- 5.3.1. This option is not recommended as the current strategy does not reflect the world as we now see it.

6. Issues for consideration

6.1. Financial implications

6.1.1. At this stage there is **no request for new funding** to kickstart implementation. Instead, approval is sought to utilise the previously approved residual funding yet to be drawn down from the Transformation Reserve that was set aside for the Future Library Services Strategy (FP/461/06/19). As both plans have the same broad ambitions to modernise the library service to meet the needs of Essex residents, the activity proposed here is within scope of the original Cabinet Paper.

6.1.2. The table below sets out how the remaining £2.4m is proposed to be used to support the delivery of Everyone's Library Service.

Description	£
6 x Fixed term temporary posts for 18 months (as set out in 5.1.3)	400,000
(1) Completion of committed refurbishment activity started under the previous strategy which also meets the ambitions of this plan; (2) Delivery of Everyone's Literacy areas as detailed in paragraph 5.1.6	400,000
<i>Sub-total costed schemes</i>	<i>800,000</i>
Remaining fund for delivery of other initiatives identified through the delivery planning process yet to be costed (as per the roles identified in paragraph 5.1.4)	1,600,000
Total revenue cost	2,400,000

6.1.3. The anticipated profile of the £800,000 costed spend is as follows

	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	Total £000
Profile of drawdown	620	180	800

6.1.4. Approval is sought to drawdown the £800,000 for costed schemes immediately. For the residual balance of £1.6m, a future drawdown decision will be sought when costed schemes are available. This decision will be informed by business cases taken through the appropriate internal governance to ensure value for money and to evidence how the spend meets the objectives of this strategy.

6.2. Legal implications

6.2.1 It is important that all issues of significant with the draft strategy which were raised in the consultation are identified and drawn to the attention of the Cabinet. It is understood that the consultation report identifies those issues and it is important that the Cabinet consider this report and the responses.

- 6.2.2 The Council is under a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service and this plan shows how we will meet that duty.

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.
- 7.4. The impact has been assessed to be positive for people with the protected characteristics of age and disability. For all other groups the impact is neutral. The Equality Impact Assessment is in Appendix 5.

8. List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026

Appendix 2: Consultation Analysis Report (Word and PowerPoint versions)

Appendix 3: Summary of other Engagement

Appendix 4: Changes Report

Appendix 5: Equality Impact Assessment

9. List of Background papers

Consultation questionnaire



Everyone's Library Service

2022-2026





Contents

Opening Statement	4
What will be different for our residents?	6
Introduction	7
Aim 1 Library Service and Literacy	8
Getting children reading	10
Thank you to our library volunteers	12
Everyone's Literacy	13
Aim 2 Communications and infrastructure	14
Skills for the future	17
Environmental initiatives	17
Aim 3 Supporting communities and levelling up	20
Reducing social isolation	23
Mobile library and outreach service	24
Map of Essex literary connections	26



Opening Statement



Councillor Louise McKinlay

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



I am passionate about our library service and believe it has a vital and important role to play in improving the lives of our residents and in helping to level up the county.

Libraries need to be at the heart of our communities. Great libraries are welcoming and inviting, they provide spaces for people to study, to learn, to attend creative clubs, to meet authors, and to play. They offer a wide range of books, e-books, graphic novels and podcasts. They support people who are seeking work by providing IT facilities and through running volunteering schemes which enable them to develop their skills and enhance their CVs.

Libraries are places where you can learn about your local area and research your family history. Young children can prepare for attending school, where students can find a place to study and where residents can access lifelong learning opportunities and our well trained and experienced staff help you access the services you need.

This is my vision for Essex Libraries.

We do much of this already, but this plan will enable us to do even more, and do it better.

Essex is fortunate to have one of the largest library services in the country, with 74 libraries, a home library service and a fleet of mobile libraries. Due to our wide reach, we can connect to and support every community across the county and enhance their lives. Underpinning this is our commitment to keep all our Libraries open as we drive forward our ambitious programme and deliver high quality services across all our locations.

Our libraries are a lifeline for many people and we will look at how to deliver the library service in different ways, as well as how we make the most of under-used space in our buildings and facilities across the county. We will design a service we can be truly proud of. One that is modern, vibrant, and sustainable. One that can improve life for everyone in Essex.

Through talking to residents and partners, it is clear that my passion for libraries is shared. People see libraries as a hub for communities to come together and interact, a vital resource for helping residents improve their literacy, and a place to learn new skills.

Following consultation feedback, this plan emphasises further our ambition to ensure our stock remains up to date and appealing to both existing and new users. It looks at how we can better localise our communications about local library events and clubs, and what we can do to reach more people where they live, study or work. Feedback showed that people understand why charges might be needed for some new facilities, and this plan shows how that might work alongside and complement existing and new free activities.

This plan describes the areas that we will be working on over the next four years:

- 1. Library Service and literacy**
- 2. Communications and infrastructure**
- 3. Supporting our communities and levelling up**

We will be developing budgets to support this plan. We will be exploring ways we can work together with other organisations with similar aims. And most importantly, we will engage with our users and the wider community to develop further the services on offer.

“Literacy sits at the heart of the levelling up agenda. Improving literacy will improve the opportunities of individuals and communities. It is great to see Essex committing to these priorities and placing libraries at the heart of their strategy. Libraries are lifelong centres of literacy, creating reading communities and of vital importance to the one child in 11 from our most vulnerable communities who don’t own a single book. With their commitment to literacy, Essex Libraries are showing themselves to be community activists and national leaders.”

Jonathan Douglas CBE, Hon FRSL,
Chief Executive, National Literacy Trust

What will be different for our residents?

By achieving this plan, we will be...

-  Supporting children and adults to improve their literacy
-  Encouraging people to enjoy reading for pleasure
-  Increasing the range and diversity of online resources
-  Introducing relevant and exciting events and activities to engage and inspire new and existing library service users
-  Growing volunteering opportunities to expand the services we can offer through our libraries
-  Benefitting from a programme of library refurbishments throughout the county
-  Using our updated digital and IT services to improve the customer experience
-  Working with partners to provide joined up and equal access to additional services
-  Supporting the levelling up agenda by focusing resources in areas that most need them
-  Providing residents with skills and support to help them achieve their aspirations wherever they live
-  Doing more to encourage residents to read, for example through Essex's Year of Reading
-  Using data to better understand the habits and interests of our library users
-  Marketing our services in dynamic and engaging ways using Instagram and other relevant media
-  Seizing opportunities to help educate and inform people on critical issues such as climate change
-  Engaging with residents to promote local events

"I have been using this library for a few years now. Very helpful and friendly staff. They always keep the premises neat and tidy. My kids love to go there every week."

Pitsea customer

"The staff are wonderful, so friendly and helpful and we would be lost without our local library."

Library customer

Introduction

The Library Service has a significant role in the community, providing access to reading, training, digital skills, trusted information, and cultural experiences to people at every stage of their lives.

This plan is about improving and promoting the opportunities that the Library Service can offer and placing it at the heart of the community.

Having a Library is a promise to residents that they can access materials from an early age that support developing their reading skills and literacy right through to adulthood.

The library service aims to be relevant to people from birth to retirement. Libraries are places people in Essex should feel excited, happy, and safe to go to whether to read, use a computer, find information or to avoid isolation. We want the service to be valued and well used.

We provide support to families so that they can use and enjoy the library service at key stages in their lives: babies and toddlers coming to our Rhymetimes, school children joining the Summer Reading Challenge, students studying in libraries, residents who may need help with modern digital technology, or those attending one of the many activities in libraries.

Through our mobile and home library offer and community outreach programmes we also improve access for people at risk of being socially isolated, residents with long term conditions or disabilities, communities which are hard to reach, and people who might find it difficult to visit a library.

All residents should know about and feel able to use our comprehensive online library service to reserve items and access our dynamic and exciting e-books, journals, and other resources, and take part in our new online groups and activities.

Our staff and volunteers should feel valued and supported and we will continue to invest in staff development so that they are equipped to deliver the best possible service to our residents.





Library Service and Literacy

The enjoyment of reading is at the core of the services and activities on offer through our libraries, and we need to support and help those who are not confident when it comes to reading and literacy.

It is estimated that around 16% of adults¹ in England have “very poor literacy skills” whilst the UK government estimates that a further 10% of adults² have a condition such as dyslexia. Mencap also estimates that at least a further 2% of adults and 2.5% percent of children have some form of learning disability. For both children and adults these issues can have a serious impact on their self-esteem as well as their ability to access information that can have a serious impact on their life chances - adults with poor literacy skills may be

locked out of the job market, have less access to health information, and, as a parent, they may not be able to support their child’s learning.

The Library Service will build people’s confidence in reading and writing by providing a safe and comfortable space where people can develop their literacy skills. The Service will focus on expanding opportunities to work with people who would benefit from additional support.

Libraries are inclusive and open to all. They provide free access to books, IT, events, and activities that inspire people to engage with reading and information as well as enjoy reading for pleasure. Libraries are knowledge hubs and support residents to connect with other service and organisations.

“Lovely displays particularly in the children’s library”

Library customer

To deliver a high-quality service to our residents, our libraries will:

ABC Support children to be ready for school and improve their reading

We will work with early years providers, parents, schools, charities and the Essex Education Task Force to support children to be school-ready. We will develop their literacy skills, support education catch-up and provide a safe space for young people to study and learn outside the classroom.

Help adults to improve their literacy

We are partnering with a range of organisations which support adults to improve their literacy skills for everyday life. This can strengthen their job opportunities, aspirations and independence.

Run a new and exciting programme of events and activities

We will work with local partners and volunteers to build on our existing programme of events and activities for all ages, so that our current and future library users develop a lifelong love of reading and libraries.

“We visit regularly as a family to take out books and love that the principle of libraries reduces waste and encourages a love of books and reading.”

Library customer

Keep our stock and resources up to date and appealing

We will continue to develop and use a variety of methods to provide us with in-depth information about our stock management choices including: our own system data on users’ borrowing choices and preferences, information from our suppliers, market analysis on national reading trends, alongside direct engagement, and feedback from residents.

Provide books and resources in formats that meet changing needs

Our online collections and resources like Find My Past and Ancestry are extremely popular, as is our wide range of e-books, newspapers and magazines. We will continue to provide access to a wide and rich range of printed books, special local collections, large print formats and audio books. As part of The Libraries Consortium, we can now offer Essex residents access to an additional six million items of stock.

Increase residents’ involvement in shaping the service

We will continue to ensure that our stock and service reflect the diverse interests and needs of our residents and communities. We will look at new ways for them to share their views and shape the service through regular feedback and input.

¹ Adult Literacy Trust <https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/adult-literacy/>
² UK Government <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-disabilities-and-impairments-user-profiles/simone-dyslexic-user>



Give our staff the skills and support to offer the best possible service

Well trained staff are vital. We will explore new ways to ensure staff have the right technical skills and service knowledge, can promote our resources and activities, and are flexible and adaptable to meet customers' changing needs.



Explore new roles and opportunities for volunteers

Volunteers are an essential and valued part of the library service in Essex, helping our paid staff throughout the year in the delivery of everyday activities and special events throughout the year. We want this to continue and will seek to recruit people with diverse life skills and experiences to help our team develop attractive new offers and services.

“My skills and confidence at painting and decorating my home have been elevated by books borrowed from here but sourced from libraries far away from Essex.”

Library customer

Getting children reading



Grandparent and member of Frinton library.

Introducing children to books at an early age can have a big impact on their development.

All our libraries provide a wide range of resources to support children's development, from picture books which they will love to board books especially designed for little hands to hold. Children learn best when they are having fun: that's why we also offer a range of fun group activities for children and their grown-ups such as our Baby and Toddler Rhymetimes, Story Time sessions and family reading activities.

Wickford Library

Since December 2021, Wickford residents have a modern, vibrant library located in the Willows Shopping Centre. The library includes:

- comfortable furniture
- spaces where you can sit, study, work and meet friends
- an area with charging points where you can work with your own devices
- a large table where groups can meet
- baby changing facilities and an accessible customer toilet
- sensory equipment as part of a colourful and welcoming children's library
- free computer and WiFi access
- free use of library tablets

To complement the library service, Citizens Advice (CA) provide a Video Access Advice Point where residents can book appointments with trained CA volunteers.

“The library provides us with a space away from the home environment to complete [my son's] learning tasks. Without this dedicated space, educating him would be a much greater challenge as the home environment affords many more distractions for us both”

Library customer



The children's corner at Wickford Library



Self-service machine at Wickford Library

“[The library service] enables me to borrow a wide range of books including audiobooks which I would otherwise not be able to afford.”

Library customer

Thank you to our library volunteers

We would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to our volunteers, who make an immense contribution to Essex Library Service.

Meet some of our library heroes and find out why volunteering is so important to them.

Anthea Symms, Home Library Service Delivery Volunteer and Reading Friends Volunteer, Coggeshall:

“Without exception every one of our customers has been a delight to deal with and it’s humbling when they express gratitude for what we do. It’s they who make the job so rewarding.”

Lesley Robinson, Home Library Service Delivery Volunteer, Canvey:

“I’d enjoyed working in the library and wanted to continue delivering the service to those customers who could no longer get there. I actually deal with some customers on my round whom I used to serve in the library and this service has been a lifeline to them and hugely rewarding for me.”



Anthea Symms (right) with Reading Friends participant Pat Alston



Helen Hardwick

Helen Hardwick, Baby and Toddler Rhymetime Volunteer and Summer Reading Challenge Volunteer, Clacton:

“I have volunteered to help with the Summer Reading Challenge for the past few years and found it very rewarding. It’s truly delightful to watch the children grow, both physically and in confidence week by week. Books are expensive these days, so it’s great to see parents and young children regularly leaving the library with a pile of books!”

Diane Donald, Baby and Toddler Rhymetime Volunteer, Chelmsford:

“I enjoy the reaction from the children when they learn a new song and the joy on their faces when we read a story together. I love watching the little ones grow in confidence, and the children who don’t have English as their first language have increased their vocabulary along with their parents, through rhymes and books.”



Diane Donald running a Rhymetime at Chelmsford Library

Sue Gallone, Home Library Service Delivery Volunteer, Clacton:

“Over the last 10 years I have taken books and talking books to five people, including one lady of 98 who has been with me throughout. It’s made a massive difference to them, ensuring they have stories to read or listen to, and I’ve also made some interesting friends. I enjoy chats with my Home Library Service customers, about books, family and the world in general. I’ve learned about wartime south London, the East Yorkshire coast, the dance halls of Norfolk and life in Florence as a child in the 1930s. I always feel cheered after a visit and come away with an interesting anecdote.”

If you’ve been inspired to volunteer with us, take a look at the volunteering page on our website: libraries.essex.gov.uk

Everyone’s Literacy

Everyone’s Literacy areas have books and resources to help you improve your reading skills. They will help you develop a love of reading for pleasure. You will find them in all Essex libraries.

The Everyone’s Literacy areas contain:

- books for adults on how to support your child to read
- phonics and learning-to-read books
- books for children and adults with dyslexia
- easy-read books for adults and children
- fun resources to help children improve their vocabulary and reading skills
- signposting to other areas of support for reading skills

All areas are clearly marked in each library. They have been developed in consultation with teachers, Adult Community Learning and other experts in literacy skills.



“It’s great to have somewhere families can sit and read together.”

Clacton Library customer



Communications and infrastructure

Ensuring that residents are aware of the services and support on offer through the library service is fundamental to our plans for the future.

We will deliver professional, targeted, marketing campaigns to a range of audiences. Our communications will be dynamic and creative, with a local focus promoting the service offer to existing users, new audiences, and the wider community in a local area.

Our physical library spaces are a vital part of how we deliver library services, and we are committed to the continued operation of all our libraries across the county. We will plan our physical spaces to ensure they are high quality, welcoming and as inclusive as possible and reflect the needs of all our residents.

Our four main libraries are Chelmsford, Harlow, Basildon, and Colchester and these will continue to be our flagship libraries. We will develop a plan to focus on these and the other libraries across the county to ensure that as many communities as possible benefit from improvements to the libraries local to them.

We will consider whether our libraries are in the right locations for our residents today and in the future. We will engage with housing developments and growth areas across the county to ensure support and contributions for a library service is considered for these new communities.

“Good stock of books and a very good request service.”

Library customer

Our technology and digital infrastructure are key components of how we deliver a modern library service. From free access to computers and IT in our libraries to the new digital offer, we recognise the importance in developing this aspect of our library service. As society becomes ever more digital, poor internet and Wi-Fi connection is no longer acceptable, instead stable, fast access is essential for ensuring real benefits for work, education, and communication. We already have a Wi-Fi improvement programme for all libraries, and we will continue to improve our technological offer, such as providing more mobile devices for our residents and staff to use, along with improved printing facilities.

“My library card is my passport to follow courses in subjects that I always hoped to find time to pursue. I’m interested in the Latin names for garden plants, so chose a free course in Beginner’s Latin.”

Library customer



Love Your Library Day at Harwich Library

To improve our communications and infrastructure, we will:



Improve our buildings

We will develop a planned programme of building improvements. We will consider upgrade and cosmetic improvements, how spaces are currently used, opportunities to use them differently and the potential to generate additional income from our estate.



Seek to reduce our carbon footprint

In line with our commitments to become a net-zero organisation, we will review the energy efficiency and environmental impact of our library buildings. Working with other parts of the organisation and our partners, we will develop a long-term plan for environmentally sustainable libraries.



Develop our mobile and outreach service

This could include promoting health and wellbeing initiatives, offering wider skills for adults, and reviewing opportunities for supporting priorities such as literacy and wider council objectives.



Engage better with new and existing users

We will develop a communications strategy to improve two-way communication with our customers locally. We will promote the range of services and activities on offer at different locations and highlight events and promotions relevant in particular neighbourhoods. We will target communications at appropriate times to encourage people to participate in library events and join their local library.



Improve communications with staff and volunteers

With a dispersed workforce, it is vital to keep people informed about what is happening across the service. We will explore the practical tools we can use and working practices we can adopt to ensure our staff and volunteers are always in the loop.



Develop an online platform

We will develop our online service to ensure it is high quality, welcoming and inclusive. Our digital library will have a more user-friendly interface and enhanced functionality, such as online bookings for special events and activities. It will also offer a more personalised service, including bespoke recommendations based on borrowing habits.



Update the printing services offered to customers

We will introduce Wi-Fi and self-service printing for customers to reduce the need for expensive home printing, bringing environmental benefits.



Roll out better mobile technology for staff and volunteers

We will provide staff and volunteers with mobile devices so that they can work more flexibly when dealing with customers, or when working in the community. Other colleagues will also be able to work in our buildings when they are out and about or not based in their usual workplace.

“Helpful catalogue so I can find the books I want”

Library customer



Skills for the future

Our libraries offer services to help residents develop new skills from job seeking to creative writing.

Our Work Clubs provide computers, software and technical support to help people use online resources to find jobs and guide them to other sources of employment advice. Our Code Clubs, led by volunteers, introduce programming to young people interested in creating digital content. They also give them the chance to learn about computational thinking, problem solving, planning, designing and collaboration. Through the funding available from our levelling up programme, we will be exploring how we can further expand our range of support for people who want to increase their skills.



“I enjoy working as a volunteer because I like helping the customers and interacting with people”

Galina, Volunteer at Braintree Library

Environmental initiatives

We are doing our bit for the environment. We:

- distribute and collect recycling bags, batteries and small electrical items
- provide ‘inkbins’ to recycle ink cartridges
- collect old laptops to be refurbished for those in need

In partnership with Active Essex, we lend out sports and leisure equipment, so that you don’t need to buy them.

We also consider the environment when we build or upgrade our libraries. Some of our libraries have solar panels and most have LED lighting. Carbon emissions in

new buildings will be at least one-third lower than required by current building regulations. We will install fittings to reduce water consumption. New buildings will have mechanical ventilation and heat recovery systems to prevent overheating and recycle heat, providing clean low-cost energy and air cooling.



Solar panels at Brightlingsea Library



Harlow Library refurbishment

Harlow Library is a large two-storey building from the 1960s in the heart of the town centre. It was extensively refurbished in 2022 and is now a high quality, welcoming and inclusive space meeting residents' needs and accommodating Adult Community Learning (ACL).

The improved library space includes:

- good stocks of books and resources that customers want
- a café serving light snacks and drinks
- a large, vibrant, exciting children's library, with sensory equipment
- a modern, flexible layout that can be used for events and group gatherings
- quiet spaces where you can sit, study, read or work
- a literacy area, with special books and materials for people of all ages who want help with their reading
- an event/exhibition space on the first floor run in partnership with ACL

All windows have been replaced; there is a new heating and ventilation system; new flooring and decoration.

"We didn't have much money and being able to have somewhere free to take them was invaluable, as well as being able to share books that I couldn't afford. It greatly improved my mental health."

Library customer



Love Your Library Day at Harwich Library



Drag Queen Storytime, Colchester

"Good to meet other people. I feel [the Baby Book workshop] has done me a lot of good also. Thank you!"

Dunmow Library workshop participant





Supporting communities and levelling up

Books and reading are our core offer, but Essex library service also brings people together, fosters culture and creativity, helps people to learn lifelong skills, improve health and wellbeing, and provides a place where people can access information and support.

We offer a huge range of services and activities like baby weighing sessions, support to people with a visual or hearing impairment, and clubs where you can make new friends and learn a new skill or hobby.

In partnership with others, we help residents improve their digital skills and find jobs, while our coding clubs help young people become IT wizards.

We are also passionate about supporting the environment and are continually thinking about how we can do more to make a difference to climate change.

“The Knit and Natter group puts a smile on many people’s faces”
Sharon, group organiser

To support our communities to level up, our libraries will:

 **Expand our outreach service further**

Many of our customers visit our library buildings, but we also care about those residents who, for different reasons, cannot get to their local library. We will ensure they know about the Home Library Service and, if needed, we can arrange a visit from one of our friendly volunteers.

We want to connect with local partners and be part of community events and activities so we will expand our mobile and outreach offer and take the library service out into the community.

 **Improve employability**

In partnership with organisations such as Adult Community Learning, business and community groups, we will expand our employment support programmes. We will explore how libraries can be used in innovative ways to help adults gain new skills, improve their employability and find jobs.

 **Help improve health and wellbeing**

We will explore with partners how we can offer residents help to improve their health and wellbeing, through our range of books, resources and activities. We believe we have an important part to play to reduce social isolation and improve mental health.

 **Help reduce digital exclusion**

We will use our libraries to narrow the divide between those who have access to and who can use new technology and those who don’t and can’t. We will explore opportunities to increase technology training so that Essex residents can develop new skills and access services and information online. Through our outreach programme, we will take the library service and digital experience out to the community.



“Very helpful staff”

Library customer

“Will go the extra mile to give a good service”

Library customer

Connect residents to new, exciting services

We will continue to develop partnerships that provide our customers with access to support services that can have a positive impact on their lives such as the Citizens Advice. We will also engage with external partners such as The Literacy Trust, The Arts Council, and Libraries Connected to deliver exciting projects to encourage people to read and enjoy storytelling and the arts.



“Good resources for studying and research”

Library customer

Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities

Libraries already offer a range of activities outside the core service. These include events such as holiday activities for children and young people. We will explore options for chargeable activities that we could offer in addition to our free sessions. These would provide an enhanced offer, service or experience to our existing customers; appeal to new users of the service; or raise awareness of libraries as a potential partner and venue for other organisations. We will explore the interest from all age groups for sessions such as adult arts and crafts to increase the use of our libraries by the local community.



Page 57 of 224

Reducing social isolation



Reading Friend participant.

Delivered in partnership with national charity The Reading Agency, the Reading Friends scheme aims to tackle life’s big challenges, such as loneliness and isolation, through the power of reading.

The scheme brings people together with trained volunteers over the phone, as part of an online group or in person at one of our libraries. Using books, magazines, newspapers, or anything else, the group starts chatting, shares stories and builds social connections. This can be invaluable for vulnerable people.

“I attended Rhymetime sessions with both my children, and it was invaluable for meeting other parents when I may have otherwise felt isolated in my local area.”

Library customer

“Helpful opening times”

Library customer



Mobile library and outreach service

Our mobile library and outreach service provides access to books and other resources to people who don't already visit libraries. It visits places such as retirement communities, traveller sites, schools, preschools, youth clubs and community centres. It provides a service for established and new communities in a flexible and agile way and enables us to target areas identified in the levelling up programme.

The mobile library and outreach service will also support the Summer Reading Challenge, the Year of Reading, and new events, such as summer fetes and holiday activity clubs.

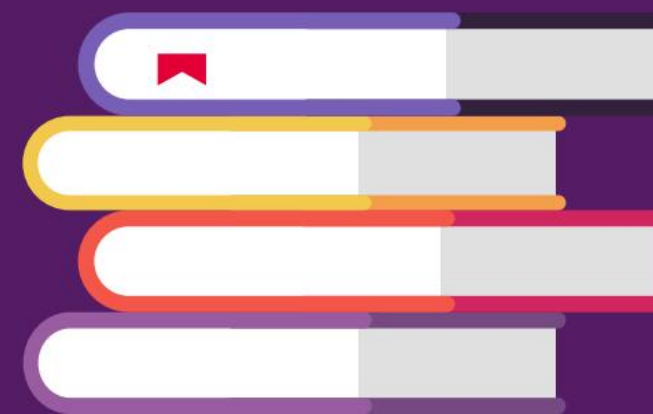
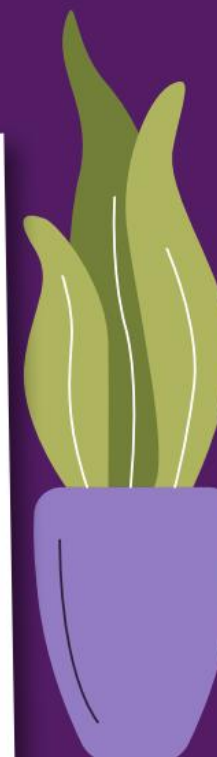
“The library is where I form friendships with like-minded book lovers.... When I’m new to an area, the library is my first destination. There I know I will find a warm welcome and help from the librarians.”

Clacton Library customer



Interior of the new vehicle

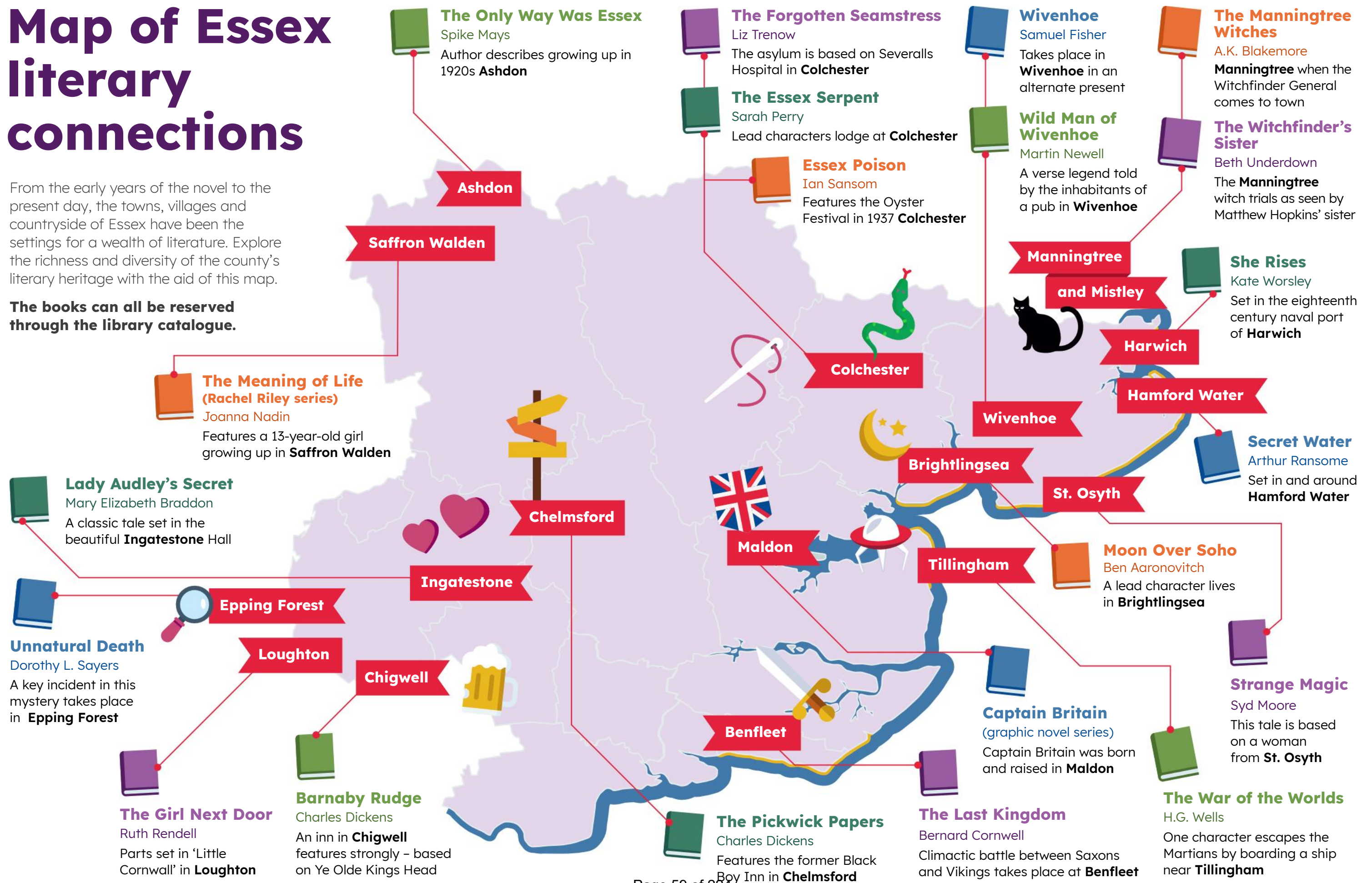
The mobile library at Hylands House



Map of Essex literary connections

From the early years of the novel to the present day, the towns, villages and countryside of Essex have been the settings for a wealth of literature. Explore the richness and diversity of the county's literary heritage with the aid of this map.

The books can all be reserved through the library catalogue.



This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Essex Library Service

Contact us:
[**libraries@essex.gov.uk**](mailto:libraries@essex.gov.uk)
[**libraries.essex.gov.uk**](http://libraries.essex.gov.uk)
0345 603 7633

Essex Library Service
Essex County Council
County Hall, Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1QH

 twitter.com/essexlibraries
 facebook.com/essexlibraries
 instagram.com/essexlibraries

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

Published April 2022

Essex County Council Everyone's Library Service 2022 – 2026 consultation summary report

Prepared by Lake Market Research

February 2022

Background and Methodology

Background and aim of consultation:

- Essex County Council is the second largest library authority in the country, serving a population of nearly 1.5 million residents across a network of 74 libraries, two mobile library vehicles, an online e-library service, and a home library delivery service provided by volunteers to residents who cannot access onsite or mobile services:
- With a new administration and new Plan for Essex in place, Essex County Council are refocussing their vision and plans for the future of Library services. This plan sets out high-level aims for the service and the areas the service will be working on over the next four years:
 - Library Service and Literacy
 - Infrastructure and Communications
 - Supporting communities and Levelling Up
- Essex County Council launched a consultation with the aim of seeking views from Essex residents, library service users and organisations about the draft plan and areas of focus

Methodology:

- The consultation was hosted on Essex County Council's consultation portal for 8 weeks from 26th November 2020 to 21st January 2022.
- The consultation was publicised through a range of channels, including ECC and Essex Libraries social media channels and websites, resident and library newsletters Essex is Green social media channels, local, regional and national press.

Point to note:

- 2,213 responses were received via the consultation questionnaire - 2,185 from individuals and 28 from organisations. 7 emails were received and reviewed by this report's author.
- Please note that participation in consultations are self-selecting and this needs to be considered when interpreting responses.
- Responses to consultations do not wholly represent the wider Essex population and is reliant on awareness and propensity to take part based on the topic and interest.
- Essex County Council were responsible for the design, promotion and collection of the consultation responses. Lake Market Research were appointed to conduct an independent analysis of feedback.

Profile of respondents taking part

- The tables on the right depict the demographic profile of Individual respondents against the active profile of Essex library users¹. The proportion who left these questions blank or indicated they did not want to disclose this information has been included as applicable.
- The vast majority of the respondents completed the survey as ‘a resident from Essex’.
- The consultation achieved representation across demographic groups and districts.

1) Based on profile of active library users (177,726 – used library card within the last year). District is based on home location selected at the point of joining the library.

	Total	Library user %
Male	24%	32%
Female	70%	53%
Non-binary	0%	0%
Prefer not to say / blank	5%	14%
Under 16	1%	-
16-24	2%	10%
25-34	7%	14%
35-44	14%	19%
45-54	15%	14%
55-64	21%	14%
65 & over	37%	31%
Prefer not to say / blank	4%	3%

	Total	Library user %
Basildon	7%	13%
Braintree	11%	10%
Brentwood	6%	6%
Castle Point	5%	5%
Chelmsford	15%	14%
Colchester	17%	14%
Epping Forest	6%	8%
Harlow	3%	6%
Maldon	4%	4%
Rochford	5%	6%
Tendring	10%	9%
Uttlesford	5%	6%

- 28 organisations responded to the consultation: 12 from community groups, 10 from town or parish councils, 4 from other public bodies, 1 from a registered charity and 1 did not disclose the type of organisation they represent.

Executive Summary

Library services have a significant impact on the lives of those responding to the consultation. A number of benefits are highlighted including access to books, fostering reading / enjoyment of reading, a service for the family / all generations, mental health benefits and access to free material that some couldn't afford otherwise.

Overall agreement is particularly strong for five of the aim one areas with a significant proportion strongly agreeing with these aims. Agreement with exploration of new roles and opportunities for volunteers is markedly lower amongst individuals responding and new opportunities to generate additional income is markedly lower amongst individuals and organisations responding.

Overall agreement is high for five of the aim two areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas. Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas e.g. printing services offer and new online library platform, amongst individuals and organisations responding.

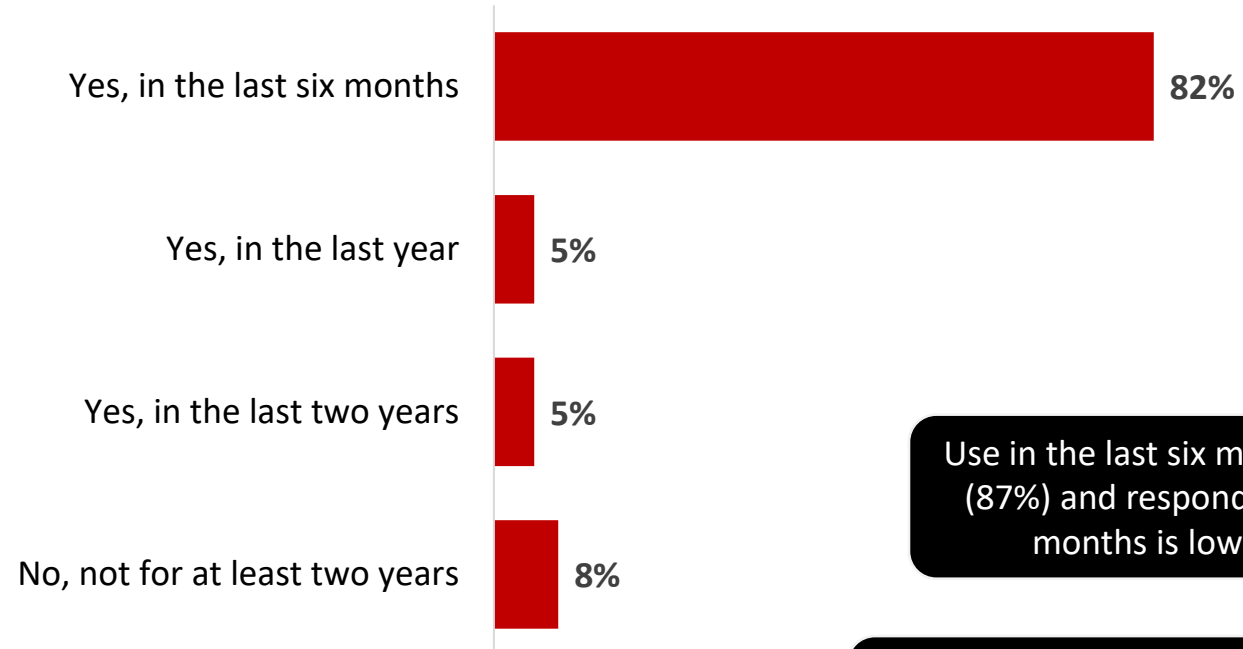
Overall agreement is high for five of the aim three areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas amongst individuals. Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside existing free activities is markedly lower amongst individuals and organisations.

Usage and familiarity with library services

Recency of library use

- The vast majority (92%) of those responding to the consultation have used Essex’s library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online in the last two years. 82% have used Essex’s library facilities in the last six months.
- Only 8% of those responding to the consultation indicated they have not used Essex’s library services for at least two years.

Have you used any of Essex’s library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online?



Supporting data table		%
Yes, in the last six months		82%
Yes, in the last year		5%
Yes, in the last two years		5%
No, not for at least two years		8%

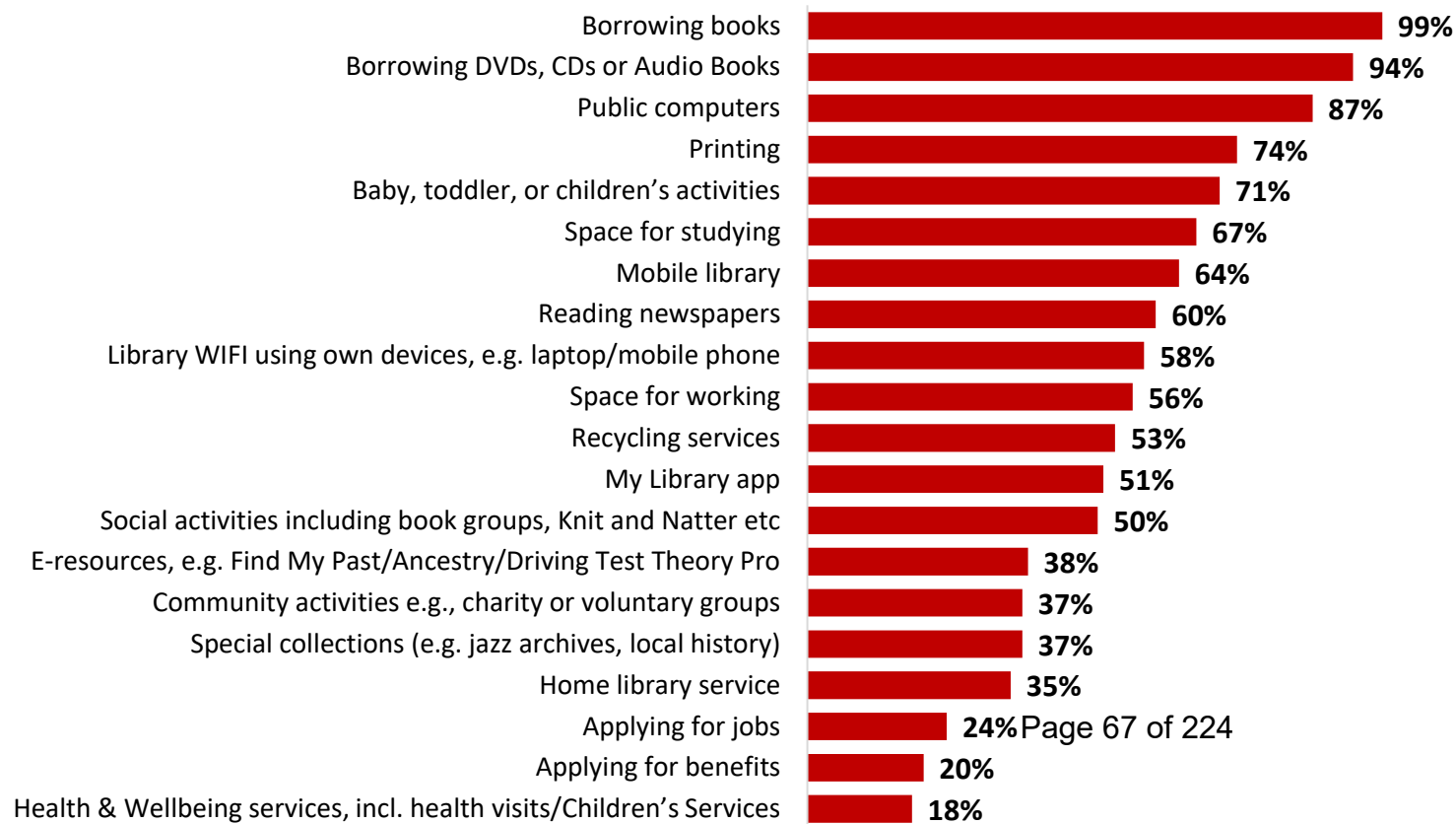
Use in the last six months is higher amongst respondents aged 35-44 (87%) and respondents aged 65 and over (84%). Use in the last six months is lower amongst respondents aged 45-54 (76%).

Use in the last six months is higher amongst respondents who are employed part time (84%) and respondents who are retired (85%). Use in the last six months is lower amongst respondents who are employed full time (73%).

Individual awareness of library services

- As expected, the vast majority are aware of book borrowing (99%) and DVD, CD or audio book borrowing (94%). Awareness of accessing technology through use of public computers (87%) or printing (74%) is also high.
- Just over two thirds (67%) are aware of the service providing space for studying and 56% are aware of space for working. Claimed awareness of outreach services is mixed with 64% aware of the mobile library service and 35% aware of the home library service.
- Awareness of community activities and health and wellbeing services are comparatively lower at 37% and 18% respectively.

Are you aware of the following library services?



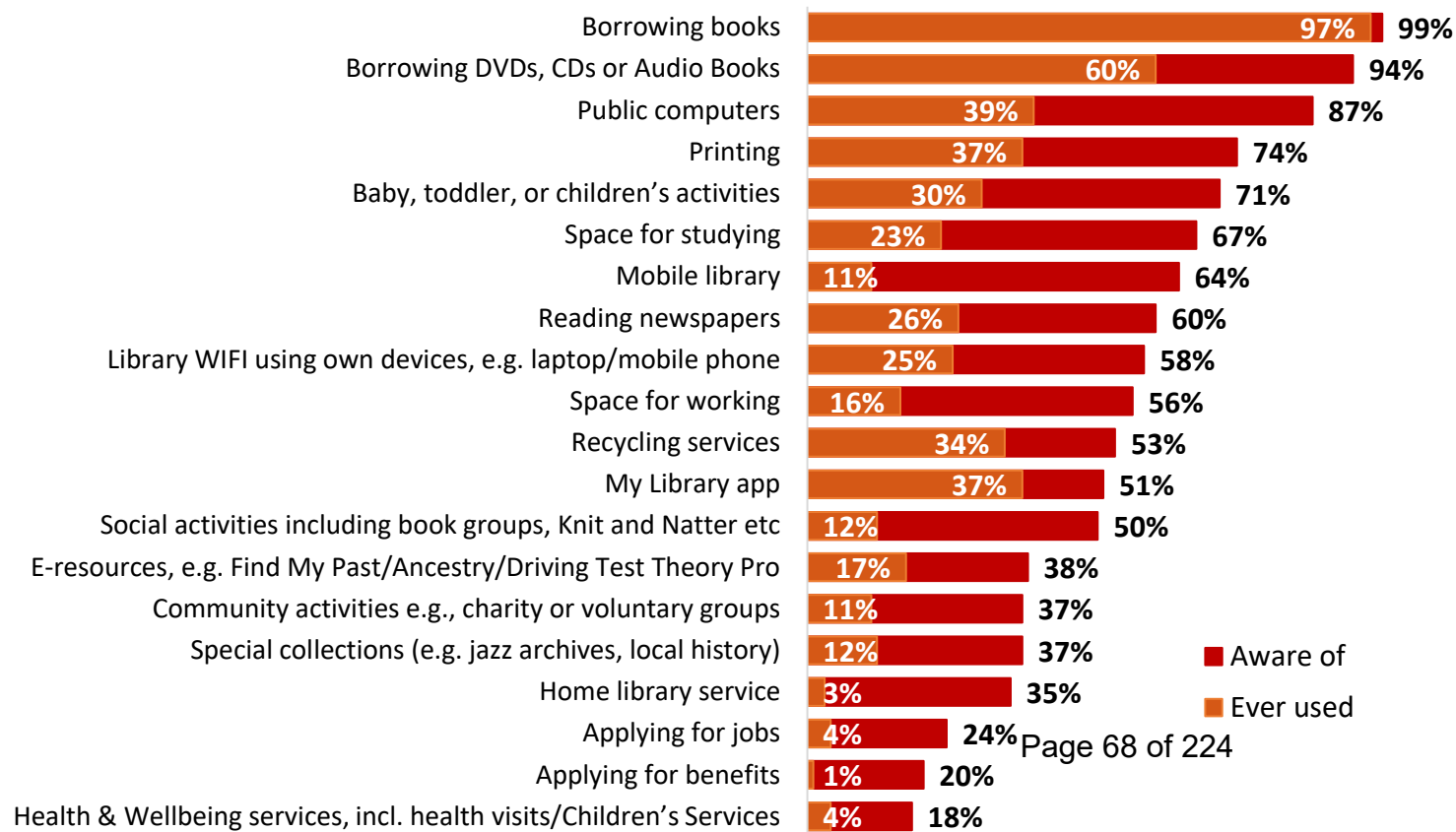
Supporting data table	%
Borrowing books	99%
Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio books	94%
Public computers	87%
Printing	74%
Baby, toddler or children's activities	71%
Space for studying	67%
Mobile library	64%
Reading newspapers	60%
Library WIFI using own devices	58%
Space for working	56%
Recycling services	53%
My Library app	51%
Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter	50%
E-resources, e.g. Find My Past / Ancestry / Driving Test Theory Pro	38%
Community activities, e.g. charity or voluntary groups	37%
Special collections	37%
Home library service	35%
Applying for jobs	25%
Applying for benefits	20%
Health and Wellbeing services	18%

Base: all Individuals answering (2,184)

Individual use of library services

- As expected, the vast majority have borrowed books from the library (97%). 60% have borrowed DVDs, CDs or audio books before.
- Over a third have used public computers (39%), printing (37%), the ‘My Library app’ (37%) and recycling services (34%). Around a quarter have used the facilities for reading newspapers (26%) and the library Wi-Fi for use on respondents’ own devices (25%).
- Claimed use of the outreach services is comparatively low at 11% for the mobile library service and 3% for the home library service.

Have you ever used the library service for any of the following?



Supporting data table	Aware	Use
Borrowing books	99%	97%
Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio books	94%	60%
Public computers	87%	39%
Printing	74%	37%
Baby, toddler or children's activities	71%	30%
Space for studying	67%	23%
Mobile library	64%	11%
Reading newspapers	60%	26%
Library WIFI using own devices	58%	25%
Space for working	56%	16%
Recycling services	53%	34%
My Library app	51%	37%
Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter	50%	12%
E-resources, e.g. Find My Past / Ancestry / Driving Test Theory Pro	38%	17%
Community activities, e.g. charity or voluntary groups	37%	11%
Special collections	37%	12%
Home library service	35%	3%
Applying for jobs	25%	4%
Applying for benefits	20%	1%
Health and Wellbeing services	18%	4%

Base: all Individuals answering (2,170)

Individuals comments on perceived impact of library service on life

- Access to books is the most common theme (60%); supported by 28% also referencing reading as being crucial / enjoyable and the service fosters reading. Being able to use the service as a family, either currently or in previous years, and the fond memories held are common with 41% commenting.
- One in five believe the services offers mental health benefits and 18% believe it offers access to free material that some couldn't afford to access otherwise.

Individuals comments on impact of library service, coded into key themes	%
Provides access to books	60%
Used as a child / take my children / grandchildren	41%
Lost without library / big part of life / rely on it / value / use regularly	36%
Reading is crucial / enjoyable / read a lot / fosters reading	28%
Free access / could not afford it otherwise	24%
Activities / groups / meetings	23%
Improves mental health / sanity / lifeline / isolation / socialising	20%
Provides access to other resources / ability to research	18%
Provides access to wide ranging material / new subjects / genres / authors	17%
Place to work / study	15%
Access to audiobooks / eBooks / CDs / DVDs	14%
Helpful / useful / accessible resource / service	13%
Welcoming / warm / comfortable / quiet / safe / pleasant surroundings	11%
Can reserve books online / collect books / drop-off & collections points	11%
Community asset	11%
IT / printing / photocopying / Wi-Fi / are essential	10%
Staff are friendly / helpful	10%
Expand knowledge / learn / educate / access to other genres / authors	10%
Used all my life	10%
Helped me through the pandemic / lockdown	9%
Work for / worked for / volunteer for library service	5%
Access to newspapers / magazines - physical / online / on app	5%
Somewhere to read	4%

Please note - 87% of Consultees answered this question

Libraries are the only place where anyone can go, regardless of socioeconomic background and be able to access all these amazing free services and are an essential part of our community, I attended rhyme time sessions with both my children and it was invaluable for meeting other parents when I may have otherwise felt isolated in my local area. We visit regularly as a family to take out books and love that the principle of libraries reduces waste and encourages a love of books and reading.

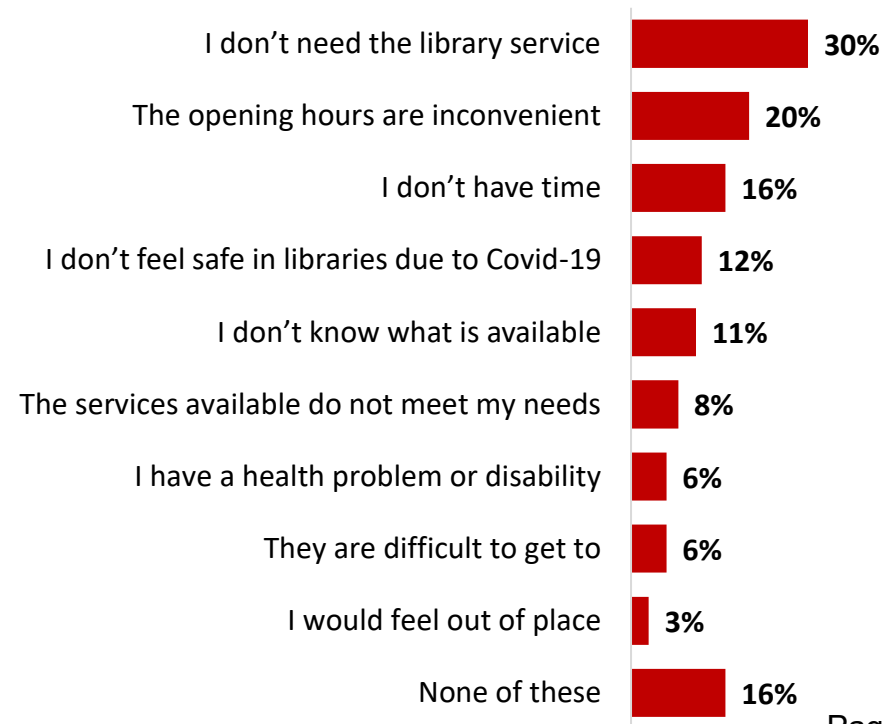
I access/use library services most days. Most commonly, I request and borrow physical books from the library and audio books from the online service. As a full time carer, these are resources I would not have the money to purchase and would therefore not have access to. Alongside the resources I borrow from the library I also use the library space on a regular basis for teaching my son (who has additional needs and is partially home schooled). The library provides us with a space away from the home environment to complete his learning tasks. Without this dedicated space, educating him would be a much greater challenge as the home environment affords many more distractions for us both.

It is an integral part of our lives as a family. We visit the library often to borrow books (every three weeks or more often). We use the online resources daily especially the borrowbox and press reader apps. Our daughter has enjoyed the rhyme time sessions and one off craft events held in the library. The staff are wonderful, so friendly and helpful and we would be lost without our local library.

Reasons for not currently using library services

- The most common reason for not using Essex Library Service is simply not having a need to (30%), followed by a perception of inconvenient opening hours (20%) and not having the time to use them (16%).
- 11% of those not using the services are unsure of what is available.

If you do not currently use Essex Library Services, what are the reasons for this?



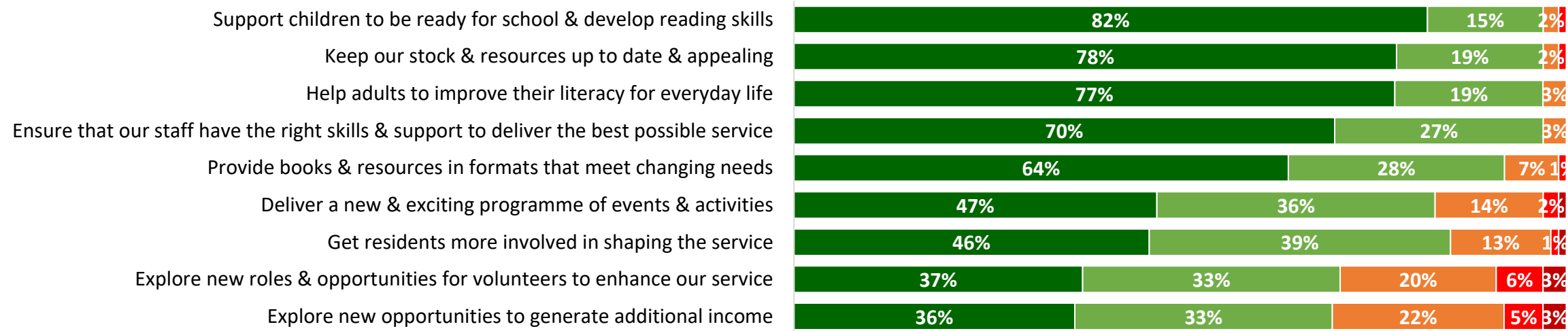
Supporting data table		%
I don't need the library service		30%
The opening hours are inconvenient		20%
I don't have time		16%
I don't feel safe in libraries due to Covid-19		12%
I don't know what is available		11%
The services available do not meet my needs		8%
I have a health problem or disability		6%
They are difficult to get to		6%
I would feel out of place		3%
None of these		16%

Individuals overall opinion of key aims put forward

Individuals support for Aim One areas – Library Service and Literacy

- Overall agreement is particularly strong for five of the aim one areas with a significant proportion strongly agreeing with these aims.
- Agreement with exploration of new roles and opportunities for volunteers and new opportunities to generate additional income is markedly lower.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims...?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Support children to be ready for school & develop reading skills	82%	15%	2%	1%	0%
Keep our stock & resources up to date & appealing	78%	19%	2%	1%	0%
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life	77%	19%	3%	0%	0%
Ensure our staff have the right skills & support to deliver the best possible service	70%	27%	3%	0%	0%
Provide books & resources in formats that meet changing needs	64%	28%	7%	1%	0%
Deliver a new & exciting programme of events & activities	47%	36%	14%	2%	1%
Get residents more involved in shaping the service	46%	39%	13%	1%	1%
Explore new roles & opportunities for volunteers to enhance service	37%	33%	20%	6%	3%
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income	36%	33%	22%	5%	3%

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Individuals comments on Aim One areas – Library Service and Literacy

- The most common theme noted is that fully well trained and paid staff are critical to the library service (25%) and volunteers should be in addition to these staff and not replacing them (18%). Some are also concerned about a potential loss of physical books to electronic alternatives (14%) and the importance of improving the range of books / investing in physical book stock (13%).
- Consistent with the comparably lower proportion of respondents agreeing, 12% of those providing a comment referenced the service should not be focusing on income generation and 10% indicated they do not support charging for services.

<i>Individuals comments on Aim One areas, coded into key themes</i>	<i>%</i>
Fully well trained & paid staff are critical to the service	25%
Volunteers should not replace trained staff only be in addition to	18%
Concerned about loss of physical books to eBooks / digital alternatives	14%
Improve range of books / invest in books / maintain if not improve book stock	13%
Children's literacy / education is so important / support library involvement / links to schools	12%
Should not focus on income generation but providing a core service	12%
Charging for services is not welcome / free service for all / priority should be a free service	10%
Support aim one areas (non-specific)	9%
Support some chargeable services / activities / with caveats / proceed with caution	8%
More events / groups / clubs / socialising	8%
Library is crucial to all / community / benefits all	7%
Support volunteers in addition to staff	7%
Suggestion for service / event / group / activity	6%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented / seems complex	6%
Increase awareness / promotion of library services	5%
Changes should not negatively affect current service levels	4%
Evolve to community hub / provide access to other services	4%
Service should be inclusive / not just about books	4%
Adults' literacy / education is so important / support library involvement	4%
Focus on providing books / core service / fostering reading / not involved in anything else	3%

Page 73 of 224

Please note - 29% of Consultees answered this question

Trained librarians are essential in the delivery of Library services and literacy. There must never be any kind of reliance on volunteers to do this, though of course volunteers should be encouraged to help.

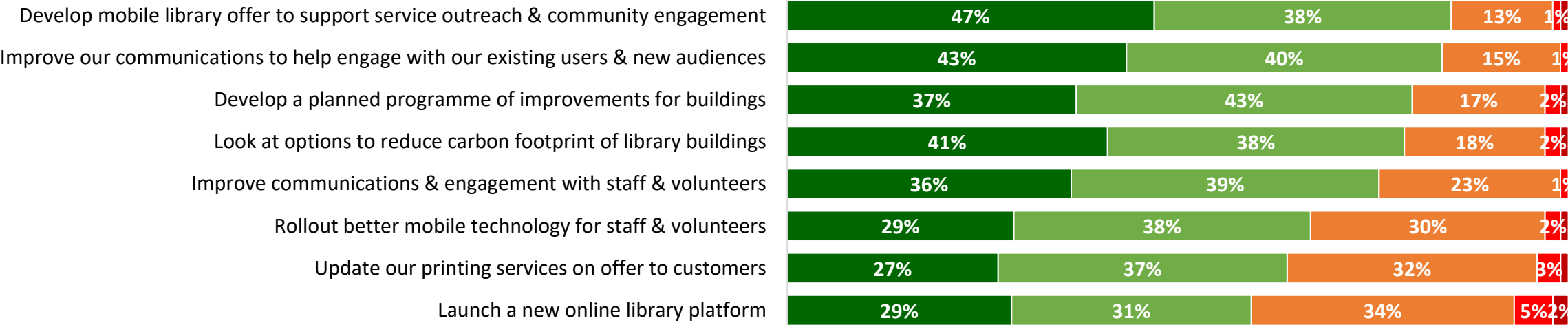
I can see the appeal to the library of exploring new opportunities to generate income, but this needs a lot of thought - you could risk making people who can't afford these services feel excluded, feel the library is not for them or not access services which are free to use because they are worried there could be a fee.

A very careful balance probably needs to be made between providing invaluable services, resources and generating further income, whilst keeping costs down as I think a huge proportion of the population are struggling on very low incomes and the struggle may become even harder and possibly much sooner rather than later. Pressure to deliver only in those areas, distracts staff from core business and discourages people from visiting.

Individuals support for Aim Two areas – Infrastructure and Communications

- Overall agreement is high for five of the aim two areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas.
- Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas e.g. printing services offer and new online library platform.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims...?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Develop mobile library offer to support service outreach & community engagement	47%	38%	13%	1%	1%
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users & new audiences	43%	40%	15%	1%	0%
Develop a planned programme of improvements for building	37%	43%	17%	2%	1%
Look at options to reduce carbon footprint of library buildings	41%	38%	18%	2%	1%
Improve communications & engagement with staff & volunteers	36%	39%	23%	1%	0%
Rollout better mobile technology for staff & volunteers	29%	38%	30%	2%	1%
Update our printing services on offer to customers	27%	37%	32%	3%	1%
Launch a new online library platform	29%	31%	34%	5%	2%

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Individuals comments on Aim Two areas – Infrastructure and Communications

- The most common theme references communication / promotion of the service is needed and communications should be improved (21%). Some are concerned about a potential loss of physical books to electronic alternatives (11%) and ensuring any changes are not to the detriment of the service as it stands currently (11%).
- Whilst a proportion put forward concerns with regards to technology, suggestions are made to improve dated IT systems (9%), more / improved IT facilities within libraries (8%) and better technology / platforms to access online services remotely (8%).

<i>Individuals comments on Aim Two areas, coded into key themes</i>	<i>%</i>
Communication / promotion / awareness of library service / improve content of comms	21%
Well trained / friendly / professional staff - proficient in tech support	13%
Retain if not expand book stock / invest in physical books / do not replace with digital alternatives	11%
Ensure changes are not to the detriment of service / space	11%
Buildings need updating / improving / better facilities / accessible	10%
Use of technology should not replace staff / reduce personal contact / supplement current service only / should not be an online service only	10%
Already have online platforms available / apps / are others needed / happy with current platforms	10%
Investment / improvement in mobile libraries / must not replace physical libraries	9%
Suggested improvements to current IT systems / systems are dated	9%
More / improved IT facilities within libraries / Wi-Fi / air printing / issues with IT	8%
In need of better technology / platforms to access online catalogue / online services remotely	8%
Buildings should be welcoming / provide a quiet space for reading/study / comfortable chairs	7%
Service must be fully inclusive - elderly / disabled - not everyone uses technology	7%
Support aim two areas (non-specific)	6%
Physical libraries important for community	6%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented	6%
Can't comment on certain issues / don't understand some of the terms used	5%
Improved printing service not needed / contradicts carbon footprint reduction	4%
Carbon footprint reduction is a worthy aim	4%
No improvement to buildings necessary / not a priority	4%
Communication is adequate	4%
Where is funding coming from / sounds costly / how much will this cost	4%

Page 75 of 224

Please note - 22% of Consultees answered this question

Promotion of services is all within the library and its own social media so most people don't know what is on offer. Events and activities should be promoted externally on village social media pages.

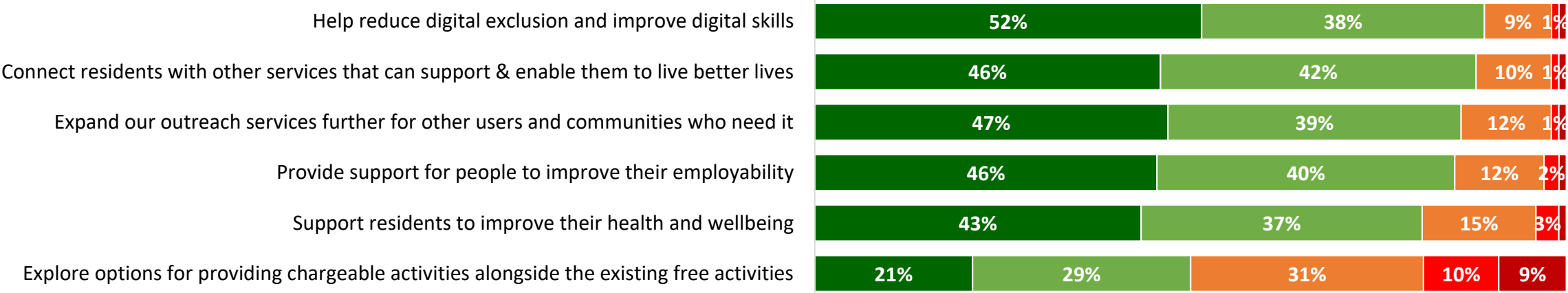
The online, app and e-book offer is really important in the modern world and the library has made great strides forward on this front in recent years. It's important to build upon this and continue to increase the e-book offer and keep it up to date. It would also be great for many if library e-books could be compatible with Kindle, the most popular e-reader, though I appreciate this is a wider issue than within Essex libraries.

Buildings should be inviting and accessible for all; children, those with disability mental, physical and sensory. The community need to know what the library has to offer. Outreach on social media can be improved. I feel the existing online library platform is underused. People won't use it if they do not know it exists!

Individuals support for Aim Three Areas – Supporting Communities and Levelling up

- Overall agreement is high for five of the aim three areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas.
- Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside existing free activities is markedly lower.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims...?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills	52%	38%	9%	1%	1%
Connect residents with other services that can support & enable them to live better lives	46%	42%	10%	1%	1%
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it	47%	39%	12%	1%	1%
Provide support for people to improve their employability	46%	40%	12%	2%	1%
Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing	43%	37%	15%	3%	1%
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	21%	29%	31%	10%	9%

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Individuals comments on Aim Three areas – Supporting Communities and Levelling up

- Over one in five (22%) of those providing a comment noted a preference for the service to stick to the core offering and not be involved in other services that are provided elsewhere. 14% of those providing a comment noted they believe all services should be free and nothing should be chargeable. 11% also referred to the potential for chargeable services to exclude or deter people.
- Some noted the library service could act as a community hub / encourage socialisation (12%) and a hub for health / outreach (8%).

Individuals comments on Aim Three areas, coded into key themes		%
Should stick to core services / not be involved in other services that are provided elsewhere		22%
All services should be free / nothing chargeable		14%
Could act as a community hub / socialisation		12%
Chargeable services likely to exclude / deter people		11%
Changes must not compromise book stocks / opening hours / staffing levels / space / service		9%
Hub for health / other services / outreach		8%
Support this aim		8%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented		8%
Provide activities / groups / clubs / events		7%
Staff should focus on library service / too much for them to do if services expanded		7%
Services must be promoted / advertised / attract new users		6%
Some chargeable services could be beneficial / acceptable / must be cautious		6%
Staff must be appropriately trained		6%
IT support/training / equipment / online functionality required		6%
Chargeable services should be in addition to free services / not compromise free services		5%
Do not turn libraries into an online service only / do not replace physical books		4%
Space could be rented out / space for activities	Page 77 of 224	4%
Could signpost services / provide information but nothing further		4%
Should not be commercialised / not a money-making operation		3%

Please note - 17% of Consultees answered this question

In expanding library services, it is essential not to lose sight of the primary purpose of a library - to provide books to borrow and the range of available books could be expanded – i.e. more books .

I think libraries can be key to bringing communities together, and organisations should be able to utilise library spaces and rent them after closing hours (gets people into the building who might not otherwise and could encourage them to use libraries more often in the future).

Often libraries are in the centre of town, accessible, visible and with working hours opening times. There is an important and valuable role for libraries to play in acting as a connector and referrer of people to other community-based services to support health wellbeing, employability and so on.

Individuals comments on chargeable areas they would like to see

- Just under one in five (18%) of those providing a comment noted they believe all services should be free and nothing should be chargeable. 9% also referred to the potential for chargeable services to exclude or deter people.
- Of those that put forward ideas for potential chargeable services, the most common are arts & crafts / artist exhibitions (16%), talks by authors / writing workshops (13%), café / refreshment provision (12%) and activities for children / teenagers / including after school / school holiday specific activities (12%).

Please note - 32% of Consultees answered this question

<i>Chargeable activities individuals would like to see, coded into key themes</i>	<i>%</i>
All services should be free / nothing chargeable	18%
Chargeable services likely to exclude / deter people	9%
Arts & crafts / artist exhibitions	16%
Prepared to pay / charge must be reasonable / if to cover costs / donations	14%
Talks by authors / writing workshops	13%
Café / refreshment provision	12%
Activities for children / teenagers / including after school/school holidays	12%
Workshops / courses / learning / talks / lectures	11%
Printing / photocopying / computer use / IT support	11%
Renting out space / providing space for groups / meetings / activities	10%
Only charge for additional services / core services must be free	8%
Drama / music / film / photography	8%
Host clubs / community groups / meetings / social groups	7%
Out of hours use	6%
Collaborate with / provide space for commercial services – banks, post office, solicitors / council	6%

<i>Chargeable activities individuals would like to see, coded into key themes</i>	<i>%</i>
Chargeable activities cannot take precedence over core services / detract from core services	5%
Some charging for services is needed (non-specific)	5%
Games (board & computer) / jigsaws / toys / DVDs	4%
More information required / examples	4%
Book clubs / reading groups / recommendations	4%
Act as community hubs	4%
Health services / mental health / wellbeing	4%
Baby / toddler groups	3%
Life skills / numeracy / literacy skills / CV writing / employability	3%
History / geology / ancestry	3%
Adult education / support for students	3%
Learning a language / sign language	3%
Small contribution to running costs / charge for inter-library lending / more for late fees	3%

Page 78 of 224

Significant differences in agreement with aims by age

- A higher proportion of respondents aged 55 & over strongly agree with four of the aim one statements (supporting children, keep up to date / appealing stock resources, improving adult literacy and staff skilling). A higher proportion of respondents aged 25-44 strongly agree with delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities.
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 55 & over support mobile library service development and a higher proportion of respondents aged 25-34 strongly agree with launching a new online platform.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims...?

AIM ONE – LIBRARY SERVICE AND LITERACY	Aged 25-34	Aged 35-44	Aged 45-54	Aged 55-64	Aged 65+
% strongly agreeing with aim to support children to be ready for school and develop their reading skills	76%	81%	83%	84%	85%
% strongly agreeing with aim to keep stock resources up to date and appealing	72%	78%	80%	79%	82%
% strongly agreeing with aim to help adults improve their literacy for everyday life	70%	74%	77%	80%	81%
% strongly agreeing with aim to ensure staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible services	59%	67%	73%	71%	72%
% strongly agreeing with aim to deliver a new and exciting programme of events and activities	54%	58%	48%	49%	42%

AIM TWO – INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS	Aged 25-34	Aged 35-44	Aged 45-54	Aged 55-64	Aged 65+
% overall support for developing the mobile library service to support service outreach and community engagement	83%	78%	83%	89%	87%
% strongly agreeing with aim for launching a new online library platform	41%	27%	33%	30%	25%

Page 79 of 224

% significantly higher response than other age groups

Significant differences in agreement with aims by district

- Differences in response are particularly evident from respondents living in Basildon and Harlow. A higher proportion of Basildon residents support four of the aim one areas and two of the aim two areas.
- A higher proportion of Harlow residents support four of the aim two areas.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims...?

AIM ONE – LIBRARY SERVICE AND LITERACY	Basildon	Castle Point	Colchester	Harlow	Tendring
% overall support for providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs	97%	94%	89%	91%	92%
% overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities	90%	85%	80%	86%	85%
% overall support for exploring new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service	79%	78%	65%	70%	67%
% overall support for exploring new opportunities to generate additional income	79%	71%	60%	63%	70%

AIM TWO – INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS	Basildon	Castle Point	Colchester	Harlow	Tendring
% overall support for developing a planned programme of improvements for buildings	83%	78%	81%	89%	82%
% overall support for improving communications and engagement with staff and volunteers	79%	76%	76%	90%	77%
% overall support for rollout of better mobile technology for staff and volunteers	72%	68%	69%	79%	66%
% overall support for updating the printing services on offer to customers	71%	75%	66%	79%	63%
% strongly agreeing with aim for launching a new online library platform	71%	63%	57%	67%	58%

AIM THREE – SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND LEVELLING UP	Basildon	Castle Point	Colchester	Harlow	Tendring
% overall support for providing support for people to improve employability	84%	86%	86%	88%	91%
% overall support for exploring options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	54%	56%	41%	51%	52%

Page 80 of 224

% significantly higher response than other districts

% significantly lower response than other districts

Individuals other comments related to the Essex libraries plan

- A quarter (25%) of those providing a comment requested that all current libraries should stay open or were concerned about their local library building closing. In addition, 16% commented on how important the library service is to the community / residents.
- Some reiterated previous comments in terms of a larger range of material / book stock (13%) and fully trained staff and volunteers / having enough staff (12%). 8% requested longer opening hours / opening on additional days.

<i>Other comments related to the plan for Essex libraries, coded into key themes</i>	<i>%</i>
Libraries must stay open / concerned about closures of particular libraries	25%
Crucially important for community / vital for residents	16%
Offer a large range of materials / increase book / up-to-date stock	13%
Support plans outlined	13%
Staff & volunteers must be fully trained / polite / friendly / need to make sure of enough staff	12%
Longer opening hours required / open on more days	8%
Must be inclusive / accessible / cater to all	8%
Communication / engagement / promote services / attract new users	8%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented / where is funding coming from	7%
Should be supported / invested in / funded / secured for future	6%
Services to be free / no charging	6%
Important to focus on core library services	6%
Activities / groups / meetings are needed	5%
Service / opening hours / space must be maintained	5%
Used as a community resource / information point for services	5%
Praise for current libraries / staff	5%
In need of upgrade / new facilities / parking / toilets / refreshment provision	4%
Continue to offer IT support / use of equipment / Wi-Fi / online provision	4%
Volunteers should not replace trained / paid staff	4%
Online offer should not replace physical books	4%

Page 81 of 224

Please note - 28% of Consultees answered this question

Libraries should continue to operate and none should be closed down. Not everyone has access to the internet for reading and learning services, and even those who do may not wish to use the internet for this purpose. From a personal point of view, I learn much more easily reading from a book than from a screen.

Make libraries more accessible for all. Utilise libraries for the community, include coffee areas, provision for talks with people of interest. Children's groups, assistance for those with extra needs. Our libraries can be so much more than just borrowing books.

I would hope that libraries will continue to be provided for local people to enable those from a variety of groups to participate and enjoy them. Libraries should be well stocked to encourage usage. The running down of libraries has put many people off visiting at all. Encourage activities that will bring people back to their local library.

Individual comments related to the future of Essex libraries

- A quarter (25%) of those providing a comment would like to see a good stock of books / wider / more up to date range of books.
- Other common comments focused on the social aspect of the service and its development – activities / events / opportunities to socialise (17%), more of a community focus / community hub moving forward (17%), engaging / working with schools / children / young people (12%).

<i>What individuals would like to see from Essex libraries in future, coded into key themes</i>	<i>%</i>
Good stock of books / wider range of books / keep up-to-date	25%
Avoid closures / retain current libraries / expand	19%
Activities / events / clubs / opportunities to socialise	17%
More of a community focus / community hub / community engagement moving forward	17%
Longer opening hours / open more days / everyday / out of hours usage	14%
Engaging / working with schools / children / young people / catering for	12%
Friendly / professional fully trained paid staff / not replaced by volunteers	12%
Continuity of current service / maintain existing service / happy with service	12%
Increase awareness / promotion of library services / attract new users	11%
Be inclusive / accessible for all	10%
Welcoming / friendly / quiet / safe environment / for study / reading / working	10%
Support learning / literacy / research / continue to foster reading	8%
Up-to-date resources / info / well stocked (unspecified)	8%
Provision of audiobooks / eBooks / online services / digital resources / keep up-to-date	7%
Provision of IT / printers / Wi-Fi / IT support / some improvement required to IT	6%
Evolving / dynamic up-to-date/improved services / adapting to needs of users / vary by library	6%
Space to use for clubs / groups / meetings / socialising	6%
Improved search / online library system / app / collection/return system	6%
Modern / keep up-to-date buildings with facilities i.e. toilets, parking	4%
Be a free service to all to use	4%
Selected services / collaboration / signposting non-library services	4%
Continual funding / investment / support / fit for future	4%

Page 82 of 224

Please note – 73% of Consultees answered this question

A continued commitment to meeting the diversity of borrowers' needs, i.e. not restricting book stock and other services to those that are useful to the majority but making sure that minority interests are catered for.

I am really happy with the service received so far. We enjoy visiting different libraries around Chelmsford. Perhaps more outdoor reading events in the spring/summer? We attended a lovely event where the library joined forces with Heart and Sole walking group to go for a walk then have a story in the park. Lovely experience had by all. A great way to bring the community together.

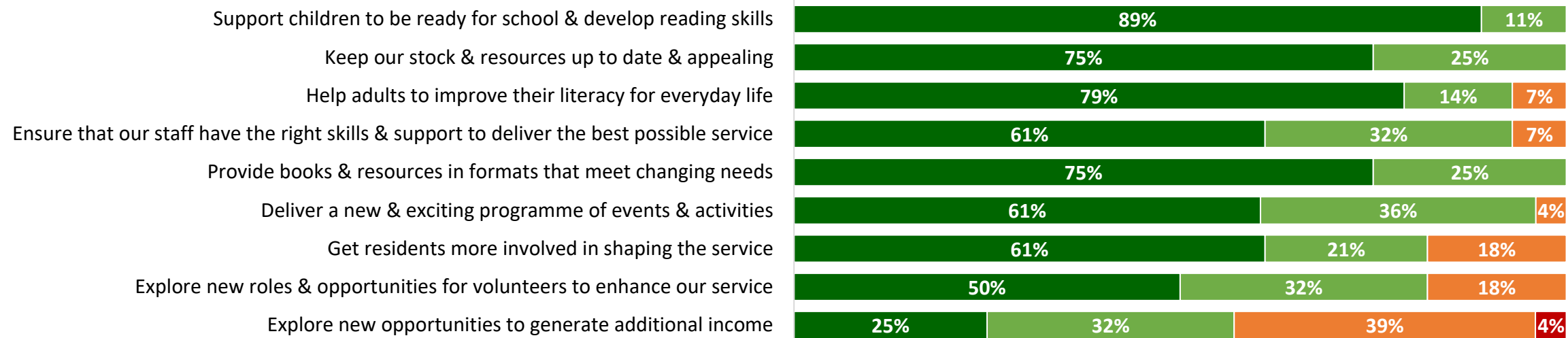
A far more dynamic and integrated service which combines a variety of local and community services and which reaches out positively to the community it serves.

Organisations overall opinion of key aims put forward

Organisations support for Aim One areas – Library Service and Literacy

- Overall agreement is strong for eight of the aim one areas with a significant proportion strongly agreeing with these aims.
- Agreement with exploration of new opportunities to generate additional income is markedly lower.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims...?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Support children to be ready for school & develop reading skills	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Keep our stock & resources up to date & appealing	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life	79%	14%	7%	0%	0%
Ensure our staff have the right skills & support to deliver the best possible service	61%	32%	7%	0%	0%
Provide books & resources in formats that meet changing needs	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Deliver a new & exciting programme of events & activities	61%	36%	4%	0%	0%
Get residents more involved in shaping the service	61%	21%	18%	0%	0%
Explore new roles & opportunities for volunteers to enhance service	50%	32%	18%	0%	0%
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income	25%	32%	39%	0%	4%

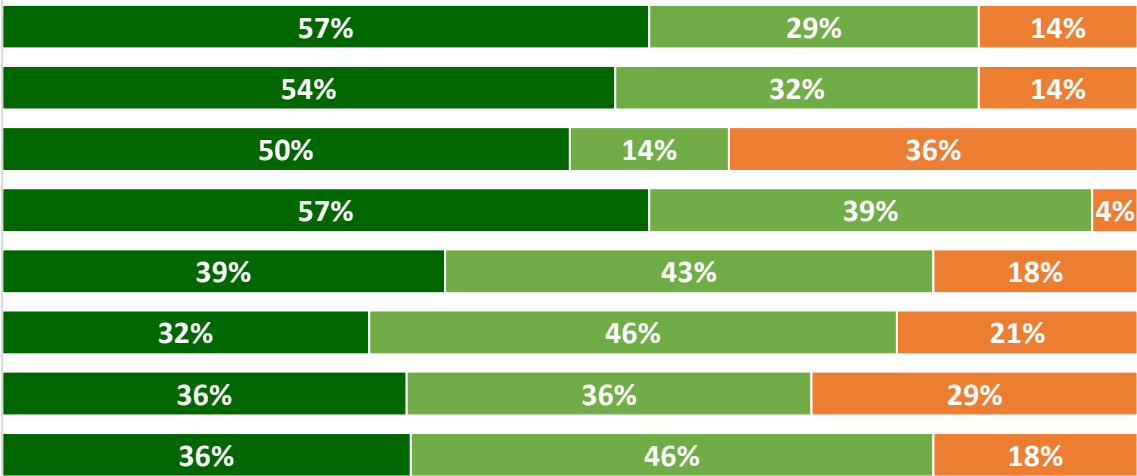
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Organisations support for Aim Two areas – Infrastructure and Communications

- Overall agreement is high for all aim two areas; although the proportion strongly agreeing is lower than the highest ranking aim one areas.
- Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas e.g. printing services offer and new online library platform.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims...?

- Develop mobile library offer to support service outreach & community engagement
- Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users & new audiences
- Develop a planned programme of improvements for buildings
- Look at options to reduce carbon footprint of library buildings
- Improve communications & engagement with staff & volunteers
- Rollout better mobile technology for staff & volunteers
- Update our printing services on offer to customers
- Launch a new online library platform



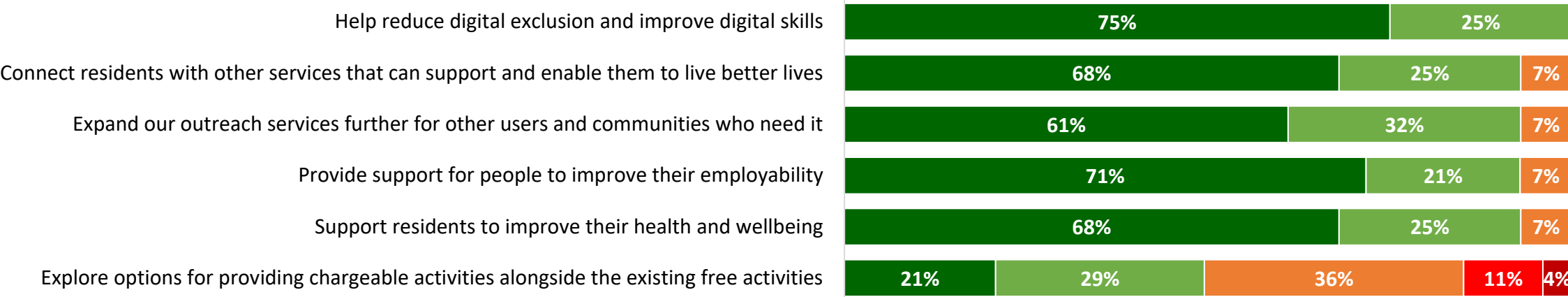
Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Develop mobile library offer to support service outreach & community engagement	57%	29%	14%	0%	0%
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users & new audiences	54%	32%	14%	0%	0%
Develop a planned programme of improvements for building	50%	14%	36%	0%	0%
Look at options to reduce carbon footprint of library buildings	57%	39%	4%	0%	0%
Improve communications & engagement with staff & volunteers	39%	43%	18%	0%	0%
Rollout better mobile technology for staff & volunteers	32%	46%	21%	0%	0%
Update our printing services on offer to customers	36%	36%	29%	0%	0%
Launch a new online library platform	36%	46%	18%	0%	0%

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Organisations support for Aim Three Areas – Supporting Communities and Levelling up

- Overall agreement is strong for five of the aim three areas. In addition, a significant proportion strongly agree with these aims.
- Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside existing free activities is markedly lower.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims...?



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Connect residents with other services that can support & enable them to live better lives	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it	61%	32%	7%	0%	0%
Provide support for people to improve their employability	71%	21%	7%	0%	0%
Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	21%	29%	36%	11%	4%

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL EVERYONE'S LIBRARY SERVICE 2022-2026 CONSULTATION REPORT

PREPARED BY LAKE MARKET RESEARCH



CONTENTS

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
INDIVIDUALS - USAGE & FAMILIARITY WITH LIBRARY SERVICES	9
INDIVIDUALS – OVERALL OPINION OF KEY AIMS PUT FORWARD	19
INDIVIDUALS – FUTURE OF ESSEX LIBRARIES	32
ORGANISATIONS – OVERALL OPINION OF KEY AIMS PUT FORWARD	36

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

Essex County Council is the second largest library authority in the country, serving a population of nearly 1.5 million residents across a network of 74 libraries, two mobile library vehicles, an online e-library service, and a home library delivery service provided by volunteers to residents who cannot access onsite or mobile services.

In 2019-20 (the last year unaffected by pandemic restrictions), the library service had 226,000 active users, 4.3 million visits, 3.9 million loans, and over 400,000 e-resources were borrowed. The service provides free internet access to users through computers and public Wi-Fi; free access to a range of online learning tools and a range of local studies resources and special collections available at different sites across the county. The service also runs a range of in-person and online activities for all age groups as well as activities to help people develop new skills, improve their health and wellbeing, connect with others in their community and reduce social isolation.

The world has changed significantly in the last 18 months. With a new administration and new Plan for Essex in place, Essex County Council are refocussing their vision and plans for the future of Library services. This plan sets out high-level aims for the service and the areas the service will be working on over the next four years:

- Library Service and Literacy
- Infrastructure and Communications
- Supporting communities and Levelling Up

Essex County Council launched a consultation with the aim of seeking views from Essex residents, library service users and organisations about the draft plan and the areas of focus for the next four years.

METHODOLOGY

The consultation was hosted on Essex County Council's consultation portal for 8 weeks from 26th November 2020 to 21st January 2022. The library survey was publicised extensively across the county.

Social media activity reached hundreds of thousands of local people through posts on ECC and Essex Libraries social media channels as well as a Facebook advertising campaign. The survey was also prominent on both the ECC and Essex Libraries websites and social media channels throughout.

The draft plan and survey were also shared directly with residents through resident and library newsletters. Prior and throughout the consultation, engagement was carried out with local, regional and national press, generating coverage in many local newspapers and on local radio stations.

Posters, popup banners and postcards have been displayed in libraries and staff have also been encouraging residents to give their thoughts on the plan. A number of groups have also been engaged with directly including the Young Essex Assembly, schools, faith leaders, as well as library clubs and groups.

POINTS TO NOTE

RESPONSE

- 2,213 responses were received via the consultation questionnaire - 2,185 from individuals and 28 responses from organisations. 7 responses were received to the consultation inbox and have been reviewed by this report's author.

- Please note that participation in consultations is self-selecting and this needs to be considered when interpreting responses.
- Responses to consultations do not wholly represent the wider Essex population and are reliant on awareness and propensity to take part based on the topic and interest.
- The majority of individual respondents are users of library services and indicated they have used library services in the last six months.

ANALYSIS

- Essex County Council were responsible for the design, promotion and collection of the consultation responses. Lake Market Research were appointed to conduct an independent analysis of feedback.
- All survey results are presented as percentages. Each chart title details the number of valid responses received to each question. Respondents could choose which questions they answered so the base size for each question will vary.
- The questionnaire contained a mix of single and multiple choice questioning. Where percentages for single choice questions do not sum to 100%, this is the result of computer rounding for each response code as percentages are displayed as whole numbers. The report notes where respondents were given the option of providing more than one answer.
- It should be remembered that a sample, and not the entire population of the County, has taken part in this consultation. As a result, all findings are subject to sampling tolerances, which means not all differences are statistically significant. In our analysis we have checked for statistical significance in the percentages for all questions between all demographic subgroups of respondents. Any demographic differences have been analysed using appropriate statistical means to check for statistical significance by comparing percentages and also taking into account the base sizes for each subgroup. Where there are significant differences in response between demographic subgroups, the report includes commentary to this effect. Statistical significance has been conducted at 95% confidence.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF INDIVIDUALS RESPONDING

The tables below depict the demographic profile of respondents against the Essex population¹ and the profile of library service users² (where comparable data is available). The proportion who left these questions blank or indicated they did not want to disclose this information has been included as applicable. Consistent with the ECC library user profile, a higher proportion of female residents took part in the consultation. The consultation received a higher proportion of responses from residents aged 55 & over compared to the ECC library user profile.

GENDER	Consultation Total %	Essex population %	Library user profile %
Male	24%	49%	32%
Female	70%	51%	53%
Non-binary/prefer to self-describe	0%	-	-
Prefer not to say / blank	5%	-	14%

¹ Based on 2020 population estimates for Essex County Council (excluding Southend and Thurrock). Age proportions have been recalculated to exclude those aged under 16.

² Based on profile of active library users (177,726 – used library card within the last year). District is based on home location selected at the point of joining the library.

AGE	Consultation Total %	Essex population %	Library user profile %
Under 16	1%	-	-
16-24	2%	12%	10%
25-34	7%	15%	14%
35-44	14%	15%	19%
45-54	15%	17%	14%
55-64	21%	15%	14%
65 & over	37%	26%	31%
Prefer not to say / blank	4%	-	3%

DISTRICT	Consultation Total %	Essex population %	Library user profile %
Basildon	7%	13%	13%
Braintree	11%	10%	10%
Brentwood	6%	5%	6%
Castle Point	5%	6%	5%
Chelmsford	15%	12%	14%
Colchester	17%	13%	14%
Epping Forest	6%	9%	8%
Harlow	3%	6%	6%
Maldon	4%	4%	4%
Rochford	5%	6%	6%
Tendring	10%	10%	9%
Uttlesford	5%	6%	6%
Southend	2%	-	-
Thurrock	0.4%	-	-
Another neighbouring county / other	2%	N/A	N/A
Prefer not to say / blank	2%	.	-

ETHNICITY	Consultation Total %	Essex population %
White British	86%	91%
White Irish	1%	1%
White other background	4%	3%
Mixed / multiple ethnic group	1.1%	1%
Asian / Asian British	0.9%	3%
Black / Black British	0.1%	1%
Other ethnic group	0.8%	<0.5%
Prefer not to say / blank	6%	-

WORKING STATUS	Consultation Total %
Employed full-time	23%
Employed part-time	16%
Self-employed	6%
Employed on flexible/zero hours contract	1%
In full-time education or training (e.g. college, university, apprenticeship)	2%
Not currently employed	5%
Volunteering	6%
Retired	40%
Other	3%
Prefer not to say / blank	5%

DISABILITY / IMPAIRMENT	Consultation Total %
No impairment	71%
Physical impairment	7%
Hearing impairment / deaf	5%
Mental health needs	3%
Visual impairment / blind	2%
Autism spectrum disorder	1%
Learning difficulties / disabilities	1%
Other	2%
Prefer not to say / blank	12%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2,185 respondents took part in the consultation as an individual. 28 organisations also took part in the consultation. There is significant alignment in response to the aims outlined amongst both groups.
- The vast majority of individual consultees responding are library users and have used library services in the last six months. This should be considered when interpreting responses.
- Library services have a significant impact on the lives of those responding to the consultation. As well as access to books (noted by 60% of those commenting), 28% reference reading as being crucial / enjoyable and that the service fosters reading. The ability to use the service as a family, either currently or in previous years, and the fond memories held is also evident with 41% commenting. 20% note the service offers mental health benefits and 24% note the service allows access free material that some couldn't afford to access in other ways.

AIM ONE

- Overall agreement with the sub areas of Aim One is strong in relation to supporting children to be ready for school and developing their reading skills, keeping stock and resources up to date and appealing, helping adults to improve their literacy, ensuring staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best service and providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs.
- Overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities and getting more residents involved in shaping the service is also high but the proportion strongly agreeing with this aim is comparatively lower – likely as a result of the exact nature of these initiatives being unknown.
- Agreement with the aims concerning exploration of new roles and opportunities for volunteers and new opportunities to generate income are comparatively lower than the other Aim One.

AIM TWO

- Overall agreement with the sub areas of Aim Two is high in relation to developing the mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement, improving communications to help engage with existing users and new audiences, developing a planned programme of buildings improvements, looking at options to reduce the carbon footprint of library buildings and improving communications and engagement with staff and volunteers.
- Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas at around two thirds agreeing with the aims of rolling out better mobile technology for staff & volunteers, updating printing services and launching a new online library platform. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with these aims (possibly as a result of perceived relevance).
- Overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities and getting more residents involved in shaping the service is also high but the proportion strongly agreeing with this aim is comparatively lower to other aims (likely as a result of the exact nature of these initiatives being unknown).

AIM THREE

- Overall agreement with the sub areas of Aim Three is high in relation to helping reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills, connecting residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives, expanding outreach services further for other users and communities that need it, providing support for people to improve their employability and supporting residents to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities is considerably lower than the other Aim Three areas at 50%. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this aim (31%). 19% disagreed with this aim.

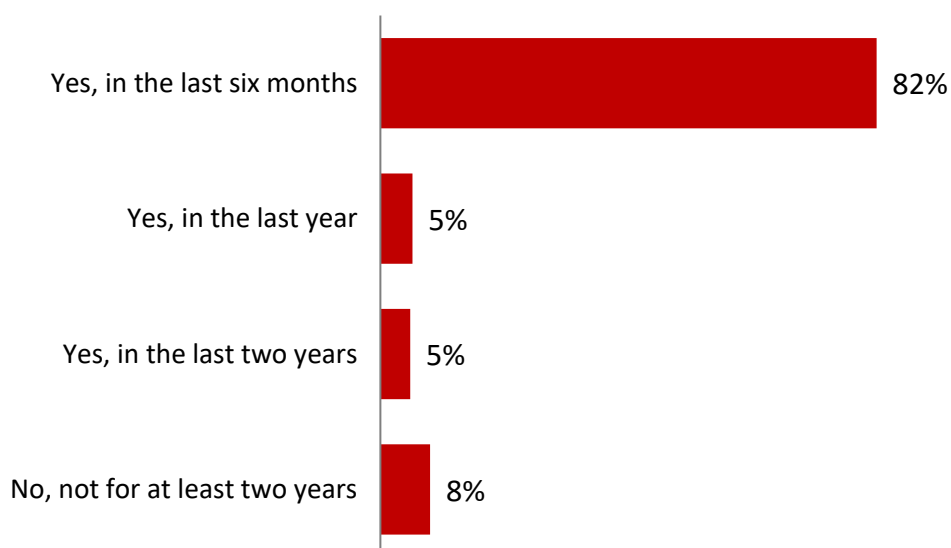
INDIVIDUALS - USAGE & FAMILIARITY WITH LIBRARY SERVICES

RECENCY OF LIBRARY SERVICE USE

The vast majority (92%) of those responding to the consultation have used Essex's library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online in the last two years. 82% have used Essex's library facilities in the last six months. Only 8% of those responding to the consultation indicated they have not used Essex's library services for at least two years.

Have you used any of Essex's library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online? Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,185), single response question

Net – Used services in last two years (individual responses combined to report net figure) | 92%



Supporting data table

Net – Used in last two years	92%
Yes, in the last six months	82%
Yes, in the last year	5%
Yes, in the last two years	5%
No, not for at least two years	8%

Whilst the majority of respondents across all demographic groups have used library services in the last six months, some significant differences were observed:

- Use in the last six months is higher amongst respondents aged 35-44 (87%) and respondents aged 65 and over (84%). Use in the last six months is lower amongst respondents aged 45-54 (76%).
- Use in the last six months is higher amongst respondents who are employed part time (84%) and respondents who are retired (85%). Use in the last six months is lower amongst respondents who are employed full time (73%).

INDIVIDUAL AWARENESS OF LIBRARY SERVICES

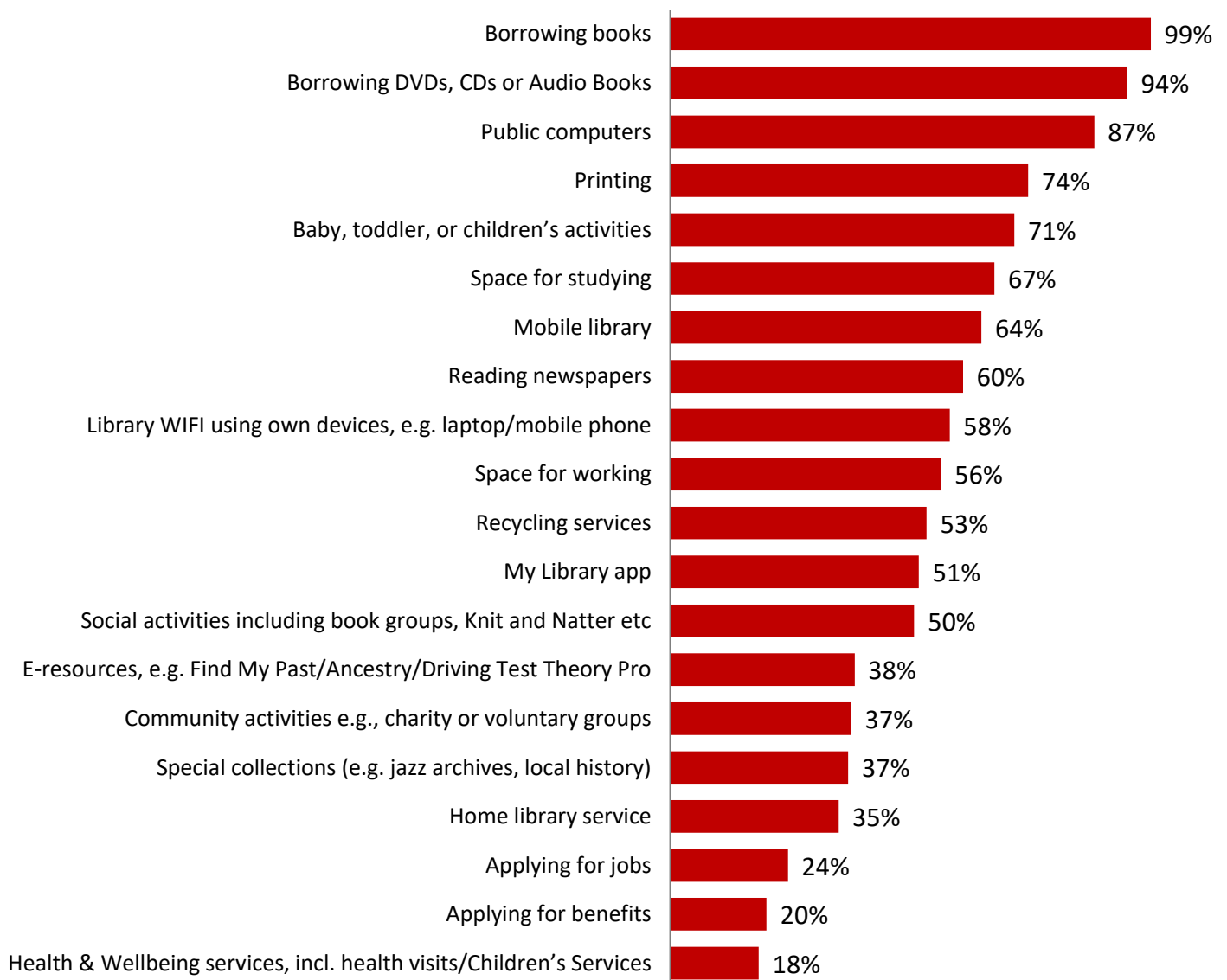
As expected, the vast majority of those responding to the consultation are aware of book borrowing (99%) and DVD, CD or audio book borrowing (94%) from the library service. Awareness of accessing technology either through use of public computers (87%) or printing (74%) is also high. Whilst access to library Wi-Fi using respondents own devices is lower at 58%.

Just over two thirds (67%) are aware of the service providing space for studying, whilst awareness of space for working is lower at 56%.

Claimed awareness of outreach services is mixed with 64% aware of the mobile library service and 35% aware of the home library service.

Awareness of community activities and health and wellbeing services are comparatively lower at 37% and 18% respectively.

Are you aware of the following library services? Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,184), multi response question



Supporting data table	
Borrowing books	99%
Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio Books	94%
Public computers	87%
Printing	74%
Baby, toddler, or children's activities	71%
Space for studying	67%
Mobile library	64%
Reading newspapers	60%
Library WIFI using own devices such as laptop or mobile phone	58%
Space for working	56%
Recycling services	53%
My Library app	51%
Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter etc	50%
E-resources such as Find My Past, Ancestry, Driving Test Theory Pro	38%
Community activities e.g., charity or voluntary groups	37%
Special collections (e.g. jazz archives, local history)	37%
Home library service	35%
Applying for jobs	24%
Applying for benefits	20%
Health and Wellbeing services, including health visits and Children's Services	18%

A likely reflection of varying service provision across Essex, there are significant variations in awareness of specific services by district:

- Awareness of the Mobile Library service is higher amongst respondents who live in Braintree (72%), Maldon (71%), Uttlesford (68%), Tendring (67%), Colchester (67%) and Chelmsford (66%).
- Awareness of space for studying (73%) and being able to use the library Wi-Fi using respondents own devices (65%) is higher amongst respondents who live in Chelmsford.
- Awareness of social activities (62%) and community activities (50%) is higher amongst respondents who live in Rochford.
- Awareness of special collections is higher amongst respondents living in Colchester (47%) and Epping Forest (47%).

As expected, awareness of specific services also varies by age:

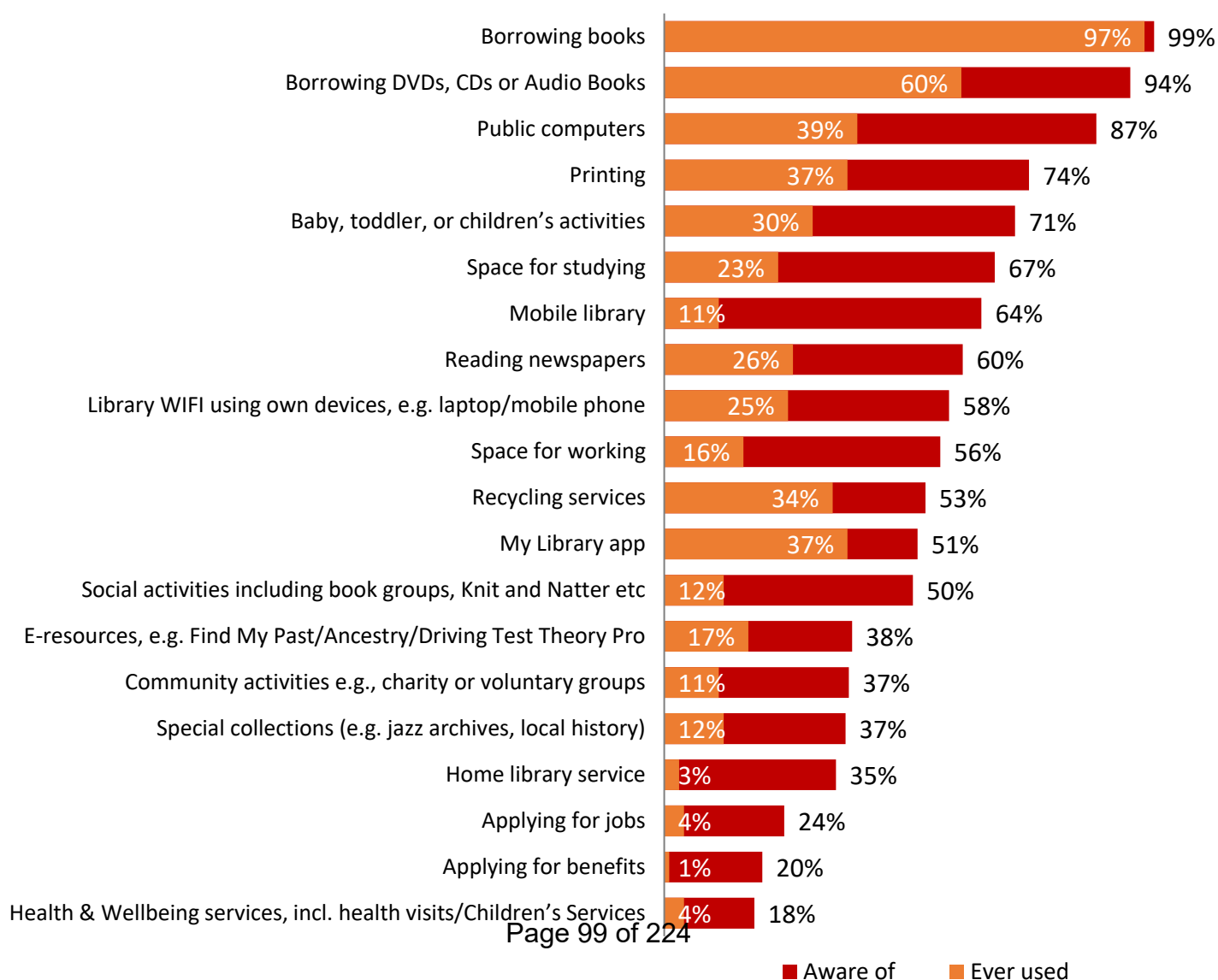
- Awareness of baby, toddler or children's activities is higher amongst respondents aged 25-34 (79%) and 35-44 (80%).

- Awareness of a number of services are higher amongst respondents aged 55-64 - the mobile library service (70%), reading newspapers (68%), 'My Library app' (58%), social activities (54%), special collections (44%) and the Home Library service.
- Awareness of the Mobile Library service, reading newspapers and social activities is also high amongst respondents aged 65 & over (66%, 65% and 54% respectively).
- Awareness of being able to use the library Wi-Fi using residents' own devices is high amongst respondents aged 25-34 (69% and 59% respectively).

INDIVIDUAL USE OF LIBRARY SERVICES

As expected, the vast majority of those responding to the consultation have borrowed books from the library (97%). 60% have borrowed DVDs, CDs or audio books before. Over a third have used public computers (39%), printing (37%), the 'My Library app' (37%) and recycling services (34%). Around a quarter have used the facilities for reading newspapers (26%) and the library Wi-Fi for use on respondents' own devices (25%). Claimed use of the outreach services is comparatively low at 11% for the mobile library service and 3% for the home library service.

Have you ever used the library service for any of the following? Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,170), multi response question



Supporting data table	Aware of	Ever used
Borrowing books	99%	97%
Borrowing DVDs, CDs or Audio Books	94%	60%
Public computers	87%	39%
Printing	74%	37%
Baby, toddler, or children's activities	71%	30%
Space for studying	67%	23%
Mobile library	64%	11%
Reading newspapers	60%	26%
Library WIFI using own devices such as laptop or mobile phone	58%	25%
Space for working	56%	16%
Recycling services	53%	34%
My Library app	51%	37%
Social activities including book groups, Knit and Natter etc	50%	12%
E-resources such as Find My Past, Ancestry, Driving Test Theory Pro	38%	17%
Community activities e.g., charity or voluntary groups	37%	11%
Special collections (e.g. jazz archives, local history)	37%	12%
Home library service	35%	3%
Applying for jobs	24%	4%
Applying for benefits	20%	1%
Health and Wellbeing services, including health visits and Children's Services	18%	4%

There are some significant variations in use of specific services by district:

- A higher proportion of respondents who live in Castle Point have used printing (56%), facilities to read newspapers (38%) and attending community activities (21%).
 - A higher proportion of respondents who live in Colchester have used the public computers (44%) and special collections (21%).
 - A higher proportion of respondents who live in Harlow have used the public computers (55%), printing (49%), space for studying (35%) and space for working (27%).
- A higher proportion of respondents who live in Maldon have used the 'My Library app' (47%).
- A higher proportion of respondents who live in Uttlesford have used the e-resources (31%), Mobile Library service (24%), special collections (22%).

There are also significant variations in use of specific services by age:

- Prior use of baby, toddler or children's activities is higher amongst respondents aged 25-34 (41%), 35-44 (62%) and 45-54 (41%).

- Prior use of borrowing DVDs, CD or audio books is higher amongst respondents aged 45-54 (68%) and 55-64 (67%).
 - Prior use of facilities to read newspapers is highest amongst respondents aged 55-64 (31%) and respondents aged 65 & over (32%).
 - Prior use of the library Wi-Fi for respondents' own devices and the 'My Library app' is high amongst respondents aged 25-34 (41% and 49% respectively).
 - Whilst the base size is relatively low (n=32), a higher proportion of respondents aged 16-24 have used space for studying (56%).
-

COMMENTS ON PERCEIVED IMPACT OF LIBRARY SERVICE ON LIFE FOR INDIVIDUALS

Respondents were asked to detail the impact the library has had on their life in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 87% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

The most common theme referenced is the service providing respondents access to books (60%); a theme supported by 28% also referencing reading as being crucial / enjoyable and that the service fosters reading. Being able to use the service as a family, either currently or in previous years, and the fond memories held are common with 41% commenting.

It is clear from the quantity and range of comments referenced that the service is valued by those using it and is seen as offering mental health benefits (20%), access to free material that some couldn't afford to access in other ways (24%), access to resources (18%) and wide ranging material (17%) as well as a place to work / study (15%).

Please tell us what impact the library service has had on your life, if any? Coded into themes

Base: all answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (87% of Individual respondents - 1,892), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (87%)	
Provides access to books	60%
Used as a child / take my children / grandchildren	41%
Lost without library / big part of life / rely on it / value / use regularly	36%
Reading is crucial / enjoyable / read a lot / fosters reading	28%
Free access / could not afford it otherwise	24%
Activities / groups / meetings	23%
Improves mental health / sanity / lifeline / isolation / socialising	20%
Provides access to other resources / ability to research	18%
Provides access to wide ranging material / new subjects / genres / authors	17%
Place to work / study	15%
Access to audiobooks / eBooks / CDs / DVDs	14%
Helpful / useful / accessible resource / service	13%
Welcoming / warm / comfortable / quiet / safe / pleasant surroundings	11%
Can reserve books online / collect books / drop-off & collections points	11%
Community asset	11%
IT / printing / photocopying / Wi-Fi / are essential	10%
Staff are friendly / helpful	10%
Expand knowledge / learn / educate / access to other genres / authors	10%
Used all my life	10%
Helped me through the pandemic / lockdown	9%

% comments from respondents answering (87%)	
Work for / worked for / volunteer for library service	5%
Access to newspapers / magazines - physical / online / on app	5%
Somewhere to read	4%
A collections point for LFTs / recycling point / collect refuse/recycling sacks	3%
Mobile library is an asset / home delivery service	3%
Better for environment to borrow rather than buy books	1%

Some example comments to support these themes are displayed below:

Libraries are the only place where anyone can go, regardless of socioeconomic background and be able to access all these amazing free services and are an essential part of our community, I attended rhyme time sessions with both my children and it was invaluable for meeting other parents when I may have otherwise felt isolated in my local area. We visit regularly as a family to take out books and love that the principle of libraries reduces waste and encourages a love of books and reading.

It was a life saver as a mother to young children. We didn't have much money and being able to have somewhere free to take them was invaluable, as well as being able to share books that I couldn't afford. It greatly improved my mental health.

It enables me to borrow a wide range of books including audiobooks which I would otherwise not be able to afford. I used to like the cafe in Colchester library as I felt it was supporting people with learning difficulties who worked there but that facility no longer exists. I have sometimes sat in the library for a quiet space.

I access/use library services most days. Most commonly, I request and borrow physical books from the library and audio books from the online service. As a full time carer, these are resources I would not have the money to purchase and would therefore not have access to. Alongside the resources I borrow from the library I also use the library space on a regular basis for teaching my son (who has additional needs and is partially home schooled). The library provides us with a space away from the home environment to complete his learning tasks. Without this dedicated space, educating him would be a much greater challenge as the home environment affords many more distractions for us both.

It is an integral part of our lives as a family . We visit the library often to borrow books (every three weeks or more often). We use the online resources daily especially the borrowbox and press reader apps. Our daughter has enjoyed the rhyme time sessions and one off craft events held in the library. The staff are wonderful, so friendly and helpful and we would be lost without our local library.

There are significant variations in the perceived impact of library services by age and reflect usage patterns:

- A higher proportion of respondents aged 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 referenced use as a child / taking their children / grandchildren (60%, 71% and 49% respectively)
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 35-44 and 45-54 referenced activities / groups / meetings (36% and 29% respectively).
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 35-44 referenced the library plays a big part in their life and would feel lost without the services offered (44%).
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 25-34 referenced use as a place to work or study (24%).
- A higher proportion of respondents aged 65 & over referenced access to other resources / ability to research (24%).

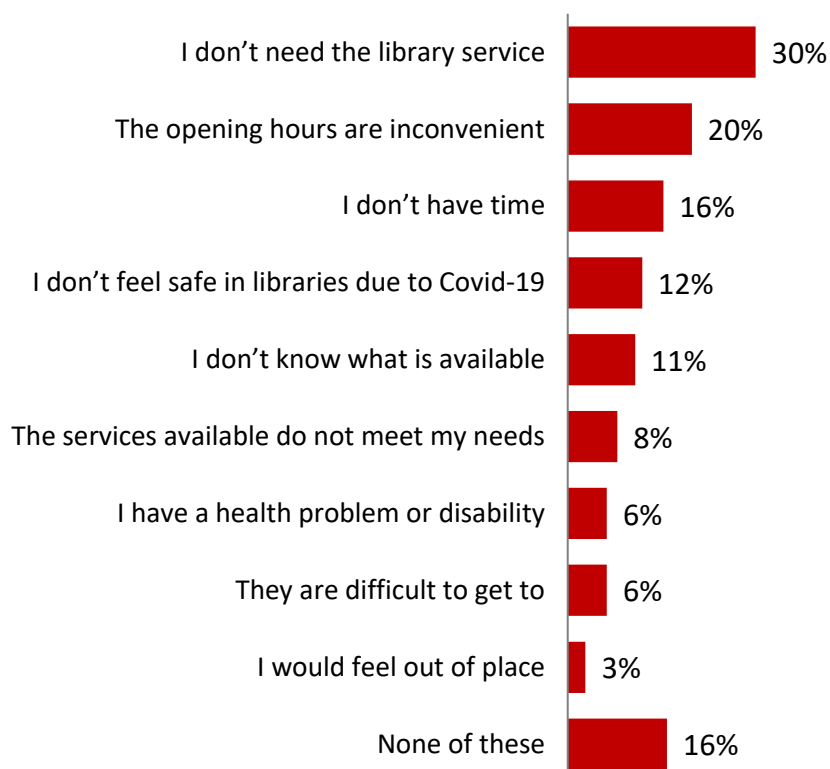
REASONS FOR NOT CURRENTLY USING LIBRARY SERVICES AMONGST INDIVIDUALS

Respondents were asked to select their reasons for not currently using Essex library services from a prompted list. 174 respondents responded to this question; 8% of respondents taking part.

The most common reason for not using Essex Library Service is simply not having a need to (30%), followed by a perception of inconvenient opening hours (20%) and not having the time to use them (16%). 11% of those not using the services are unsure of what is available.

If you do not currently use Essex Library Services, what are the reasons for this?

Base: all Individual respondents answering (174), multi response question



Supporting data table	
I don't need the library service	30%
The opening hours are inconvenient	20%
I don't have time	16%
I don't feel safe in libraries due to Covid-19	12%
I don't know what is available	11%
The services available do not meet my needs	8%
I have a health problem or disability	6%
They are difficult to get to	6%
I would feel out of place	3%
None of these	16%

INDIVIDUALS - OVERALL OPINION OF KEY AIMS PUT FORWARD

The draft 'Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026 plan' sets three high-level aims for the Essex Library service and the areas that the team will be working on over the next four years. These are:

1. Library Service and Literacy
2. Infrastructure and Communications
3. Supporting our communities and Levelling Up

Respondents were presented with the sub level aims within each of these three areas and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each one. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide feedback on each of the three high-level aims in their own words.

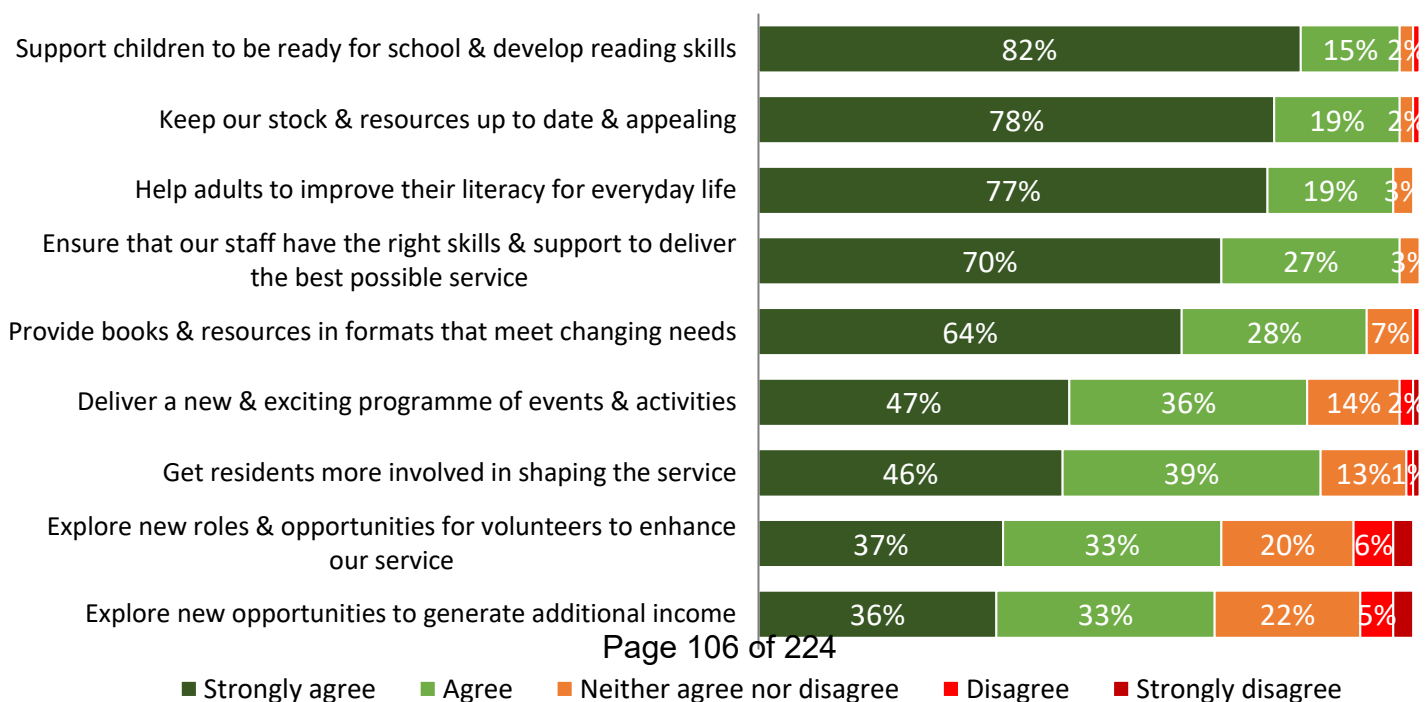
SUPPORT FOR AIM ONE AREAS – LIBRARY SERVICE AND LITERACY

Overall agreement is strong in relation to the stated aims of supporting children to be ready for school and developing their reading skills, keeping stock and resources up to date and appealing, helping adults to improve their literacy, ensuring staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best service and providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs; all with at least 90% agreement. Strength of agreement (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') with these aims is also very high (64% or above).

Overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities and getting more residents involved in shaping the service is high (84% and 85% respectively). However, strength of support is comparatively lower – likely as a result of the exact nature of these initiatives being unknown.

Agreement with the aims concerning exploration of new roles and opportunities for volunteers and new opportunities to generate income are comparatively lower than the other Aim One areas at 70% and 69% respectively.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims? Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,175), single response question for each aim



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Support children to be ready for school & develop their reading skills	82%	15%	2%	1%	0%
Keep our stock & resources up to date & appealing	78%	19%	2%	1%	0%
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life	77%	19%	3%	0%	0%
Ensure that our staff have the right skills & support to deliver the best possible service	70%	27%	3%	0%	0%
Provide books & resources in formats that meet changing needs	64%	28%	7%	1%	0%
Deliver a new & exciting programme of events & activities	47%	36%	14%	2%	%
Get residents more involved in shaping the service	46%	39%	13%	1%	1%
Explore new roles & opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service	37%	33%	20%	6%	3%
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income	36%	33%	22%	5%	3%

There are a few significant variations in support between districts which likely reflect the perceived needs of particular libraries in different areas, and are as follows:

- Overall support for providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs (97%), delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities (90%), exploring new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance the service (79%), and exploring new opportunities to generate additional income is higher amongst respondents living in Basildon.
- Overall support for exploring new roles and opportunities for volunteers to enhance the service (65%) and exploring new opportunities to generate income (60%) is lower amongst respondents living in Colchester.

There are significant variations in the degree of support for particular aims by age:

- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for supporting children to be ready for school and develop their reading skills increases with age and is highest amongst respondents aged 55-64 (84%) and aged 65 & over (85%).
- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for keeping stock and resources up to date and appealing increases with age and is highest amongst respondents aged 45-54 (80%), 55-64 (79%) and aged 65 & over (82%).
- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for helping adults to improve their literacy for everyday life increases with age and is highest amongst respondents aged 55-64 (80%) and aged 65 & over (81%).

- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for ensuring staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible services increases with age and is highest amongst respondents aged 45-54 (73%), 55-64 (71%) and aged 65 & over (72%).
- Overall support for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities is higher amongst respondents aged 25-34 (91%).

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments they had related to Aim One in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 29% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

The most common theme referenced is the position that fully well trained and paid staff are critical to the library service (25%) and volunteers should be in addition to these staff and not replacing them (18%). Some are also concerned about a potential loss of physical books to electronic alternatives (14%) and the importance of improving the range of books / investing in physical book stock (13%).

Consistent with the comparably lower proportion of respondents agreeing, 12% of those providing a comment referenced the service should not be focusing on income generation and 10% indicated they do not support charging for services.

Do you have any other comments related to Aim One? Coded into themes, 3% or above reported
Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (29% of respondents - 638), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (29%)	
Fully well trained & paid staff are critical to the service	25%
Volunteers should not replace trained staff only be in addition to	18%
Concerned about loss of physical books to eBooks / digital alternatives	14%
Improve range of books / invest in books / maintain if not improve book stock	13%
Children's literacy / education is so important / support library involvement / links to schools	12%
Should not focus on income generation but providing a core service	12%
Charging for services is not welcome / free service for all / priority should be a free service	10%
Support aim one areas (non-specific)	9%
Support some chargeable services / activities / with caveats / proceed with caution	8%
More events / groups / clubs / socialising	8%
Library is crucial to all / community / benefits all	7%
Support volunteers in addition to staff	7%
Suggestion for service / event / group / activity	6%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented / seems complex	6%
Increase awareness / promotion of library services	5%
Changes should not negatively affect current service levels	4%

% comments from Individual respondents answering (29%)	
Evolve to community hub / provide access to other services	4%
Service should be inclusive / not just about books	4%
Adults' literacy / education is so important / support library involvement	4%
Focus on providing books / core service / fostering reading / not involved in anything else	3%

Trained librarians are essential in the delivery of Library services and literacy. There must never be any kind of reliance on volunteers to do this, though of course volunteers should be encouraged to help.

I would caution relying too much on volunteers who may not be able to commit regularly. I would also not want to see space taken away from core library services for income generation etc.

I can see the appeal to the library of exploring new opportunities to generate income, but this needs a lot of thought - you could risk making people who can't afford these services feel excluded, feel the library is not for them or not access services which are free to use because they are worried there could be a fee.

The library should not be about making money and attempting to introduce commercial aspects adds pressure to deliver only in those areas, distracts staff from core business and discourages people from visiting.

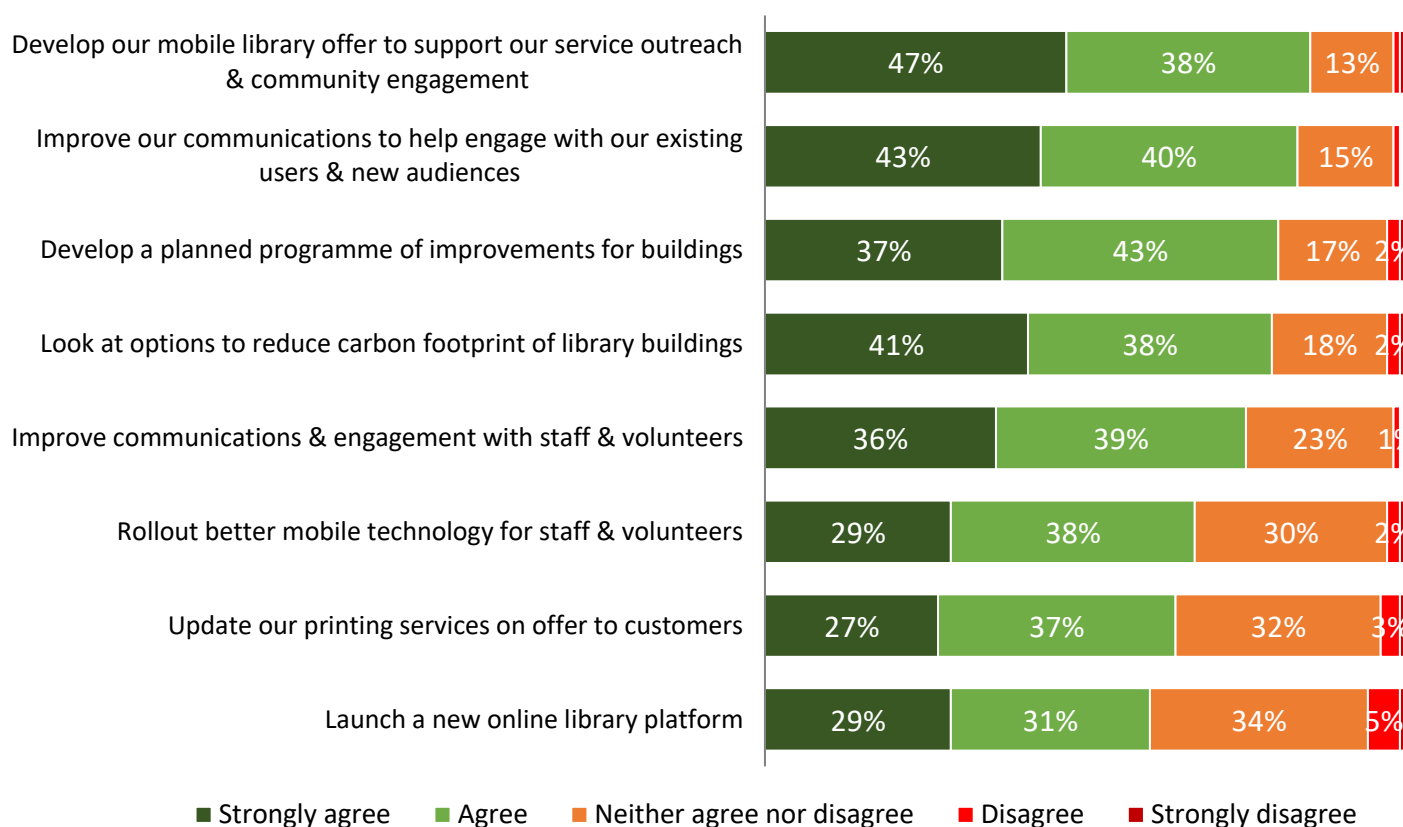
A very careful balance probably needs to be made between providing invaluable services, resources and generating further income, whilst keeping costs down as I think a huge proportion of the population are struggling on very low incomes and the struggle may become even harder and possibly much sooner rather than later. Pressure to deliver only in those areas, distracts staff from core business and discourages people from visiting.

SUPPORT FOR AIM TWO AREAS – INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Overall agreement is high with the stated aims of developing the mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement, improving communications to help engage with existing users and new audiences, developing a planned programme of buildings improvements, looking at options to reduce the carbon footprint of library buildings and improving communications and engagement with staff and volunteers; all with at least 75% agreement. Strength of agreement (i.e. the proportion of respondents ‘strongly agreeing’) with these aims is comparatively lower than observed for the top five areas of Aim One, however, at around four to five in ten.

Agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas. 67% agree with rolling out better mobile technology for staff & volunteers, 64% agreeing with updating printing services and 60% agree with launching a new online library platform. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with these aims (possibly as a result of perceived relevance).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims? Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,159), single response question for each aim



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Develop our mobile library offer to support our service outreach and community engagement	47%	38%	13%	1%	1%
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences	43%	40%	15%	1%	0%
Develop a planned programme of improvements for our buildings	37%	43%	17%	2%	1%

Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Look at options to reduce the carbon footprint of our library buildings	41%	38%	18%	2%	1%
Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers	36%	39%	23%	1%	0%
Rollout better mobile technology for staff and volunteers	29%	38%	30%	2%	1%
Update our printing services on offer to customers	27%	37%	32%	3%	1%
Launch a new online library platform	29%	31%	34%	5%	2%

There are significant variations in support by district and likely reflect the perceived needs of particular libraries are as follows:

- Overall support for updating the printing services on offer to customers (71%) and launching a new online library platform (71%) is higher amongst respondents living in Basildon.
- Overall support for updating the printing services on offer to customers (75%) is highest amongst respondents living in Castle Point.
- Overall support for improving communications and engagement with staff and volunteers (90%), developing a planned programme of improvements for buildings (89%), updating the printing services on offer to customers (79%) and rollout of better mobile technology for staff and volunteers (79%) is higher amongst respondents living in Harlow.

A few significant variations in the degree of support for particular aims by age:

- Overall support for developing the mobile library service to support service outreach and community engagement is higher amongst respondents aged 55-64 (89%) and 65 & over (87%).
- Strength of support (i.e. the proportion of respondents 'strongly agreeing') for launching a new online library platform is higher amongst respondents aged 25-34 (41%).

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments they had related to Aim Two in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 22% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

The most common theme referenced supports the areas highlighted within Aim Two and references communication / promotion of the library service is needed and communications should be improved (21%).

Consistent with response to Aim One, some are concerned about a potential loss of physical books to electronic alternatives (11%) and ensuring any changes are not to the detriment of the service as it stands currently (11%). Whilst a proportion put forward concerns on technology replacing staff / reducing personal contact (10%) and there already being enough online platforms available (10%), commentary also refers to suggested improvements to dated IT systems (9%), more / improved IT facilities within libraries (8%) and better technology / platforms to access online services remotely (8%).

Do you have any other comments related to Aim Two? Coded into themes, 3% or above reported

Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (22% of respondents - 485), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (22%)	
Communication / promotion / awareness of library service / improve content of comms	21%
Well trained / friendly / professional staff - proficient in tech support	13%
Retain if not expand book stock / invest in physical books / do not replace with digital alternatives	11%
Ensure changes are not to the detriment of service / space	11%
Buildings need updating / improving / better facilities / accessible	10%
Use of technology should not replace staff / reduce personal contact / supplement current service only / should not be an online service only	10%
Already have online platforms available / apps / are others needed / happy with current platforms	10%
Investment / improvement in mobile libraries / must not replace physical libraries	9%
Suggested improvements to current IT systems / systems are dated	9%
More / improved IT facilities within libraries / Wi-Fi / air printing / issues with IT	8%
In need of better technology / platforms to access online catalogue / online services remotely	8%
Buildings should be welcoming / provide a quiet space for reading/study / comfortable chairs	7%
Service must be fully inclusive - elderly / disabled - not everyone uses technology	7%
Support aim two areas (non-specific)	6%
Physical libraries important for community	6%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented	6%
Can't comment on certain issues / don't understand some of the terms used	5%
Improved printing service not needed / contradicts carbon footprint reduction	4%
Carbon footprint reduction is a worthy aim	4%
No improvement to buildings necessary / not a priority	4%

% comments from Individual respondents answering (22%)	
Communication is adequate	4%
Where is funding coming from / sounds costly / how much will this cost	4%
Further consultation with stakeholders needed	3%
Meetings / events / groups / facilities for community outreach / services	3%

Of the above the most important is communication of the value of the library services and what is on offer to the residents so that they use the Library.

Promotion of services is all within the library and its own social media so most people don't know what is on offer. Events and activities should be promoted externally on village social media pages.

Whilst I admire the sentiment, this plan is in stark contrast to the previous five year plan. How will these improvements be funded? Is there still an insistence on libraries being self-funding, which simply doesn't work. Has the Community-run libraries plan which has never taken off, despite huge amounts of staff resource in its planning, been abandoned, or will savings be made by replacing staff with volunteers. You only have to look at other library services to see that in most cases volunteer-led libraries are not sustainable.

The online, app and e-book offer is really important in the modern world and the library has made great strides forward on this front in recent years. It's important to build upon this and continue to increase the e-book offer and keep it up to date. It would also be great for many if library e-books could be compatible with Kindle, the most popular e-reader, though I appreciate this is a wider issue than within Essex libraries.

Buildings should be inviting and accessible for all; children, those with disability mental, physical and sensory. The community need to know what the library has to offer. Outreach on social media can be improved. I feel the existing online library platform is underused. People won't use it if they do not know it exists!

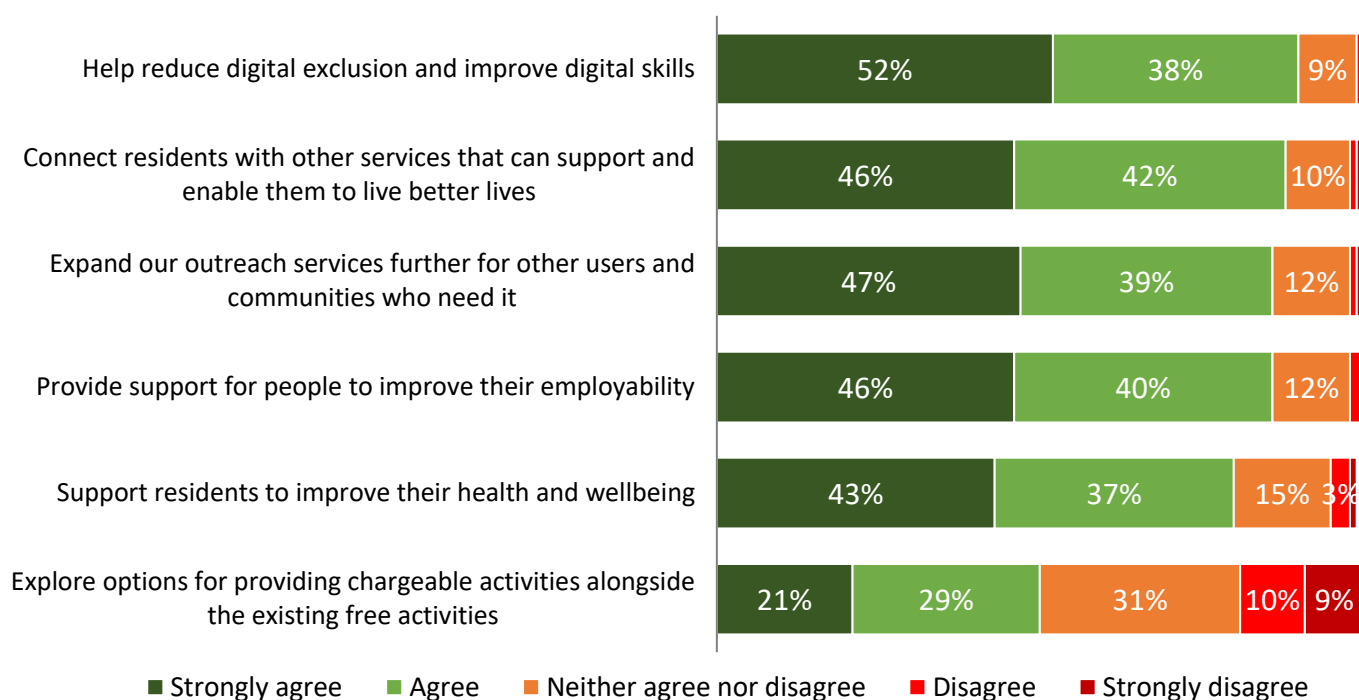
SUPPORT FOR AIM THREE AREAS – SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND LEVELLING UP

Overall agreement is high in relation to the stated aims of helping reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills, connecting residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives, expanding outreach services further for other users and communities that need it and providing support for people to improve their employability; all with at least 85% agreement. Strength of agreement (i.e. the proportion of respondents ‘strongly agreeing’) with these aims is comparatively lower than observed for the top five areas of Aim One, however, at between four and five in ten.

Overall agreement for supporting residents to improve their health and wellbeing is high (80%).

Agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities is considerably lower than the other Aim Three areas at 50%. A significant proportion of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this aim (31%). 19% disagreed with this aim.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims? Base: all Individual respondents answering (2,159), single response question for each aim



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Help reduce digital exclusion & improve digital skills	52%	38%	9%	1%	1%
Connect residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives	46%	42%	10%	1%	1%
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it	47%	39%	12%	1%	1%
Provide support for people to improve their employability	46%	40%	12%	2%	1%
Support residents to improve their health & wellbeing	43%	37%	15%	3%	1%
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	21%	29%	31%	10%	9%

A few significant variations in support by district and likely reflect the needs of particular geographical areas are as follows:

- Overall support for providing support for people to improve their employability is higher amongst respondents living in Tendring (91%) and Harlow (88%).
- Overall support for exploring options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities (41%) is lower amongst respondents living in Colchester.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments they had related to Aim Three in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 17% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

Over one in five (22%) of those providing a comment noted a preference for the service to stick to the core offering and not be involved in other services that are provided elsewhere. Consistent with the comparably lower proportion of respondents agreeing, 14% of those providing a comment noted they believe all services should be free and nothing should be chargeable. 11% also referred to the potential for chargeable services to exclude or deter people.

Some noted the library service could act as a community hub / encourage socialisation (12%) and a hub for health / outreach (8%).

Do you have any other comments related to Aim Three? Coded into themes, 3% or above reported
Base: all Individuals answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (17% of respondents – 379), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (17%)	
Should stick to core services / not be involved in other services that are provided elsewhere	22%
All services should be free / nothing chargeable	14%
Could act as a community hub / socialisation	12%
Chargeable services likely to exclude / deter people	11%
Changes must not compromise book stocks / opening hours / staffing levels / space / service	9%
Hub for health / other services / outreach	8%
Support this aim	8%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented	8%
Provide activities / groups / clubs / events	7%
Staff should focus on library service / too much for them to do if services expanded	7%
Services must be promoted / advertised / attract new users	6%
Some chargeable services could be beneficial / acceptable / must be cautious	6%
Staff must be appropriately trained	6%
IT support/training / equipment / online functionality required	6%
Chargeable services should be in addition to free services / not compromise free services	5%

% comments from Individual respondents answering (17%)	
Do not turn libraries into an online service only / do not replace physical books	4%
Space could be rented out / space for activities	4%
Could signpost services / provide information but nothing further	4%
Should not be commercialised / not a money-making operation	3%

In expanding library services, it is essential not to lose sight of the primary purpose of a library - to provide books to borrow and the range of available books could be expanded – i.e. more books in the libraries.

On the whole, there are a number of organisations that already support the local community. IAG is a skilled role and we already have a CAB and a local college that can offer these activities. Let these established organisations carry on doing what they are being funded for and allow the library service to do what it does best.

I think libraries can be key to bringing communities together, and organisations should be able to utilise library spaces and rent them after closing hours (gets people into the building who might not otherwise and could encourage them to use libraries more often in the future).

Often libraries are in the centre of town, accessible, visible and with working hours opening times. There is an important and valuable role for libraries to play in acting as a connector and referrer of people to other community-based services to support health wellbeing, employability and so on.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any comments on chargeable services they would like to see if they supported the provision of chargeable services. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 32% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

Just under one in five (18%) of those providing a comment noted they believe all services should be free and nothing should be chargeable. 9% also referred to the potential for chargeable services to exclude or deter people.

Of those that put forward ideas for potential chargeable services, the most common are arts & crafts / artist exhibitions (16%), talks by authors / writing workshops (13%), café / refreshment provision (12%) and activities for children / teenagers / including after school / school holiday specific activities (12%).

If you support the provision of chargeable activities (alongside existing free activities), which chargeable activities would you like to see, if any? Coded into themes, 3% or above reported

Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (32% of respondents – 709), multi response question

% comments from Individual respondents answering (32%)	
All services should be free / nothing chargeable	18%
Chargeable services likely to exclude / deter people	9%
Arts & crafts / artist exhibitions	16%
Prepared to pay / charge must be reasonable / if to cover costs / donations	14%
Talks by authors / writing workshops	13%
Café / refreshment provision	12%
Activities for children / teenagers / including after school/school holidays	12%
Workshops / courses / learning / talks / lectures	11%
Printing / photocopying / computer use / IT support	11%
Renting out space / providing space for groups / meetings / activities	10%
Only charge for additional services / core services must be free	8%
Drama / music / film / photography	8%
Host clubs / community groups / meetings / social groups	7%
Out of hours use	6%
Collaborate with / provide space for commercial services – banks, post office, solicitors / council	6%
Chargeable activities cannot take precedence over core services / detract from core services	5%
Some charging for services is needed (non-specific)	5%
Games (board & computer) / jigsaws / toys / DVDs	4%
More information required / examples	4%
Book clubs / reading groups / recommendations	4%
Act as community hubs	4%
Health services / mental health / wellbeing	4%

% comments from Individual respondents answering (32%)	
Baby / toddler groups	3%
Life skills / numeracy / literacy skills / CV writing / employability	3%
History / geology / ancestry	3%
Adult education / support for students	3%
Learning a language / sign language	3%
Small contribution to running costs / charge for inter-library lending / more for late fees	3%

INDIVIDUALS - FUTURE OF ESSEX LIBRARIES

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were also given the opportunity to provide feedback in their own words in relation to:

1. Any other comments related to the plan for Essex Libraries
2. What they would like to see from Essex Libraries in the future

INDIVIDUALS OTHER COMMENTS RELATED TO ESSEX LIBRARIES PLAN

For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 28% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

A quarter (25%) of those providing a comment requested that all current libraries should stay open or were concerned about their local library building closing. In addition, 16% commented on how important the library service is to the community / residents.

Some reiterated previous comments in terms of a larger range of material / book stock (13%) and fully trained staff and volunteers / having enough staff (12%). 8% requested longer opening hours / opening on additional days.

7% highlighted that they would welcome more detail on the plans in terms of implementation and funding.

Do you have any other comments related to the plan for Essex Libraries?

Coded into themes, 3% or above reported

Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (28% of respondents - 613), multi response question

% comments from respondents answering (28%)	
Libraries must stay open / concerned about closures of particular libraries	25%
Crucially important for community / vital for residents	16%
Offer a large range of materials / increase book / up-to-date stock	13%
Support plans outlined	13%
Staff & volunteers must be fully trained / polite / friendly / need to make sure of enough staff	12%
Longer opening hours required / open on more days	8%
Must be inclusive / accessible / cater to all	8%
Communication / engagement / promote services / attract new users	8%
Plans need further details / how will this be implemented / where is funding coming from	7%
Should be supported / invested in / funded / secured for future	6%
Services to be free / no charging	6%
Important to focus on core library services	6%
Activities / groups / meetings are needed	5%
Service / opening hours / space must be maintained	5%

% comments from respondents answering (28%)	
Used as a community resource / information point for services	5%
Praise for current libraries / staff	5%
In need of upgrade / new facilities / parking / toilets / refreshment provision	4%
Continue to offer IT support / use of equipment / Wi-Fi / online provision	4%
Volunteers should not replace trained / paid staff	4%
Online offer should not replace physical books	4%
Offer a safe / quiet environment	3%
Awareness of this consultation is poor / criticism of consultation	3%

Please commit to keeping all of Essex's libraries open - they are a lifeline for so many residents.

All existing libraries should be kept as they are, run by Essex County Council with paid staff and no reduction in opening hours or services.

Libraries should continue to operate and none should be closed down. Not everyone has access to the internet for reading and learning services, and even those who do may not wish to use the internet for this purpose. From a personal point of view, I learn much more easily reading from a book than from a screen.

Make libraries more accessible for all. Utilise libraries for the community, include coffee areas, provision for talks with people of interest. Children's groups, assistance for those with extra needs. Our libraries can be so much more than just borrowing books.

I would hope that libraries will continue to be provided for local people to enable those from a variety of groups to participate and enjoy them. Libraries should be well stocked to encourage usage. The running down of libraries has put many people off visiting at all. Encourage activities that will bring people back to their local library.

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS RELATED TO FUTURE OF ESSEX LIBRARIES

For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 73% of respondents provided a comment relevant to the question.

Under one in five (19%) requested that all current libraries should be retained and closures should be avoided. In addition, 12% commented on the importance of the continuity of the current service / maintaining the existing service.

A quarter (25%) of those providing a comment would like to see a good stock of books / wider / more up to date range of books. Other common comments put forward focused on the social aspect of the service and its development – activities / events / opportunities to socialise (17%), more of a community focus / community hub moving forward (17%), engaging / working with schools / children / young people (12%).

What would you like to see from Essex Libraries in the future?

Coded into themes, 3% or above reported

Base: all Individual respondents answering and providing a comment relevant to the question (73% of respondents – 1,589), multi response question

% comments from respondents answering (73%)	
Good stock of books / wider range of books / keep up-to-date	25%
Avoid closures / retain current libraries / expand	19%
Activities / events / clubs / opportunities to socialise	17%
More of a community focus / community hub / community engagement moving forward	17%
Longer opening hours / open more days / everyday / out of hours usage	14%
Engaging / working with schools / children / young people / catering for	12%
Friendly / professional fully trained paid staff / not replaced by volunteers	12%
Continuity of current service / maintain existing service / happy with service	12%
Increase awareness / promotion of library services / attract new users	11%
Be inclusive / accessible for all	10%
Welcoming / friendly / quiet / safe environment / for study / reading / working	10%
Support learning / literacy / research / continue to foster reading	8%
Up-to-date resources / info / well stocked (unspecified)	8%
Provision of audiobooks / eBooks / online services / digital resources / keep up-to-date	7%
Provision of IT / printers / Wi-Fi / IT support / some improvement required to IT	6%
Evolving / dynamic up-to-date/improved services / adapting to needs of users / vary by library	6%
Space to use for clubs / groups / meetings / socialising	6%
Improved search / online library system / app / collection/return system	6%
Modern / keep up-to-date buildings with facilities i.e. toilets, parking	4%
Be a free service to all to use	4%

% comments from respondents answering (73%)	
Selected services / collaboration / signposting non-library services	4%
Continual funding / investment / support / fit for future	4%
Integrated / balance of physical & digital resources / keep up-to-date	3%
Focus on core library services / don't get involved in other services nor income generation	3%
Continue / expand mobile libraries / home delivery service	3%
Café / refreshment provision	3%

A continued commitment to meeting the diversity of borrowers' needs, i.e. not restricting book stock and other services to those that are useful to the majority but making sure that minority interests are catered for.

I am really happy with the service received so far. We enjoy visiting different libraries around Chelmsford. Perhaps more outdoor reading events in the spring/summer? We attended a lovely event where the library joined forces with Heart and Sole walking group to go for a walk then have a story in the park. Lovely experience had by all. A great way to bring the community together.

A far more dynamic and integrated service which combines a variety of local and community services and which reaches out positively to the community it serves..

ORGANISATIONS - OVERALL OPINION OF KEY AIMS PUT FORWARD

28 organisations responded to the consultation:

- 12 responded from community groups
- 10 responded from town or parish council
- 4 responded from other public bodies
- 1 responded from a registered charity
- 1 did not disclose the type of organisation they represent

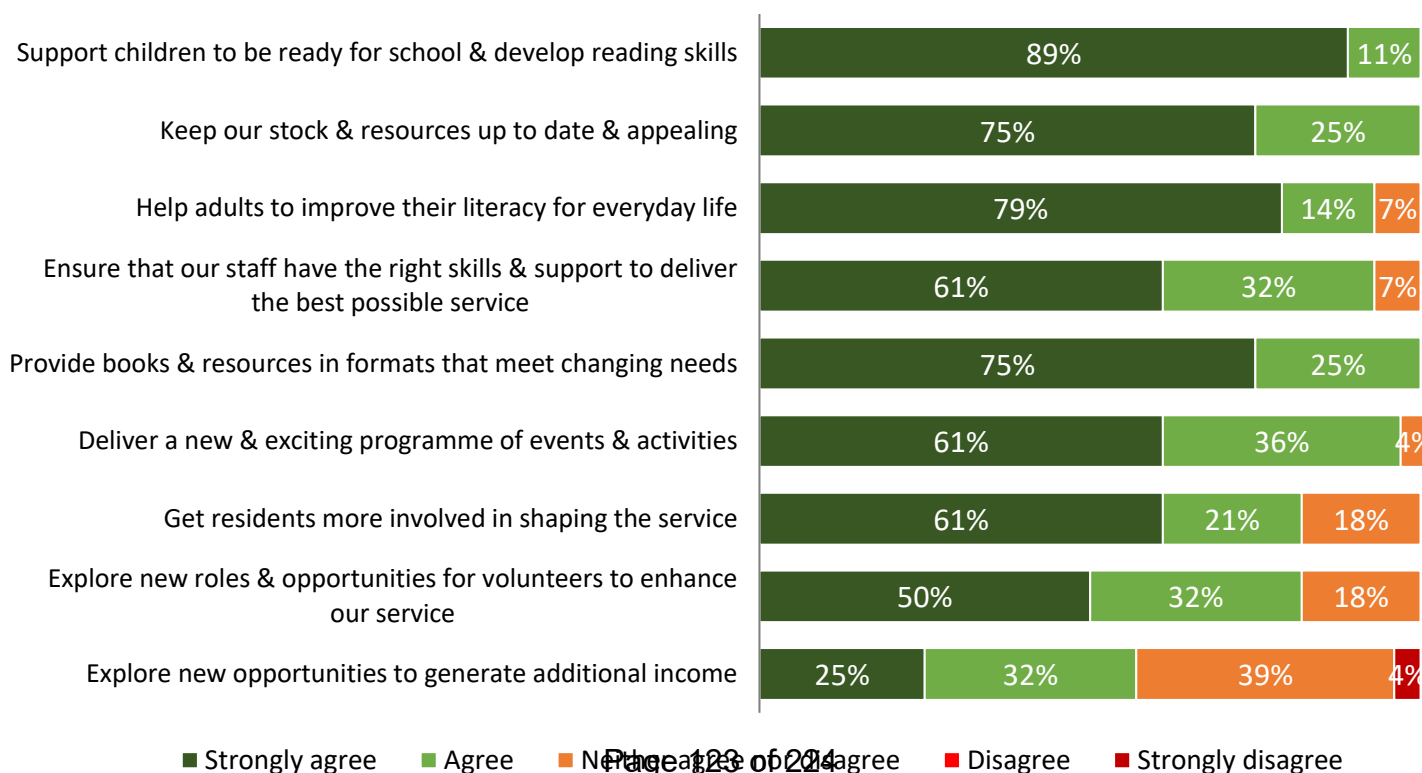
Consistent with the approach for individuals, organisation respondents were presented with the sub level aims within each of the three areas and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each one.

SUPPORT FOR AIM ONE AREAS – LIBRARY SERVICE AND LITERACY

Consistent with trends observed amongst individual respondents, overall agreement is strong in relation to the stated aims of supporting children to be ready for school and developing their reading skills, keeping stock and resources up to date and appealing, helping adults to improve their literacy, ensuring staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best service and providing books and resources in formats that meet changing needs. Agreement is also high for delivering a new and exciting programme of events and activities.

Also consistent with the trend observed amongst individual respondents, agreement with exploring new opportunities to generate income is comparatively lower than the other Aim One areas. A higher proportion neither agreed nor disagreed with the aim.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims? Base: all organisations answering (28)



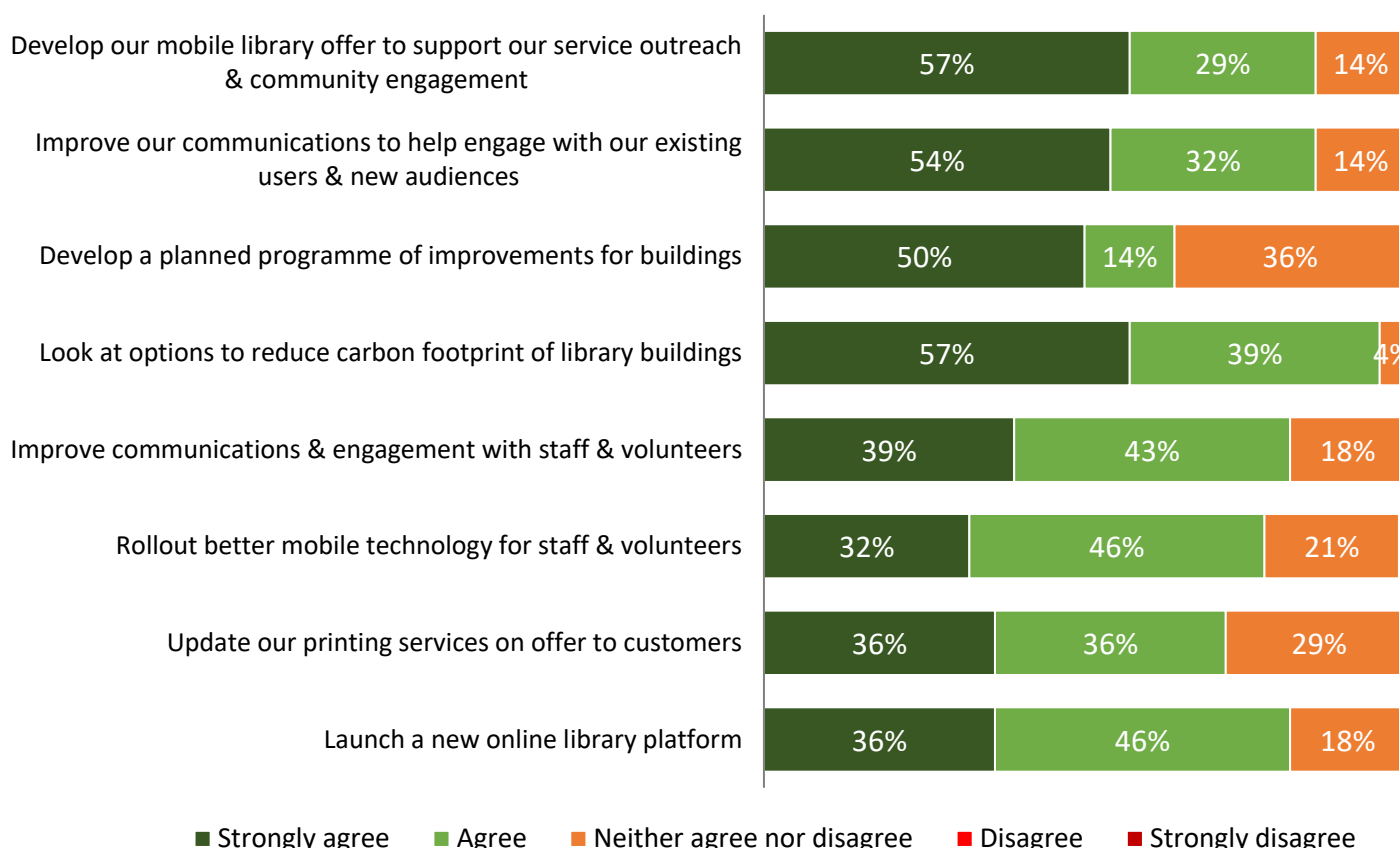
Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Support children to be ready for school & develop their reading skills	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Keep our stock & resources up to date & appealing	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Help adults to improve their literacy for everyday life	79%	14%	7%	0%	0%
Ensure that our staff have the right skills & support to deliver the best possible service	61%	32%	7%	0%	0%
Provide books & resources in formats that meet changing needs	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Deliver a new & exciting programme of events & activities	61%	36%	4%	0%	0%
Get residents more involved in shaping the service	61%	21%	18%	0%	0%
Explore new roles & opportunities for volunteers to enhance our service	50%	32%	18%	0%	0%
Explore new opportunities to generate additional income	25%	32%	39%	4%	0%

SUPPORT FOR AIM TWO AREAS – INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Overall agreement is high with the stated aims of developing the mobile library offer to support service outreach and community engagement, improving communications to help engage with existing users and new audiences and looking at options to reduce the carbon footprint of library buildings. In contrast to individual respondents, agreement with developing a planned programme of buildings improvements is lower (with a significant proportion neither agreeing nor disagreeing).

Consistent with trends observed amongst individual respondents, agreement with the technological sub areas of Aim Two are comparatively lower than the other Aim Two areas.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims? Base: all organisations answering (28)



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Develop our mobile library offer to support our service outreach and community engagement	57%	29%	14%	0%	0%
Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences	54%	32%	14%	0%	0%
Develop a planned programme of improvements for our buildings	50%	14%	36%	0%	0%
Look at options to reduce the carbon footprint of our library buildings	57%	39%	4%	0%	0%
Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers	39%	43%	18%	0%	0%

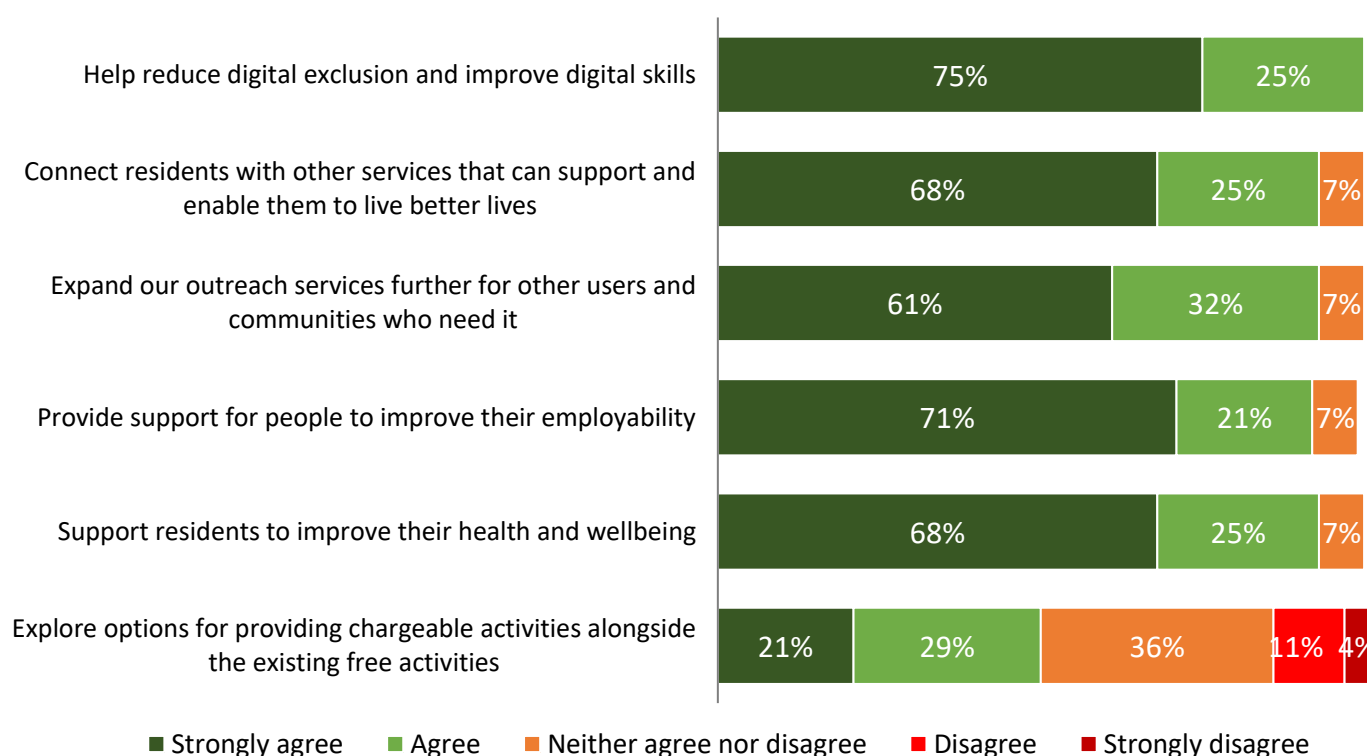
Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Rollout better mobile technology for staff and volunteers	32%	46%	21%	0%	0%
Update our printing services on offer to customers	36%	36%	29%	0%	0%
Launch a new online library platform	36%	46%	18%	0%	0%

SUPPORT FOR AIM THREE AREAS – SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND LEVELLING UP

Overall agreement is strong in relation to the stated aims of helping reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills, connecting residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives, expanding outreach services further for other users and communities that need it, providing support for people to improve their employability and supporting residents to improve health and wellbeing.

Consistent with individual respondents, agreement with exploration of options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities is considerably lower than the other Aim Three aims.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims? Base: all organisations answering (28)



Supporting data table	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Help reduce digital exclusion and improve digital skills	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Connect residents with other services that can support and enable them to live better lives	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%
Expand our outreach services further for other users and communities who need it	61%	32%	7%	0%	0%
Provide support for people to improve their employability	71%	21%	7%	0%	0%
Support residents to improve their health and wellbeing	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%
Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities	21%	29%	36%	11%	4%

This report was produced for Essex County Council's Chief Executive's Office

For more information email: research@essex.gov.uk

Appendix 3:Summary of Engagement with other organisations

Number	Date	Name of Organisation	Feedback and suggestions
1	5/1/22	Libraries Connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleased to see the word “infrastructure” in the report • Approved of the focus on the environment • Acknowledge Essex is a very diverse county - need to target the areas of deprivation • Look at Kirklees Libraries – successful recruitment programme • Seek information from CILIP and Arts Council for information about the environment and how libraries can help
2	6/1/22	DCMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered to look at Scrutiny papers in role of Critical Friend • Recommended we mention our statutory duty “to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof” in the plan • Interested to see we have digital ambition • Asked how we were targeting digitally excluded non-users as part of the consultation • Interested to hear what we are doing to develop and improve our digital infrastructure • Asked if we would be using Open Data approaches • Suggested we looked at joining the GovWifi network to attract partners and encourage users from government organisations such as MoJ or job centres • Suggested we read the study by TRA re 12 pilots focussed on targeting nonusers • Suggested we refer to front line staff as 'skilled and experienced staff' • Suggested we explored funding that might be available from Government - eg BEIS offers decarbonisation grants via Salix (one of their ALBs) • Community libraries – be explicit – state we are not going to be doing this • Run (a) You Said, We Did session(s)
3	6/1/22	National Literacy Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended we contacted Juniper Education schools library service • Felt the report was an “incredibly positive message” • Good to see mention of levelling up • What is our partnership strategy? What are our ambitions to integrate with public health and schools? There is strong potential to work with partners like these

Number	Date	Name of Organisation	Feedback and suggestions
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the partnerships ECC already has, those that are already focussed on families • Suggested a strategic steering group to help deliver the plan – including how we measure raising awareness and success with Early Years, formulating outcomes • Link literacy with public health – eg midwives, health visitors, social housing • Link with local business, flag up rhymetimes / literacy activities to workers and business leaders • Promote the library as providing skills for the workforce of the future • Target areas of need, reach out to schools • Have strong measures and targets • Use priority postcodes, prioritise the schools • Evidence school readiness results
4	18/1/22	Epping Youth Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus is always around Rhymetime and we cater so much for the under 5s those in the teenage bracket get lost • Want to be able to use the adult space – ‘we don’t want to be surrounded by bright colours and children’s images’ • In relation to our buildings ‘they are not cool and need a face lift need to be fit for purpose’ • Someone mentioned that they thought it was really good that some of our libraries have a J9 sign in the window for domestic abuse. Could there be more publicity around the libraries being a safe space for children too. It seems to be an unspoken rule that if you are lost go to the library, could this be more official? • Have good PCs worth using • Hours that suit young people, after school and not shut at 4pm • Promote as one stop shop - where you could get everything done • Incentives – coffee shops, podcasts. Fixed earphones that you could sit and plug in to listen to podcasts or music • Spaces to study – would like zones. • Would like to see events hosted by someone of the same age group • Sofas and spaces to be able to work together • Focus themes – gaming, crafting, home working. Game workshops, digital spaces

Number	Date	Name of Organisation	Feedback and suggestions
5	25/1/22	Young Essex Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need a space for students to come together to collaborate on work. Perhaps adopt a scheme of dedicating some time as 'student time' • Extend opening times to 7 or 8 at some times during the week • Allocate more laptops and computers in libraries to allow more kids to do their homework on • Advertise libraries in a way more appealing to young people. Libraries could be a youth hub and a centre of interest. For instance, the Basildon Youth Centre has an LGBT group. It could be promoted to be more a safe space rather than just a place where people come to read books and revise etc. • Have more direct contact with schools, like sending representatives to go to schools, particularly secondary schools • Do an older reading or writing challenge or something similar for secondary school children. Emphasis on reading for pleasure and partnership with Essex Young Assembly • We'd be interested in coffee / tea machines. It's hard to be in the library for a long time without anything to sustain you • Have book clubs so that young people can come and discuss a book and their ideas on it • Encourage support groups, such as for dyslexia, to come in and support people. • Diversify books a bit more • Use Amazon and individual schools lists to gauge what's trending and buy accordingly • Increase the EDI part of libraries

Abbreviations

ALB	Arms-length body
BEIS	Department for Business, Investment and Industrial Strategy
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
EDI	Equality, diversity and inclusion
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
TRA	The Reading Agency

Appendix 4: Everyone's Library Service – Post Consultation Changes

Date: 15.03.2022

Background:

From 26th November 2020 to 21st January 2022 Essex County Council undertook a public consultation on the new draft plan for the Essex Library Service. Overall 2,185 individual responses were received to the consultation via the online consultation portal with a further 28 responses were received on behalf of different organisations (see consultation report for full details and findings).

For every proposal set out in the plan the majority of responses were in agreement with the plan, based on combined totals for those answering “strongly agree” or “agree”, followed by those who had no opinion or were unsure. There was however some variation depending on the specific proposal or additional comments and feedback that suggests that some additional clarification may be required in some sections. As such we have put forward a number of suggested changes to reflect the feedback received from members of the public and responding organisations.

Page 5

- **Opening Statement:** Additional text included to reflect some of the key themes coming from consultee responses and comments, and to reference how the consultation has informed the plan.
- New text reads *“Through talking to our residents and partners it is clear that people are passionate about our libraries as a hub for communities to come together and interact, a vital resource for helping residents improve their literacy, and a place to learn new skills to help them level up.”*
- **Section 2 heading:** This has been changed to “Communications and Infrastructure” as per changes set out for page 12.

Page 9

- **Keep our book stock and other resources up to date and appealing:** We have added the word “book” and “other” to the title of this item to clarify that this activity will include hard copy book stock not just electronic resources as commented on in some public feedback. We have also simplified some of the other wording to improve readability.

We have also made this item the fourth item in this section to reflect the high proportion on comments received about the importance of maintaining the book stock across in this and other sections of the consultation.

- **Get residents and communities more involved in shaping the service:** We have updated this item to include reference to communities in the title and the wider text. This is to reflect the feedback from consultees as on the importance of libraries as a community resource.

Page 10

- **Ensure that our staff have the right skills and support to deliver the best possible service:** We have added the line *"Well trained staff are critical to the service."* To reflect feedback from consultees about the importance of the staff to the customer experience and reinforce our commitment to the library service workforce.
- **Explore options for providing chargeable activities alongside the existing free activities:** This item has been moved from page 18 as it is more relevant to the section on services to customers. We have also updated the wording to provide context as to why charging is required for some new activities to include the following new text *"We will explore options for additional chargeable activities that would possibly run alongside and complement free activities. These would be activities which we may consider hosting to provide an enhanced offer, service or experience to our existing customers; to appeal to new users of the service; or to raise awareness of libraries as a potential partner and venue for other organisations."*

Page 12

- **Communications and Infrastructure:** The title of this section has been changed from *"Infrastructure and Communications"* to reflect the importance of communications to customers arising from the consultation. We have also moved text from elsewhere in the introduction accordingly.

Page 13

- **Reordering Items:** The following items have been moved to the front of this section to reflect changes agreed to the title of this section.
 - Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences
 - Improve communications and engagement with our staff and volunteers
- **Improve our communications to help engage with our existing users and new audiences:** additional reference to engagement added to the text to reflect feedback from consultees and engaging with service users and communities, and requests for communications at a more local level.

Page 18

- **Explore new opportunities to generate additional income:** This has been moved from page 10 due to the focus being on new services to communities and is thus more appropriate in this section.

Other Changes

- **Pages 8, 12 & 16:** "Chapter" has been changed to "Aim" in line with the introduction.

Forward Plan reference number: FP/245/12/21

Report title: Essex Renewal Fund	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor Lesley Wagland, Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning and Councillor Christopher Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs	
Date: 19 April 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Stephanie Mitchener, Director of Finance stephanie.mitchener@essex.gov.uk or Steve Evison, Director of Sustainable Growth steve.evison@essex.gov.uk or Tina French, Head of Finance Commercial Insight tina.french@essex.gov.uk or Ricky Thakrar, Principal Economic Growth Officer ricky.thakrar@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 The economy is one of the four key areas of focus in the Council's *"Everyone's Essex: our plan for levelling up the county 2021 to 2025"*. The proposals for an Essex Renewal Fund in this paper will help to deliver nine of the twenty Everyone's Essex commitments.
- 1.2 It is proposed to establish an Essex Renewal Fund ('the Fund') to support the Council's commitment to good jobs, future growth and investment, green growth, levelling up the economy, transport and built environment, healthy lifestyles, education outcomes, levelling up families and net zero.
- 1.3 In establishing the Fund, the Council would aim to secure over £100m of investment into Essex over the next 20 years, creating 1,500 jobs, and bringing to market enough land for other parties to deliver 1,000 new homes. Following initial seed funding from the Council, the Fund will eventually become self-financing, allowing the Council to continue delivering projects into the future. It will do this through land and property projects that the market will not deliver or may not deliver to such high standards. All new build projects will be expected to deliver net zero carbon in operation. It will have a catalytic impact beyond the projects that it supports directly, by building confidence in Essex places and markets.
- 1.4 The proposed fund would deliver direct benefits for Essex residents and businesses – supporting our town centres and high streets, investing in our new Garden Communities, increasing choice of high-quality business accommodation, and nurturing the Council's five key sectors (advanced manufacturing, clean energy, construction, digital and life sciences).
- 1.5 This report asks Cabinet to agree in principle to invest capital in the Essex Renewal Fund. This will be a revolving fund, where net income and capital

receipts are reinvested into the Fund to deliver further growth and renewal projects, with the existing £13.5m Commercial Investment in Essex Places Reserve used to support the revenue position initially. The Fund will also leverage central government grant funding and private sector funding into Essex to deliver projects. Allocation of funds to individual projects or opportunities will be subject to separate decisions that will support each investment.

- 1.6. Approving the recommendations in this report will support the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030 as the expectation is that all new build projects will deliver net zero carbon in operation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to the establishment of an Essex Renewal Fund on the basis contained in this report, to deliver a balanced portfolio of land and property projects focussed on economic renewal and growth.
- 2.2 Agree in principle that the Council will make capital investment in the Essex Renewal Fund. Specific allocations for the capital programme will be set out in the individual decisions that will support each investment.
- 2.3. Agree to draw down £590,000 for 2022/23 from the Commercial Investment in Essex Places reserve to the Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning portfolio (£350,000) and Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs portfolio (£240,000), for the internal and external resource costs for the first year of operation. Any unspent funding will be returned to the reserve at the end of the financial year. The future years' budget requirement will be incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Resource Strategy (MTRS) from 2023/24 onwards (see paragraph 6 below).
- 2.4. Agree that investments will only be made in line with the specific investment criteria set out in paragraphs 3.27 to 3.30, subject to variation as appropriate from time to time, and always following the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations.
- 2.5. Agree to run a competitive procurement to provide independent and specialist investment and real estate expertise that will be required for the successful delivery of the Fund and to delegate the decision to award the contract to the Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs. This will include the management of the existing commercial property portfolio. The external support required for individual projects within the Fund will be requested in separate decisions.

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1. The challenges of Everyone's Essex and the need to improve the Essex economy have led to us investigating how the Council could invest in the future of Essex in a way that helps boost jobs for our residents.
- 3.2. One way to do this would be to create a fund which could invest in the development of employment land in Essex to help new businesses and help existing businesses to grow or maintain competitiveness.
- 3.3. Accordingly, it is proposed to create a new fund to be called the Essex Renewal Fund. It is proposed that over the next 20 years, the Fund would invest at least £100m to create 1,500 jobs, bring to market enough land for other parties to deliver 1,000 new homes. The support for housing will take the form of bringing consented, cleared, serviced parcels of land to the market for other parties to then build out. During this time, it is expected to become a revolving fund whereby assets generated through regeneration are disposed of to generate a capital receipt which is itself reinvested, allowing the Council to continue delivering projects into the future.
- 3.4. The proposed investment activity will be an addition to the Council's existing investment landscape that includes treasury management, shareholdings and the commercial property portfolio.
- 3.5. As well as helping the Council to lever in external public and private sector funds, it is intended that it will have a catalytic impact beyond the projects that it supports directly, by building confidence in Essex places and markets.

Purpose and Principles of the Fund

- 3.6. The purpose of the Fund is to help deliver economic growth and renewal in the county, creating good jobs, attracting future growth and investment and helping to level up the Essex economy whilst also helping to deliver net zero carbon, all key commitments of Everyone's Essex. This will be delivered through a balanced portfolio of land and property projects, operating within a set of agreed principles and criteria.
- 3.7. This will be a revolving fund investing only within the administrative county of Essex. Net income and the capital receipts will be reinvested into future fund activity. Capital receipts later in the life of the Fund may also be available for use by the Council to fund the wider capital programme. Investment and divestment decisions will be coordinated to manage risks.
- 3.8. The Fund will seek to resolve evidenced market failures by either delivering schemes which the market will not deliver or deliver schemes to a higher standard than the market would provide.
- 3.9. The Fund will require access to central government funding, especially to support the net zero environmental credentials in the early years of the Fund and will also seek to attract other public and private sector funding to share risk, where appropriate.

3.10. The Fund **will not**:

- invest outside the administrative county of Essex (the Essex County Council area)
- invest primarily for yield, or hold assets indefinitely
- deliver what the private sector would have done anyway
- directly deliver housing or social infrastructure, unless this is ancillary to a non-residential project (for example, the construction of residential apartments above ground floor commercial premises). The support for housing will be to bring cleared, consented, serviced parcels of land to the market for other parties to then build out. Such parties could include private sector developers / housebuilders, Essex Housing, or district councils.

3.11. The risk profile of the Fund takes into consideration the lower risk characteristics of the Council's existing three commercial properties and the Commercial Investment in Essex Places reserve already in place to support such activity, as well as the higher risk new projects to be developed. The existing assets are lower risk given their tenancy covenant strength and asset quality and sit alongside the existing reserve to provide balance to the refurbishment, development and development land projects, which have a higher risk profile.

3.12. Formal investment and delivery decisions will be taken in accordance with the Council's constitution, with each individual investment proposal being subject to its own decision paper to ensure that each will deliver economic and social benefits as well as a suitable financial return relative to the costs and risks involved.

3.13. The Fund will use the following framework:

- A clear portfolio strategy
- A set of pre-agreed investment criteria against which each potential investment opportunity will be measured
- Independent specialist advice to support each investment and delivery decision as well as providing overall portfolio fund management
- Strategic fit and risk assessments for each opportunity
- Economic appraisals carried out to inform investment and delivery decisions
- External funding sought where possible to minimise borrowing costs, potentially share reward and to share risk.

3.14. The principles of the Fund are set out below:

- Revolve capital receipts and net income into further investments
- Investment will be within the administrative county of Essex
- To seek a balanced portfolio of investment, where risk is spread across types of activity, sectors and locations to minimise the risk of major failure in any one of these areas.
- An agreed set of criteria for decision making, including minimum at project and strand levels
- A maximum value for a single investment of £12.5m
- Project and portfolio-level criteria (see paragraphs 3.23 to 3.26)
- A contingency for unexpected revenue costs

- Confirmation of compliance with Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) guidance will be formally sought prior to any capital investment decision
- Performance will be regularly reviewed and reported to officers and Members
- Use independent specialist advisers to help manage the portfolio and to support decisions
- Formal decisions will follow the Council's constitution

3.15. The Fund will not invest in projects that are not forecast to generate the minimum levels of economic, social or financial returns set out in the proposed criteria in paragraphs 3.27 to 3.30.

3.16. It is proposed that there will be three strands or types of activity within the Fund listed below:

- **Development and Refurbishment Projects** – these are projects where the primary use is non-residential and the Council will develop or repurpose existing assets to deliver economic benefits.
- **Development Land Projects** - these are projects where the Council will acquire land and promote a development scheme to influence the location, quality and uses of developments, capturing land value uplift as a result of our interventions. The Fund may build out the scheme if the primary use is non-residential or may dispose of the site to other parties on terms which require the purchaser to build it. Such parties could include private sector developers / housebuilders, Essex Housing, or district councils. The Council may also invest in enabling works / infrastructure prior to onward delivery.
- **Income generating assets** - these are assets where the primary use is non-residential that commence as one of the two strands above and where, upon completion, the Council chooses to retain the asset in whole or part for the rental income generated and/or to ensure benefits realisation. The net rental income would be used to meet the operating costs of the fund.

3.17. Over the life of the Fund the value of the first two strands shall remain below 1.4 times that of the value of the cash reserve and income generating assets. We will include the value of the existing commercial property portfolio as income generating assets. This will ensure an appropriate overall risk balance as the first two strands are higher risk than holding income generating assets.

3.18. A pipeline of potential investment opportunities will be maintained, based on both the internal intelligence within the Council and the market intelligence of our external advisors. Opportunities will be assessed against the minimum criteria set out in this paper via a series of gateway reviews, with the most suitable projects ultimately being developed into individual business cases and the formal investment and delivery decisions being taken in line with the Constitution and Financial Regulations.

Management and Monitoring

- 3.19. Given the objectives of the Fund and nature of activity, all decisions must have a well-rounded consideration of both financial and non-financial costs, benefits and risks. The operational management of the Fund will sit in the Economic Growth service area, supported by the relevant support services (finance, legal, property, etc.) reporting to the Executive Director, Economy, Investment and Public Health. Formal decisions will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs. The Essex Property team will provide scrutiny and specialist advice as part of their corporate landlord responsibilities. An estimate for the additional internal resource requirements has been included in the development and testing of the Fund and is itemised in Section 6 below.
- 3.20. The performance of the Fund at a project, strand and portfolio level will be reviewed and managed by the Executive Director for Economy, Investment and Public Health, the section 151 officer and other senior officers (in liaison with relevant Cabinet Members). They will consider recommendations and actions for both investment and divestment, prior to the formal decision being made per the existing Financial Regulations.
- 3.21. The Council will seek appropriate advisory services for the Fund and the existing commercial property portfolio to ensure that the Council has the necessary expertise to operate and manage it to achieve the best outcomes. These will include:
- **Fund Management, Real Estate Consultancy, and Lettings Management** – to provide market intelligence and opportunity identification, risk management, robust due diligence and challenge for opportunities and performance and strategic reporting to the Council. The Fund Manager will also provide real estate consultancy and lettings management. It is proposed that these services be procured using a Public Sector framework, RM6168 (Lot 1 – Total Estate Management). This framework covers the requirements identified and having been competitively tendered contain value for money, commercial rates from the market leading suppliers and will allow a quicker and more efficient procurement exercise. It is proposed to use a high level evaluation split of 35% price : 65% quality, including 5% for social value.
 - **Facilities Management** – to maintain asset values, ensure health and safety, minimise environmental impacts and retain tenant satisfaction. It is proposed that this service is provided via the existing Mitie contract managed by the Essex Property team.
 - **Design & Technical Services** – to ensure health and safety, high quality design and sustainability, appropriate engineering solutions, and management services for projects. It is proposed that each project will be considered on a project-by-project basis, with their own individual procurement governance decisions depending on approach and value, but

the Council has access to providers via existing Mitie or Perfect Circle consortium arrangements or via a direct procurement.

- **Construction Works** – it is proposed that this will be secured on a project-by-project basis via existing procurement routes, such as Mitie and/or Essex Construction Framework 2 or via a direct procurement where appropriate. All procurements would be subject to their own individual procurement governance decisions depending on approach and value.

3.22. The development and testing of the Fund has considered the costs associated with these services at estimated market rates either at a project or a portfolio level.

3.23. Following best practice, potential investment and delivery decisions will follow a four-gateway “Stop/Continue” approval process, which will embed existing Council governance routes for formal decision making. The summary process will be:

- **Gateway 1** – The opportunity identified must achieve a pass against Financial, Economic, Management, and Risk Assessment matrices prepared by officers and independent external specialists before further feasibility and due diligence is carried out
- **Gateway 2** – Officers must endorse a Strategic Business case before an “in principle” non-legally binding bid is made to acquire an asset
- **Gateway 3** – Cabinet Member or Cabinet must approve a decision before a formal offer is made to acquire an asset
- **Gateway 4** – With respect to projects involving construction works, the Cabinet Member or Cabinet must approve the delivery strategy before construction works are procured or before a contract is awarded

3.24. For any investment opportunity, it is possible to stop or pause the progress of that opportunity at each gateway. The implications of doing so will become greater towards the later gateways, and these will be clearly communicated to decision makers.

3.25. The performance monitoring will also allow for regular pause and reflect stages to ensure the Fund is delivering against the Everyone’s Essex commitments as well as against the economic, social, environmental and financial targets.

3.26. The financial and non-financial performance of the portfolio as a whole will be reported regularly to key officers and Members, including regular reporting to relevant Scrutiny Committee(s), and will be reported to Cabinet via the Quarterly Financial reports.

Proposed Criteria for Investment

3.27. The key minimum criteria to be used to assess each opportunity within each strand are as follows.

3.28. **Portfolio Level**

- All investments will be located within Essex
- Projects will be spread across Essex to both ensure delivery of economic and social benefits to the communities most in need but also to help spread some of the geographical risk of local market failure.
- Maximum grant funding requirement prior to start on site shall not exceed £10m across the portfolio at any one time
- Revenue reserve balance will not fall below £0.5m to provide a contingency for unexpected revenue costs
- Each proposed project will have confirmation of compliance with PWLB and CIPFA guidance from the s151 Officer or Chief Accountant.
- When making decisions we will seek to ensure that the project contributes to ensuring that the portfolio is a mixed portfolio:
 - There will be a mix of shorter-term investment in development and refurbishment projects (approximately 5 years or less) and longer-term investment in development land (up to 10 years or so), complemented by some assets held upon completion for income and/or to ensure benefits realisation (up to 10 years or so)
 - There will be a mix of properties purchased across a range of sectors and different locations (albeit all within Essex) to minimise the impact of a sector/location specific downturn

3.29. Project Level

- All projects will deliver a minimum Benefit:Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2:1, meaning that every £1 spent by the council generates £2 of social value. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities considers a BCR of 2:1 to represent “High” value for money.
- The minimum project and overall strand post-financing Internal Rate of Return (IRR) hurdle rates are:

Strand	Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Rating B projects	Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Rating A+ projects	Overall Strand Target
Income Generating Assets	4.25%	3.75%	4.00%
Development/Refurbishment	6.50%	4.50%	5.50%
Development Land	7.00%	5.00%	6.00%

- No single investment should exceed £12.5m (to diversify risk)
- Net zero carbon (EPC Rating A+) in operation will be the ambition for all new build projects, with exception only where there is a clear opportunity to deliver on Levelling Up Essex commitments
- At the first decision gateway, any project will fail if it fails to meet minimum standards for either of:
 - the Financial, Economic, Management Assessment for all strands
 - the relevant strand-specific Risk Assessment matrix
- Projects will be prioritised based on Strategic Fit with nine policy areas in Everyone’s Essex which link to this. Those nine areas are:

- Good jobs
- Levelling up the economy
- Future growth and investment
- Green growth
- Net zero
- Transport and built environment
- Healthy lifestyles
- Education outcomes
- Levelling up outcomes for families

3.30. The above hurdles, targets and prioritisation have been developed and tested with support from multiple independent specialist consultants. It is likely that over time these may move both upward/downward as the market changes over the long timeframe covered by the Fund. The parameters will be kept under ongoing review and monitoring as part of the ongoing management of the Fund and any required change will be subject to a separate decision at the appropriate time or as part of individual project business cases.

Risk Implications

3.31. The key risks identified include:

- As with all such investment activity, the value of assets and investments can increase or decrease. These movements could lead to impacts on the revenue budget and balance sheet. The inevitability of investment asset volatility should be appreciated but should be understood in the context of the opportunity to deliver on the Everyone's Essex commitment to deliver economic growth and to generate a financial return
- It is likely that some, possibly a majority, of the projects will require an element of grant funding to make them viable. Funding will be sought from external funders, but there is a risk that such funding sources are not readily available. Some assets may also be purchased prior to the grant funding being in place up to a maximum level as mentioned in 3.29 above
- PWLB borrowing guidance mean that a council would be prohibited from **all** borrowing from the PWLB if there are any projects in the capital programme that are considered to be investment assets made primarily for yield
- There are potential reputational risks for the Council should the Fund invest in projects that might be or become unpopular in their localities (for example, higher-density development or development on previously undeveloped land). Similarly, there may be occasions where there are abortive negotiations to acquire land or property and/or disputes with neighbouring landowners that may bring adverse comments for the Council
- Activities associated with the Fund will be complex to manage and operate and requires sufficient officer capacity and capability to ensure positive outcomes for residents and businesses
- The project identification, selection and business case development processes must take account of optimism bias and operate free from any undue influence

3.32. The key risk mitigation approaches to the risks described above include:

- The portfolio will be a mix of shorter-term investment in development and refurbishment projects (approximately 5 years or less) and longer-term investment in development land (up to 10 years or so), complemented by some assets held upon completion for income and/or to ensure benefits realisation (up to 10 years or so)
- Properties purchased across a range of sectors and different locations (albeit all within Essex) to minimise the impact of a sector/location specific downturn
- No single investment should exceed £12.5m to diversify risk
- Setting minimum investment parameters at project and portfolio level, varying by strand and environmental credentials
- Use of independent specialist advisors to provide advice and market intelligence alongside internal capacity-building and sufficient budgets to allow correct resourcing
- Having a portfolio investment approach that ensures a balanced risk exposure across higher and lower risk activity including the existing property portfolio and the initial £13.5m cash reserve
- Retaining a £0.5m minimum revenue reserve balance for unexpected revenue costs
- Using a range of scored assessment matrices with minimum standards set to eliminate projects with too high a risk profile at the identification stage
- Using a gateway approval process that embeds the existing Council decision making process for formal decisions
- Setting a maximum level of investment made that requires grant funding for which that funding is not yet in place.
- Deployment of specialist resource to prepare HM Treasury 'Green Book'-compliant business cases for grant funding bids
- Each project will evidence PWLB compliance via a schedule to be signed off by the s.151 Officer, or delegate, as part of the decision process before any investment is made
- A stakeholder engagement strategy for each project involving the Council's Communications team where appropriate.

3.33. The implications of macroeconomic shocks, such as COVID-19, war in Ukraine and the UK's exit from the European Union, will remain a risk and others will arise over the Fund's life. The use of market experts, the inclusion of longer-term investments, combined with strong due diligence and the other mitigations described above should provide some mitigation to these market impacts.

3.34. The divestment of individual projects or the portfolio will be kept under regular review as an option as part of the Council's overall investment management policy.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

4.1. This report links to all four strategic priorities in the Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high-quality environment

- Health, wellbeing & independence for all ages
- A great place for children and families to grow

5. Options

- 5.1. **Option 1 – Establish the Fund** to deliver a balanced portfolio focussed on economic renewal and growth, whilst delivering a financial return and helping to deliver net zero carbon ambitions. This will boost economic growth, create new jobs and homes, deliver environmental benefits and generate income to help deliver on the Everyone's Essex commitments and the outcomes key to residents and businesses of Essex. The portfolio approach will allow a diversification of risk and allow the Council to best manage market failure by investing where either the market will not invest and/or where the market will deliver lesser social value.

All investment activity will be within Essex.

This is the recommended option

- 5.2. **Option 2 – Make similar investments but in a piecemeal approach** on a project-by-project basis, which may deliver similar benefits, but the absence of the portfolio managed overview could lead to an unbalanced risk exposure for the Council in terms of type of project, location of projects or sector
- 5.3. **Option 3 – Do nothing** and wait for the market to respond to possibly deliver delayed benefits. This approach is unlikely to see investment made in the target localities or of the required nature to deliver the same level of economic and social benefits that the Council require, nor in the same timeframes.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1. Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The financial and non-financial operation of the Fund was developed and tested with support from multiple independent specialist firms and included passing 55 specimen projects through the gateway assessments as a dummy exercise. Around 15% of these specific projects passed the dummy assessments and were used to generate a representative portfolio of 16 projects over 27 years. While these projects were based on potential opportunities within Essex at the time, they will not be the actual investments made. Instead, they act as a realistic illustration of how the Fund might operate, based on evidence of costs and values provided by independent specialists.
- 6.1.2 The testing showed that there will be a period outside the initial investment period when activity will slow until such times as the Fund can recycle funding. If this occurs within the live fund, a decision can be made whether to slow investment or whether alternative funding might be available.

6.1.3 Based on this testing of specimen projects, the revenue performance and capital requirements of the Fund's initial years is expected to be as follows. The use of the Commercial Investment in Essex Places reserve, set up specifically to be used for this sort of activity, will ensure that there is no negative revenue budget impact:

Expected Revenue Position – 5 year view

Revenue	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	TOTAL (£m)
Income	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	1.8
Operating & Overhead Costs	(0.6)	(0.6)	(0.6)	(0.6)	(0.7)	(3.1)
Interest & Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Costs	(0.3)	(0.6)	(0.8)	(1.0)	(1.3)	(4.0)
Expenditure	(0.9)	(1.2)	(1.4)	(1.6)	(2.0)	(7.1)
Net Pressure to be funded from Reserve	(0.8)	(0.8)	(1.0)	(1.2)	(1.5)	(5.3)
Balance in Reserve	12.7	11.9	10.9	9.7	8.2	

Expected Capital Position – 5 year view

Capital	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	TOTAL (£m)
Gross capital funding requirement	10.5	7.0	7.0	8.0	8.5	41.0
Less: Grant funding		5.0	3.0	3.0	1.5	12.5
Less: Capital receipts	-	-	-	-	2.0	2.0
Net capital funding requirement	10.5	2.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	26.5

6.1.4 The financial modelling includes £590,000 per annum of estimated additional revenue resource requirements to support the operation of the Fund, with expenditure funded from the revenue reserve initially. This is split £280,000 for 3.5 FTE plus legal support costs and £310,000 per annum for external support, based on best available market information.

There are also opportunity costs of 0.5 FTE within the Property team.

6.1.5 Individual decisions for each project will include any project specific resource requirements. The capital requirements are not currently included in the Council's 2022/23 budget, capital programme and MTRS.

6.1.6 All revenue implications are proposed to be funded from drawdowns from the Commercial Investment in Essex Places Reserve that has a current balance of £13.5m.

6.1.7 For the purposes of developing and testing the operation of the Fund, capital is assumed to be entirely funded from new PWLB borrowing for regeneration purposes. As the Fund becomes more mature, as assets are sold, the capital receipts will be invested into subsequent projects. When a decision is taken to wind down the Fund, debt will be repaid and capital receipts made available for the Council to use to avoid borrowing costs on its capital programme.

6.1.8 Based on the types and levels of activity anticipated, over 20 years, the Fund could achieve performance of:

- Around 15 projects supported
- Peak borrowing under £30m (net of other funding sources)
- Total cash generated of over £80m:
 - Capital around £50m, which can be used by the Council to reduce borrowing costs
 - Revenue around £30m (incl. £13.5m initial reserve)
- Post-financing portfolio IRR of 12.5%

The modelling assumptions used are rooted in market evidence and a prudent approach has been taken. In addition, a series of sensitivities have been run, which show that the Fund is resilient to adverse conditions. These sensitivities included general and construction inflation, sales value/rental growth, interest rate movement and baseline cost and income movement.

6.1.9 Of the risks identified in Section 3, the key financial risks will be the availability of grant funding to support projects, especially in the initial years to deliver the Net Zero carbon ambition, the inflation risk and the cost of borrowing risk. It is important to note that each project will be the subject of its own decision, including financial modelling, as part of the approval process and if these risks materialise and the projects do not meet the investment criteria then they will not proceed. Other key mitigations are set out in Section 3.

6.1.10 The approval of this decision will not commit the Council to any investment in specific projects. Each project will be subject to its own detailed business case, which will include full financial, economic and risk appraisals and will include confirmation of compliance with the PWLB borrowing guidance.

6.2. Legal Implications

6.2.1 Any property owning and development activity involves legal risks. These will vary from scheme to scheme but include contractual, procurement, planning, property and funding issues. This scheme will see the Council investing,

sometimes with external funding, in order to help the economic growth of Essex.

6.2.2 It will be important to ensure that the fund is designed to avoid losses and that appropriate assurance and advice is in place to ensure that the scheme delivers on its objectives.

6.2.3 Finally processes need to be put in place to ensure that when supporting housing schemes it is not competing with Essex Housing as it would be undesirable to have two parts of the council competing with one another.

7 Equality and Diversity implications

- 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.
- 7.4 The establishment of the Fund will help to deliver economic benefits across the County. Each project will be subject to its own business case and decision paper, which will include project-specific Equality Impact Assessments.

8 List of appendices

Equality Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

None

Forward Plan reference number: FP/230/11/21

Report title: Procurement of contract(s) for bio-waste treatment, transfer and transport services	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Malcolm Buckley, Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling	
Date: 19 April 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Mark Simpkins, Head of Operational Delivery, email Mark.Simpkins@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex sets out the Council's strategic purpose, including the strategic aim of a high-quality environment. This strategic aim includes a specific commitment to minimising the impact on the environment by supporting residents and businesses to reduce waste and increase the amounts recycled.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to commence the procurement for waste treatment, transfer and transport services for separately collected bio-waste streams in Essex. Bio-waste is organic material such as food, green or mixed food and green waste.
- 1.3 This contract will help to deliver the aspirations of the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) between Essex County Council ("ECC") and the District, City and Borough Councils to increase the recycling of food and green waste across Essex by creating a more circular economy to protect our natural resources through the efficient reuse of materials, maximising energy generation and contributing to our Net Zero ambition.
- 1.4 The new contractual arrangements replace existing contracts which expire on 31 March 2023 and will ensure the continuation of recycling services to residents at the kerbside and at household recycling centres. The new contracts will aim to provide an economical and sustainable disposal option for segregated municipal food and green waste as well as transfer and haulage. The intention is to provide long-term capacity in the new contract by locking in processing capacity with supplier(s) for a minimum of 5 years to provide them with longer-term security over tonnage inputs.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to launch a competitive procurement using the open procedure to procure contractors to provide treatment, transfer and transport of separately collected food and green waste at an estimated value of £6m per annum.

- 2.2 Agree to the contract length of 5 years with options to extend in any number of periods not exceeding an extension period of five years in total.
- 2.3 Agree that the following award criteria is applied in the procurement: 70% price: 30% quality (of which 5% of the quality score will be allocated to social value).
- 2.4 Agree that the Director, Environment and Climate Action is authorised to agree the division of lots for the procurement and the detailed evaluation criteria.
- 2.5 Agree that the Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs, is authorised to award contract(s) to the successful bidders following completion of the procurement process, subject to the outcome being within budget.
- 2.6 Agree to run a mini-competition, using the procedure set out in ECC's Biowaste Framework Agreement, for a two year service order for the treatment, transfer and transport of mixed food and green waste at an estimated value of £1.1m per annum.
- 2.7 Agree that the Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling is authorised to award a service order to the successful bidder following completion of the mini-competition process, subject to the outcome being within budget.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 ECC is the Waste Disposal Authority ("WDA") for its area and has a statutory responsibility to arrange for the treatment of bio-wastes collected by the Essex Waste Collection Authorities which are the 12 Borough, City and District Councils in Essex ("WCAs"). There is also a Joint Waste Agreement ("JWA") in place with the unitary authority of Southend-on-Sea City Council ("SCC"), which requires ECC to procure these services on their behalf.
- 3.2 Bio-waste is organic material such as food, green or mixed food and green waste collected by the WCAs and from the RCHWs. ECC currently make arrangements for the processing of 166,000 tonnes of bio-waste per annum (including bio-waste from Southend) via an existing framework agreement that was procured in December 2018 and expires in January 2023.
- 3.3 Bio-waste treatment technologies are controlled by a range of national regulations that specify the feedstocks that can be used and the quality of outputs. Green waste is therefore composted at open windrow sites, food waste is treated in Anaerobic Digestion (AD) tanks and mixed food and green waste is handled by In-Vessel Composting (IVC) technology. Open windrow treatment and IVC produce compost or soil improver that can be used in agriculture or horticulture and AD produces a digestate that is typically spread on farmland and biogas that is either fed into the national grid or used to produce renewable electricity. This approach ensures that bio-waste material is diverted away from

landfill and also accords with the Essex Waste Strategy (2007 – 2032) that follows the principles of the Waste Hierarchy and seeks to “channel resources into reducing, re-using and recycling, so that the maximum amount of waste is put to beneficial use”.

- 3.4 It is proposed that ECC go out to the market to procure contracts to replace the current Biowaste Framework Agreement which expires on 1 January 2023 (the “Biowaste Framework”). There are current service orders that have been called off from the Biowaste Framework and these make provision for biowaste disposal until 31 March 2023. It is proposed that the new 5 year contract(s) will commence on 1 April 2023.
- 3.5 A new two year service order from the Biowaste Framework is however needed for the treatment, transfer and transport of mixed food and green waste for a two year period at an estimated value of £1.1m per annum. Mixed food and green waste is currently collected by Epping Forest District Council (“EFDC”) and Rochford District Council (“RDC”). The Biowaste Framework includes a lot for this mixed waste. It is therefore proposed that a mini competition is run, and a new service order awarded, to deal with this waste for a two year period during which time both RDC and EFDC will look to implement separate collections of food and green waste. Once EFDC and RDC move to separately collected food and green waste, this tonnage will be picked up under the new contract(s) that will be in place.
- 3.6 The proposed new five year contract(s) will aim to provide an economical and sustainable disposal option for segregated municipal food and green waste as well as transfer and haulage. The existing Biowaste Framework does not provide adequate long-term capacity and financial security for this material. The new contract(s) will aim to overcome this by locking in processing capacity with supplier(s) for a minimum term of 5 years to provide suppliers with longer term security over tonnage inputs.
- 3.7 This procurement will enable ECC to retain access to facilities optimised for the treatment of separately collected bio-waste streams, ensuring that as much of this waste as possible is diverted from higher cost disposal routes such as landfill – benefitting the environment and reducing the cost to the taxpayer.
- 3.8 It is proposed that the contract is split into at least four lots being (1) Green Waste (ECC); (2) Green Waste (SCC); (3) Food Waste; and (4) Transfer and Transport with the Director, Environment and Climate Action agreeing the final lots that will form part of the procurement.
- 3.9 The indicative tonnage for each material under the new contract(s) and the new service order(s) are as follows:

Source	Food	Green	Mixed Food & Green
ECC Kerbside collections by WCAs	40,000	75,000	N/A
ECC Recycling Centres for Household Waste	N/A	21,000	N/A
Southend on Sea Borough Council	5,000*	12,000	N/A
RDC & EFDC	10,000**	21,000**	31,000

* SCC estimate that food waste could increase to 8,000t over the contract term.

** Estimated tonnage, once RDC and EFDC have segregated material.

- 3.10 The open procurement procedure will allow an unlimited number of bidders per Lot. The bio-waste market is limited to a small number of key suppliers, so it is envisaged that a maximum of 5 bidders for each lot will be received.
- 3.11 The proposed award criteria (70% price: 30% quality (of which 5% of the quality score will assess social value)) is considered to provide the optimum outcome for ECC for this requirement by balancing the evaluation in favour of price with a meaningful quality weighting to impact overall scores. The quality aspects of the evaluation will assess the robustness of bidder's responses against a number of areas including (but not limited to): service delivery method, mobilisation, business continuity planning; environmental benefit, health and safety management, and social value. In addition to the 5% social value weighting which broadly covers the Council's levelling up agenda, there will be weighted standalone quality question(s) on supplier initiatives to support education and encourage diversion rates thus giving these core requirements further focus within tender submissions. Minimum standards will be applied to core requirements across the evaluation where appropriate to ensure that bids are of sufficient quality.
- 3.12 Each lot will be evaluated against the pre-determined evaluation criteria and contracts awarded based on the most economically advantageous bid. Each bidder will be allocated guaranteed minimum tonnage at 70% of their awarded tonnage under each lot.
- 3.13 ECC currently dispose of food waste on behalf of SCC. Under the JWA with SCC, a range of 4,000 – 8,000 tonnes per annum of food waste will be collected by SCC and included in this procurement. SCC will pay the costs for the reprocessing of their material and they already contribute to a central cost for managing these arrangements under the JWA.
- 3.14 SCC have requested that ECC include a standalone lot for their green waste tonnage. No guarantee of award or minimum tonnage will be offered under this

Lot, as SCC are unable to commit to any tonnages. However, this approach enables SCC to use the successful supplier if the rates are more beneficial than their existing arrangements. If they wish to use this lot, the JWA will need to be updated and the costs will be managed in the same way as in paragraph 3.13.

- 3.15 The new contract(s) will include a mechanism where known/foreseen risks related to change in law are shared equally between the parties. ECC will take any unforeseen change in law risks, contributing to the cost to contractors associated with implementing any changes required to plant or operational practices as a result of the change in law, based on the proportion of ECC's waste volume against the total waste capacity a plant is able to take. ECC believe the likelihood of any unforeseen changes in law occurring during the contract term to be low. If a change did occur, the contractor would be required to demonstrate how the cost of the new requirements were being mitigated, but any additional costs would be passed through to ECC. For both foreseen and unforeseen changes in law, change in law provisions will be included within the contract to transparently set out a process to be followed when a change in law occurs to achieve best value through this procurement.
- 3.16 The Regulations to implement the Environment Act 2021 are still being consulted on, but this requires all WCAs to put in place mandatory food waste collections by 2024. This legislation will influence supply and demand within the market, resulting in likely price increases. Our current framework value is approximately £6m per annum and this procurement seeks to maintain this good value for ECC by going to market before other authorities and the previously stated changes in market take effect.
- 3.17 RDC and EFDC currently mix food and green waste for their organic kerbside collections and are waiting for the outcome of further consultation on the intentions of the Environment Act 2021. Once these statutory requirements are clear, these District Councils will look at how separately collected food and green waste services can be implemented.
- 3.18 As a result of this uncertainty, ECC are unable to include the mixed food and green waste stream within the new 5 year procurement, as tonnages over the term would not be guaranteed, which is likely to result in bidders not submitting tenders or pricing this risk. However, the anticipated separately collected food and green waste tonnages will be included to ensure that the material from these District Councils can be added to the contract once they implement changes for separate collections.
- 3.19 In order to give these District Councils time to investigate their new service options, a further competition under the existing Biowaste Framework will be conducted to procure an interim arrangement for 2 years from April 2023. This approach ensures that ECC do not take on any risk from including the mixed food and green waste in the proposed new contract and will provide flexibility to the District Councils, so that they can exit when they are ready to implement any changes.

- 3.20 Carrying out a mini competition under the existing Biowaste Framework for mixed food and green waste enables ECC to offer guaranteed tonnage over a shorter timeframe, which will help to achieve better value and is more likely to attract a greater number of bids.
- 3.21 The award criteria for the mini competition shall be 100% price, as quality was evaluated under the Bio-Waste Framework procurement.
- 3.22 Awarding a new contract(s) and service order(s) will enable ECC to continue to fulfil its statutory obligations as the WDA and continue to provide this service to the WCAs. It will also support delivery of ECC's strategic priority to help to secure sustainable development and protect the environment.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:
- Develop our County sustainably
- 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:
- Diversion of waste from landfill through the continuation of separately collected food and green waste will help to maintain lower emissions from ECC's contracted landfill sites.
- 4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':
- A high-quality environment
- 4.4 This decision links to Everyone's Essex Strategy to deliver a high-quality environment, minimise waste, and contribute towards ECC's net zero carbon ambition. This links in with ECC's climate change aspirations by maximising energy recovered from the waste disposal process and ensuring less waste goes to landfill. ECC will also evaluate innovation opportunities through tender submissions which may include potential gain share opportunities and/or energy agreements with suppliers to further support circular economy.

5 Options

Option 1 – Do nothing (Not Recommended)

- 5.1 This would mean that when the current service orders expire, ECC will fail to meet its statutory obligation as a waste disposal authority by having an inadequate disposal solution for this waste stream. This option is not recommended.

Option 2 – Run additional mini-competitions for all materials under the existing framework agreement with short-term service orders in each Lot (Not Recommended)

- 5.2 This option is not recommended as it would only provide a short-term procurement solution (circa 24 months from when the existing service orders expire) and as such would not provide ECC with the ability to secure capacity and financial security over the upcoming period of uncertainty with the legislative changes related to the implementation of the new Environment Act 2021 on the horizon, as detailed in paragraph 3.6.
- 5.3 The current framework does not offer suppliers long-term commitments on total tonnages or the rates of input, which has resulted in certain suppliers pricing in this risk within mini competitions, as they need a continual feedstock for their facilities.
- 5.4 Furthermore, there is a risk that the market may decline to participate in another mini competition under the terms of the current Framework Agreement with the upcoming market changes posed by The Environment Act 2021.
- 5.5 The impact of the new legislation on supply and demand in the market, means other authorities will be forced to take up capacity in 2024. Market research highlights that if ECC delay going to market for a new contract after 2024 competition for capacity will be limited and this is likely to attract higher prices. This approach is therefore likely not to achieve best value for money for ECC over the medium-term and risks ECC securing capacity in the market to process ECC's required tonnages.

Option 3 – Replace the current framework agreement with another framework agreement (Not Recommended):

- 5.6 A replacement framework agreement would enable the re-use of current procurement and contract documentation with minimal changes. The structure of the Framework Agreement and associated processes would be familiar with the market and contract managers and the re-procurement would open the opportunity back up to the market.
- 5.7 However, this option is not recommended as a replacement framework would be limited to four-years in duration and would entail running mini-competitions throughout the framework term, which is resource intensive for both ECC to run and contractors to participate in.
- 5.8 Similar to Option 2, short-term call-off contracts (service orders), which on the existing Biowaste Framework have to date been for 24 months in duration, would not provide the market with any long-term tonnage security and would be unlikely to secure best value for ECC over the upcoming period of uncertainty/changes in the market. This approach would not enable ECC to secure longer-term capacity and financial security.

Option 4 – Procure a new five year lotted contract for separately collected food and green waste utilising an Open Procedure with separate service orders under the existing Bio-Waste Framework for mixed food and green waste (Recommended):

- 5.9 This option would involve undertaking a single stage procurement process using the Open Procedure to appoint a contractors to each Lot to provide the required bio-waste treatment, transfer, and transport services.
- 5.10 The Open Procedure is recommended as the market is well established and there are only a small number of suppliers that would be likely to bid, so shortlisting through pre-selection (a Restricted Procedure) is unnecessary.
- 5.11 ECC's requirements can be met without adaption of readily available solutions or design or innovative solutions, and the technical specification can be established by ECC with sufficient precision, therefore there is no requirement for negotiation/dialogue with bidders prior to contract award.
- 5.12 The Open Procedure provides a quick route to market, providing a competitive and compliant procurement route which will drive value for money, whilst ensuring that the procurement timescales are minimised.
- 5.13 Going to market in 2022 for a new lotted five year contract (with an option to extend the contract in any number of periods not exceeding a total of five years) rather than a maximum four year Framework Agreement with shorter-term service orders, will enable ECC to lock in prices and capacity before neighbouring authorities go to market. This will allow ECC to mitigate risks of rising costs which will likely to be brought about by an increase in competition for limited processing capacity at facilities as food waste collections are mandated under The Environment Act 2021(as detailed in paragraph 3.6).
- 5.14 This approach will allow ECC to concentrate on contract management, mitigate risk by securing 5 year capacity, provide greater continuity in ECC supply chain for a longer period and is likely to achieve best value for money for ECC over the medium-term.
- 5.15 A further competition will be run through the existing framework for mixed food and green waste for RDC and EFDC to award service orders for a maximum of two years. However, the segregated food and green waste tonnages from these authorities will be included in the permitted tonnage for the 5 year contract with the option to be added at any time, subject to capacity and on the basis of the contract award criteria.
- 5.16 Option 4 is recommended, since it offers the best commercial opportunity to ECC, and mitigates risks associated with impending market change.
- 5.17 Assessment of risks associated with option 4:

Risk Description	Mitigation
<p>Procurement over-run If the procurement is not completed on time there could be no means of ECC fulfilling its duties as the waste disposal authority regarding bio-wastes.</p>	<p>A robust timetable with adequate resources to complete the procurement process on schedule. Extend the existing framework service orders for a limited period in compliance with the terms of the current framework agreement and the Procurement Regulations. Dispose of the bio-waste to landfill assuming the relevant contracts have capacity for the additional tonnage.</p>
<p>Essex Waste Strategy in development and not yet confirmed, this is likely to impact future strategy of Bio-Waste</p>	<p>As a Portfolio we regularly feed into the new Waste Strategy project team to ensure any dependencies for bio-waste are mapped and managed. ECC will also build in provisions to extend the contract for up to five years to align with any delays or infrastructure building that may come out of the confirmed strategy.</p>
<p>Environment Act 2021 - Mandatory food waste and free green waste collections</p>	<p>The risk of mandatory food waste collections is mitigated by carrying out the mini competition for the mixed food and green waste, whilst retaining the ability for the RDC and EFDC material to be added to the 5 year contract.</p> <p>Six of the WCAs charge for green garden waste collections, therefore the guaranteed minimum tonnage percentage for green waste shall be based on the current tonnage levels. Any introduction of free green garden waste services by the WCAs that currently charge will only increase tonnages.</p>
<p>Increase in fuel costs</p>	<p>Worldwide and National events can lead to fuel price increases, which could potentially impact on services.</p> <p>To mitigate this risk indexation will be applied annually to ensure that contract rates reflect current market condition.</p>

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The financial evaluation of the treatment options for bio-waste must consider the whole system costs of any solution proposed via the procurement exercise. While the gate fee price per tonne offered by suppliers is one element of the cost of the solution, the cost to transfer and transport the material to the proposed facilities must also be considered. The transfer and transport costs will be derived from the new in-house integrated waste handling service, the costs under the proposed transfer and transport lot of this procurement as well as any 'tipping away' costs, where WCAs are asked to deliver material more than 5 miles from the WCA's border.

6.1.2 The whole system cost for bio-waste currently runs at circa £6m per annum. This is split approximately £4.8m per annum on gate fees and £1.2m per annum on haulage. The bio-waste budget withing the current Medium Term Resource Strategy for 2023/24 is £5.96m.

6.1.3 The new contract will aim to provide an economical and sustainable disposal option for segregated municipal bio-wastes as well as transfer and haulage. The existing framework does not provide adequate long-term capacity nor financial security.

6.1.4 The main financial risks of the procurement are:

- obtaining pricing within budget and subsequent inflation
- the volume of tonnage
- change in law risk

6.1.5 While disposal prices for organic waste have remained relatively constant in recent years and ECC would hope to leverage the best prices from the market, there is a risk that the procurement will lead to an increase in whole system costs. The payment mechanism will include annual inflation as it is seen as the best way to reduce risk pricing and will reflect the inflation impacts on the activities carried out under each lot. The likely impact of indexation will form part of the price assessment in the final award.

6.1.6 Volumes of bio-waste have remained reasonably constant over recent years, apart from during the pandemic. A guaranteed minimum tonnage of 70% of the historical average is being offered to the market. This will encourage competitive pricing. It is felt this is a reasonable offer and the risk of falling below that level is low, especially if green waste collections are obliged to become free again over the contract term.

6.1.7 There is a risk of cost increase due to changes in law over the term from the regulations developed to implement the Environment Act 2021. The financial impact of any foreseen changes, that is currently unknown, will be shared equally with the contractor. This is felt to be the best way to avoid risk pricing at the

tender stage for changes that may only happen later in the term, if at all. The sharing will also invest the contractor in the mitigations to such changes to minimise the overall cost impact. The financial impact of unforeseen changes in law will be ECC's responsibility although the risk of such changes over the term is considered very low. In all cases, any cost increase will only be ECC's proportion of the contractor's overall increase.

6.1.8 The tender will ask for gainsharing proposals from the market to establish the potential for cost reduction from performance or operational impacts that are better than those forecast at the time of the tender. For bio-waste this may be most likely focussed on the solutions which include energy production but it may not be limited to these.

6.1.9 The opportunity cost of running this procurement will be met from existing service budgets, including support services.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 The call-off from the Biowaste Framework must be carried out in accordance with the criteria set out in that framework.

6.2.2 ECC is a contracting authority for the purposes of The Public Contract Regulations 2015. The estimated value of the contract exceeds the EU threshold for Services. The procurement of the contract will be advertised via the Find a Tender service and undertaken in accordance with the open procedure set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

6.2.3 It is proposed that the new contract will initially be five years in duration, with the option to extend up to a further five years. The procurement will be split into lots in order to allow the market to provide the most cost-effective disposal approach for the waste types that must be disposed of.

6.2.4 Two Prior Information Notices (PIN) have been published accompanied by market engagement questionnaires to inform the procurement and will support in maximising publicity of the requirements and competitive bids.

6.2.5 Contracts should be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender and qualitative, environmental and/or social aspects should be linked to the subject matter of the contract.

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 1 - Equality Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

None declared

Forward Plan reference number: FP/339/03/22

Report title: Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities Contracts 2023-2028	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor Beverley Egan, Cabinet Member for Childrens Services and Early Years	
Date: 19 April 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Clare Burrell, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy, Clare.Burrell@essex.gov.uk or Chris Martin, Director, Commissioning	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1. Providing short breaks for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is an important and valuable responsibility for Essex County Council (ECC) to undertake. It is essential to support young and adult carers so that they are better enabled in their roles, as well as supporting their mental health and wellbeing.
- 1.2. The Children Act 1989 sets out a legal duty for local authorities to provide short break opportunities for parents and carers which enable them to have a break, but also to ensure that children and young people themselves have opportunities to meet friends, take part in activities, develop independence and have fun by socialising with their peers and learning new skills.
- 1.3. The current contracts for The Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities (SBCCA) component of the council's full short breaks offer, end on 31 March 2023. This report recommends the recommissioning of the SBCCA offer which will ensure Essex County Council meets its duties.
- 1.4. The recommended core SBCCA offer will provide breadth of choice and access of opportunity for families; the proposed annual micro grant is expected to be made available to mainstream providers to improve inclusion in mainstream settings; and the proposed virtual offer will increase the scope of the support, enabling families to receive support within their homes and help in raising outcomes for vulnerable children.
- 1.5. This decision is important to delivering against four of the Everyone's Essex commitments that are integral to the areas of Health and Families. SBCCA provide short breaks for parents who are carers and spend a lot of their time caring for their children in comparison to other parents. In turn, these short breaks contribute to supporting the health and wellbeing of all the family thereby contributing to their resilience and stability. Furthermore, by having the opportunity to attend the clubs and activities good outcomes are delivered for children and young people through high quality informal educational opportunities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Agree the procurement of twelve contracts for the provision of short breaks, community clubs and activities, through a single stage, procurement for an initial contract term of three years from April 2023 to March 2026 with an option to extend for up to two years to March 2028.
- 2.2. Agree that the procurement will be based on county wide needs-based lots across the south, west, northeast and mid-Essex quadrants (making twelve lots in total). The three needs-based lots are:
 - Children with a learning disability and/or autism (under 8 years and 8-15 years)
 - Children with a physical or sensory impairment (under 8 years and 8-15 years)
 - Older adolescents (aged 15-19 years)
- 2.3. Agree that the evaluation model for the procurement will be based on 30% price and 70% quality, of which 10% of the quality criteria will assess social value.
- 2.4. Agree that the Cabinet Member, Children's Services and Early Years is authorised to agree the terms of and award the SBCCA contracts to the successful bidders within the budget envelope of £1.32m per year.
- 2.5. Agree to set up an annual innovation and inclusion grant fund of £150,000 per year for three years to 2026, at which time it is to be reviewed in line with the SBCCA core offer. The arrangements for the innovation and inclusion grant will be made under separate governance and funded within existing resources.
- 2.6. Agree £20,000 per year to be allocated from the SBCCA budget to enable the development and sourcing of a virtual offer to run concurrently delivery of SBCCA to 2026 at which time it will be reviewed in line with the SBCCA core offer. The arrangements for the virtual offer will be made under separate governance and funded within existing resources.

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1. The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to provide short breaks for families with disabled children. Short breaks give carers a break from caring while enabling children and young people to meet friends, take part in activities, develop independence and have fun.
- 3.2. The Council's current short breaks offer comprises a wide suite of early intervention provision including Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities (SBCCA) as well as other services including specialist support such as overnight

care with Foster Carers when a specific need is identified through social care assessment.

- 3.3. This paper is concerned with the SBCCA element only. At present the Council commissions a range of provision across Essex.
- 3.4. The current range of SBCCA available are primarily delivered by the voluntary and community sector. Families can access SBCCA by meeting simple eligibility criteria and enrolling in activities. There are currently 28 contracts delivering the SBCCA offer, and until recently an additional lead provider contract, delivered by Action for Children (AFC). The AFC contract expired September 2021 and was not extended, with the contract and performance management responsibilities being delivered by ECC. The current contracts for Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities end 31 March 2023.
- 3.5. As at 14 March 2022, there were 4,409 families registered across all Essex Short Breaks provisions, of which 1,668 access the SBCCAs.
- 3.6. The existing SBCCA model was developed in 2015. ECC has collated comprehensive data and research resulting in a robust assessment which forecasts and evidences the current model will not sufficiently meet the needs of families in the future.
- 3.7. In 2020/2021 there was significant engagement with families to develop the Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy of which the SBCCA is one component. Over 400 families responded to consultation and 20 families took part in interviews. This work informed the strategy development which was finalised in October 2021.
- 3.8. Following the development of the strategy several workshops were held with families and a formal consultation, focused specifically on the SBCCA outcomes was undertaken. The Children with Disabilities (CWD) Consultation and Survey Key Findings Report can be found in Appendix 2.
- 3.9. The extensive engagement and consultation with families, combined with the data, enables us to understand the change and improvements needed for a high quality SBCCA offer to be procured. The following table sets out what is not working in the current offer, and how recommissioning presents an opportunity to create change that will bring improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND:

What families have told us is not working for them:	How the recommissioning of SBCCA will lead improvements
There is a perceived 'lottery' of current providers with some families reporting an excellent service and others finding it hard to access appropriate provision. This is particularly true when examining the geographic spread of current provision.	The procurement process should include quadrant-based lots to ensure that the offer is spread fairly across the county. It should also reflect needs and age, which will ensure that there is a clear offer for all identified cohorts in each quadrant.
Some young people are currently unable to access an offer that is age	The specification should include a focus on age to ensure that the offer is appropriate for all ages, in all

What families have told us is not working for them:	How the recommissioning of SBCCA will lead improvements
appropriate or must travel long distances to access it. .	quadrants. Cohorts have been identified through school census data and current Short Breaks registrations, and age forecasting suggests SBCCA registered club members will increase and age over the next 5 years. Providers must evidence through the procurement process how they will respond to changing demand based on age.
There is a significantly higher number of children with a learning disability and/or autism, than those with physical and sensory impairments but all children with SEND require access to SBCCAs. The current offer does not address the range and choice required by families. It is also limited in terms of the types of settings, and families have told they want to see more provision taking place in mainstream settings.	The procurement process should include needs-based lots to ensure that the offer includes a good choice and range for children and young people with differing needs. This should also ensure that where there are smaller cohorts, their needs remain addressed and are not 'lost' in a more generic procurement approach. In addition, an annual fund should be created from the Short Breaks budget to enable mainstream providers to be more inclusive, and to encourage all providers to make use of mainstream settings to deliver SBCCAs.
The current offer does not provide adequate informal educational opportunities to prepare young people for transitioning to adulthood, and specifically does not provide support for young people in identifying services appropriate for them once they turn 19 years old.	The new specification must ensure that 15–19-year-olds are able to access appropriate provision in relation to both independence skills development and in relation to social connectedness. As a clear growing cohort, providers must evidence how they will support older adolescents to plan for adulthood. Older adolescents will be able to access an appropriate offer in each of the quadrants.
Some families want to see the learning from the pandemic restrictions, which led to several providers offering online activities, be developed as part of the ongoing Short Breaks offer. Consultation showed that this offers some families a break from the 'mental load' of their additional caring responsibilities rather than a physical one, and that they, and their other children, could enjoy the positive activities. However, in the consultation 53% said they would not use this offer.	A virtual offer should be developed that is proportionate to the volume of families demanding it, and should be based on what families have told us they would use it for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer support - Introduction to face-to-face activities or providers - Inclusive online gaming Rather than include this as a separate lot, this should be seen as a development opportunity to be undertaken with the families that will use it. Separating this element from the procurement will represent value for money as it will be directly targeted to the smaller number of families who require it.
Improved system navigation, information and guidance is required, with some families finding it hard to understand what their localised provision looks like.	The registration system is currently under review and will offer families more self-service abilities. The new offer will need to be well promoted, linked to the local offer and should include a regular newsletter. In addition, the website will be reviewed and made clearer, and will set out the offer by location and age. Providers must demonstrate that they will provide and update their information in good time to ensure a clear offer for families.
The current offer does not have a clear and consistent approach to supporting families more holistically, particularly in relation to support for siblings.	The specification will require potential providers to demonstrate how they will be more holistic in their approach to families. This should include peer support for parents/carers, activities that include siblings, or other forms of added social value.

3.10. The following headings set out three proposed model strands developed with families and in response to the formal consultation, with consideration having been given to the improvements set out in 3.9.

SBCCA Core Offer Procurement

3.11. An SBCCA core offer should be procured focused on responding to cohorts of children and young people with SEND based on age and primary SEND need which will address the fact that the age profile of those registered to Short Breaks is likely to both increase and change over the next 5 years.

3.12. Data research and family engagement identified several cohorts of children and young people for which the lots will be shaped. The three needs- based lots are:

- Children with a learning disability and/or autism (under 8 years and 8-15 years)
- Children with a physical or sensory impairment (under 8 years and 8-15 years)
- An older adolescents cohort (15-19 years)

3.13. The SBCCA core offer will respond to the high proportion of children and young people who have Learning Disability/Difficulty and/or Autism (LDA) as their primary SEND need, and lower number of children and young people who have Physical or Sensory Impairments (PSI) as their primary SEND need.

3.14. The SBCCA core offer will provide specific provision for older adolescents in every quadrant, who need age-appropriate activities, including independence skills development, and socialisation with peers. It also specifies a clear focus on transitions planning.

3.15. The three lots will be procured on a south, west, northeast and mid-quadrant basis and this will ensure a more consistent core offer across Essex.

3.16. The specification will encourage the use of community spaces, such as youth centres and leisure centres who have signified, they are open to working in partnership with SBCCA providers to share and adapt space.

3.17. A breakdown of funding, based on analysis of existing registered members and school census data is shown below.

	LDA	PSI	Older Adolescents	Total
North	£182,432	£33,466	£88,177	£304,075
Mid	£230,028	£42,171	£111,180	£383,379
South	£206,232	£37,809	£99,678	£343,719
West	£174,054	£31,992	£84,343	£290,389
Total	£792,746	£145,438	£383,378	£1,321,562

Inclusion & Innovation Grant

- 3.18. In addition to the main procurement, it's proposed that an annual micro grant opportunity should be made available to mainstream providers to improve inclusion in mainstream settings. This will ensure that there will be opportunities over and above the SBCCA core offer for children and young people to access. Young Commissioners will be at the centre of the design and decision making for the grant programme, decisions for which will be subject to separate governance.
- 3.19. The grant fund should be allocated from the SBCCA budget on an annual basis of £150,000 per annum, approximately 10% of the overall SBCCA budget, up to £750,000 over the full 5 years of delivery but to be reviewed after three years in conjunction with the Core SBCCA contracts.

Virtual Offer

- 3.20. During the pandemic many providers moved their offer online and feedback from the consultation evidenced that for some – but by no means all - families this offered a good option because their children were focussed on meaningful activity and they could enjoy that activity with them without the additional pressures of travel, or planning.
- 3.21. ECC also heard from families that other virtual support would be good such as peer support, introductions to activities, and specific online activities such as gaming.
- 3.22. A virtual offer will be designed with families so that it meets the needs and interests of children and young people and offers choice.
- 3.23. It is proposed that £20,000 annually is allocated from the SBCCA budget for three years to 2026, value £60,000 at which reviewed after three years in conjunction with the Core SBCCA contracts, potentially being extending for up to 5 years at a total value of £100,000. Details for the virtual offer will be developed and subject to separate governance.

4. Links to our strategic ambitions

- 4.1. This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision

- Provide an equal foundation for every child
- Connect us to each other and the world

- 4.2. This report links to the following strategic priorities in the Organisational Plan

- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

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:

- Improving access to provision in terms of geographic spread, families will not be required to drive as far to access the offer.

5. Options

Option 1: (Recommended) - Commission the core SBCCA based on 3 lots across each of south, mid, north east and west quadrants. Set up an annual micro grants fund and commission a virtual offer

- 5.1. This option brings forth a myriad of benefits and has the best potential to address the improvements required (as set out in 3.9). It enables ECC to create a whole new provision that specifically responds to what families have mandated, whilst mitigating risks that arise from having a single or limited number of lead providers.

Benefits	Risks
Will meet the needs of the high proportion of children and young people with LDA balanced with the smaller proportion of children with PSI who require Short Breaks.	Some families will be hesitant or resistant to change, particularly if a provider they currently access is not successful in their bid. This may be perceived that provision has been 'taken away'. This will be mitigated by regular clear communications, and a long mobilisation period to ensure providers and families are prepared for and supported through change.
Will meet the needs of children and young people in an age-appropriate way ensuring that provision on offer is designed and delivered accordingly, including supporting young people through transitions to adulthood.	
The proposed approach has been developed and designed in consultation with families and will meet the expectations and needs of the majority of children and young people.	Smaller providers struggle to engage with the tender. Bid writing support is being offered to providers so they are supported to engage with the procurement.
The model has been designed to address the need for a core commissioned offer whereby the specification enables a versatile approach that can adapt to changing or emerging needs.	There is a risk that the geographic spread of providers does not reach across Essex equitably. Mitigations to this risk include working with mainstream providers, such as leisure centre operators and youth services to take part in market engagement, encouraging specialist and mainstream settings to lean on resources they have access to.
There will be more suitable provision available that is more local to families and in accessible locations meaning less travel for many of them.	The contractor for each lot might choose to sub-contract some of its provision, which can present a level of risk. The risk has been mitigated through the procurement design so that it is less likely for this to be a mandated requirement but allows room for partnership working where appropriate.

Smaller, more niche organisations will be able to apply as sole providers or in partnership with other organisations.	
This option potentially presents better value for money than other options as a result of there being no additional layer of management required.	

Option 2: (Not Recommended) Commission the core SBBC offer based on a single provider for each quadrant

- 5.2. This procurement option would be based on 4 individual contracts based on quadrants with providers responding to all cohorts in their applications.
- 5.3. This option could potentially lead to higher levels of risk related to potential lead provider failure, as it is highly likely that lead providers would require multiple subcontracts.
- 5.4. This option could – by way of a single provider being successful in their application to all four lots – effectively become Option 3. This compounds the risk of potential lead provider failure.
- 5.5. It does not prioritise age and needs based lots, which have been evidenced to be of high priority to families and does not address the anticipated increasing and changing demand pressures.
- 5.6. Ultimately this option will not create the change required to meet the needs of as many families as possible, and to bring in the improvements required as evidenced through consultation and data analysis.

Benefits	Risks
All elements of change required would be addressed within the procurement, although not necessarily responded to by the market.	This option could lead to some cohorts of children and young people with SEND being favoured over others, and not deliver the change required.
Streamlined commissioning and contract management benefits and potential economies of scale.	It is unlikely that one single provider per quadrant would be able to deliver all the requirements which would mean sub-contracting arrangements would need to be put in place. Although the council would have to agree those arrangements and give approval to those arrangements.
	This option presents a risk that fewer of the current providers could engage with the procurement. ECC could encourage partnership working but that could not be guaranteed.

Option 3: Commission the SBCCA offer using a single Lead Provider and sub-contractor model by quadrant or county wide (Not Recommended)

- 5.7. This option builds from previous experience of using a lead provider model. Initially the model was designed to encourage development by the lead provider of smaller providers across Essex. Whilst it offered some success, it resulted in an inequitable offer led by services rather than service user needs.
- 5.8. The lead provider model presents a risk in the event the lead provider ceases to be able to deliver services and all subcontracted providers have to be managed by the local authority.
- 5.9. This option is not recommended due to the evidenced previous provider failure risks and that no one provider can deliver all the desired lots.
- 5.10. Children and young people with SEND, their families and other stakeholders have been generous with their time, efforts and engagements. If ECC fails to respond to the learning by effectively maintaining the status quo, it could harm ECCs reputation and introduce risk to future engagement efforts.
- 5.11. Ultimately this option will not create the change required to meet the needs of as many families as possible, and to bring in the improvements required as evidenced through consultation and data analysis.

Benefits	Risks
This option streamlines contract management by devolving the management who in turn contracts organisations to deliver the desired model. This lessens the burdens on the local authority to manage the contract.	This option does not guarantee the desired change would be achieved of the specific needs of cohorts delivered.
	This option has several risks associated with it, including an unnecessary added layer of management and accountability.
	A single lead provider model overburdens the budget with non-direct delivery, for example, management costs. When demand is evidenced to be increasing, direct delivery should be prioritised to maximise the reach of the work. This option does not present value for money.
	A single lead provider model presents risk that all subcontracts could be returned to the council if the single lead provider fails as happened previously. This puts delivery of our statutory duties at higher risk.

6. Issues for consideration

Financial implications

- 6.1. The annual budget included in the Medium-Term Resource Strategy for SBCCA is £1.492m from 2022/23 though to 2025/26.

- 6.2. As per Option 1 (recommended) the budget for SBCCA will be apportioned as set out in the table below:

				2 Year extension (optional)		
	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Total £000
SBCCA Core Offer	1,322	1,322	1,322	1,322	1,322	6,610
Inclusion and Innovation Grant	150	150	150	150	150	750
Virtual Offer	20	20	20	20	20	100
Total	1,492	1,492	1,492	1,492	1,492	7,460
Budget	1,492	1,492	1,492	<i>tbc</i>	<i>tbc</i>	<i>tbc</i>

Financial Risk

- 6.3 The volume of families registered across all Essex Short Breaks provisions is 4,409 (March 2022) of which 1,668 access SBCCA. This is an increase of approximately 29% since Summer 2021 where 3,933 families were registered to all short Breaks provision. Demand for SBCCA is expected to increase further, potentially leading to existing budget provision not fully meeting demand. However, the risk is mitigated through a collaborative approach to working with providers to encourage them to flex provision and implementation of a virtual offer and the use of the Inclusion and Innovation grants to increase the scope and accessibility of the service.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The proposals are a way of meeting statutory need in a way that is procured lawfully. Commissioners believe that the re-procured service will better meet the needs of service users.
- 7.2 The proposed grants programme needs to be properly managed and subject to appropriate controls to ensure value for money is delivered.

8. Equality and Diversity Considerations

- 8.1 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.

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).

- 8.2 The equality impact assessment indicates that the recommended proposal in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.
- 8.3 In fact, the recommended proposal offers several benefits to children and young people with SEND and includes ongoing collaboration with children and young people with SEND in order to ensure the offer remains fit for purpose for the next 5 years.
- 8.4 It also prioritises the development of inclusive activities in mainstream settings, and therefore works towards a more equitable offer for children and young people with SEND across the county.

9. List of Appendices

1. Equality Impact Assessment
2. Children with Disabilities (CWD) Consultation and Survey Key Findings Report

10. List of Background papers

1. Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy
2. Children and Young Peoples Plan
3. SEND Strategy
4. Sufficiency Strategy

Childrens with Disabilities Short Breaks consultation and survey

Key findings report

March 2022

**Research & Citizen Insight
Chief Executive's Office**

Page 171 of 224

Contents

Introduction

Interpreting the data within the consultation

Key conclusions

Executive summary

Who gave their views?

Detailed findings (Consultation and survey)

Appendix

Quality Assurance

Introduction:

Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities is one of our offers and provides a range of informal learning activities for children and young people with SEND after school, at weekends and during school holidays. The 28 contracts for short breaks end in March 2023 and we would like views from families and stakeholders on what the Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities offer could look like from that point onwards.

The Children with Disabilities Short Breaks statutory consultation survey ran for 12 weeks from 26th September 2021 until 16th January 2022 and an additional supplementary easy read survey was designed, with both editions being hosted on Citizen Space and running concurrently. The survey was also available in paper copies and other formats on request.

The Short Breaks consultation follows on from the insights gathered following research with families which took place during from October 2020 and April 2021 and the subsequent launch of the Children with Disabilities Short Breaks Strategy in November 2021, which set out the our ambitions for short breaks as informed by this earlier research.

The consultation saw an extensive communications campaign and the consultation was promoted through parent support groups, Essex Family Forum events and family events, both online and in person.

This consultation was split into two parts. The first section consulted with children and young people with SEND, and their primary carers, on the proposals for improving the current Community Clubs and Activities offer. The second section contained questions that will help those who run the community clubs and activities know what families would like from clubs and activities. The consultation consisted of yes/no questions, multiple choice tick boxes and open-ended responses and this report shows the findings from this consultation.

Interpreting the data within the consultation

This report contains several tables and charts that present the consultation and survey findings. In some instances, responses may not add up to 100%. This is due to either rounding of percentages, or where the question allowed respondents to give more than one answer.

- As the questionnaire was completed by respondents themselves (self-completion), not all respondents have answered all the questions. Therefore, the base size (the number of people answering a question) varies by question.
- To ensure inclusivity, the questionnaire was open for anyone to take part and was available online and in paper format, including easy read.
- For the analysis of free text comments, all have been read through and a coding frame was developed on a theme by theme basis and quantified thereafter.
- Please note easy read responses have not been incorporated into the main tables and charts but will be shown separately alongside main data.

Key conclusions

While the current short breaks offer is working for some, a great many families have said that this is not working for them and the offer does not meet their children's individual needs and there is a distinct lack of choice or suitable provision, especially in the **local areas**.

Respondents are aware that the **offer needs to change** and become more equitable and while there is **strong agreement** in an **annual review process**, however there are some mixed response to what this future model of provision could be for families.

There is strong support respondents for ECC to commissioning Short Breaks providers to deliver activities in **mainstream settings** and increase opportunity and choice of clubs and activities for families.

Responses in relation to the **online offer** have been **mixed**, with some parents telling us that this would not be a suitable for their child and others willing to participate in the future.

There is an overwhelming response telling us that **we need to better plan** for transitions for when **young people turn 19+**.

We need to improve access to information and advice ensuring it is given to families at the right time in their journey and in the right format. The website needs to be clearer and booking process needs to be made easier to use.

Executive Summary

- There were **205** responses to the consultation, **196** completing to the main survey and **9** the easy read survey. **187** respondents were parent carers, **4** were children and **12** were providers
- The consultation saw responses from all demographic districts within Essex
- In response to **Proposal 1** (no change to the current offer) **45% disagreed**, 30% agreed and 24% unsure
- In response to **Proposal 2** (increase in venues) **90% agree**, 4% disagreed and 6% unsure
- In response to **Proposal 3** (improve geographic location) **85% agreed**, 4% disagreed and 11% were unsure
- In response to **Proposal 4** (commit to a flexible activity allowance) **53% agreed**, 23% disagreed 24% unsure
- Responses to the 4 proposals from the easy read survey were similar
- There were a total of **108** free text comments, mostly relating to the consultation and these have been themed in the analysis below

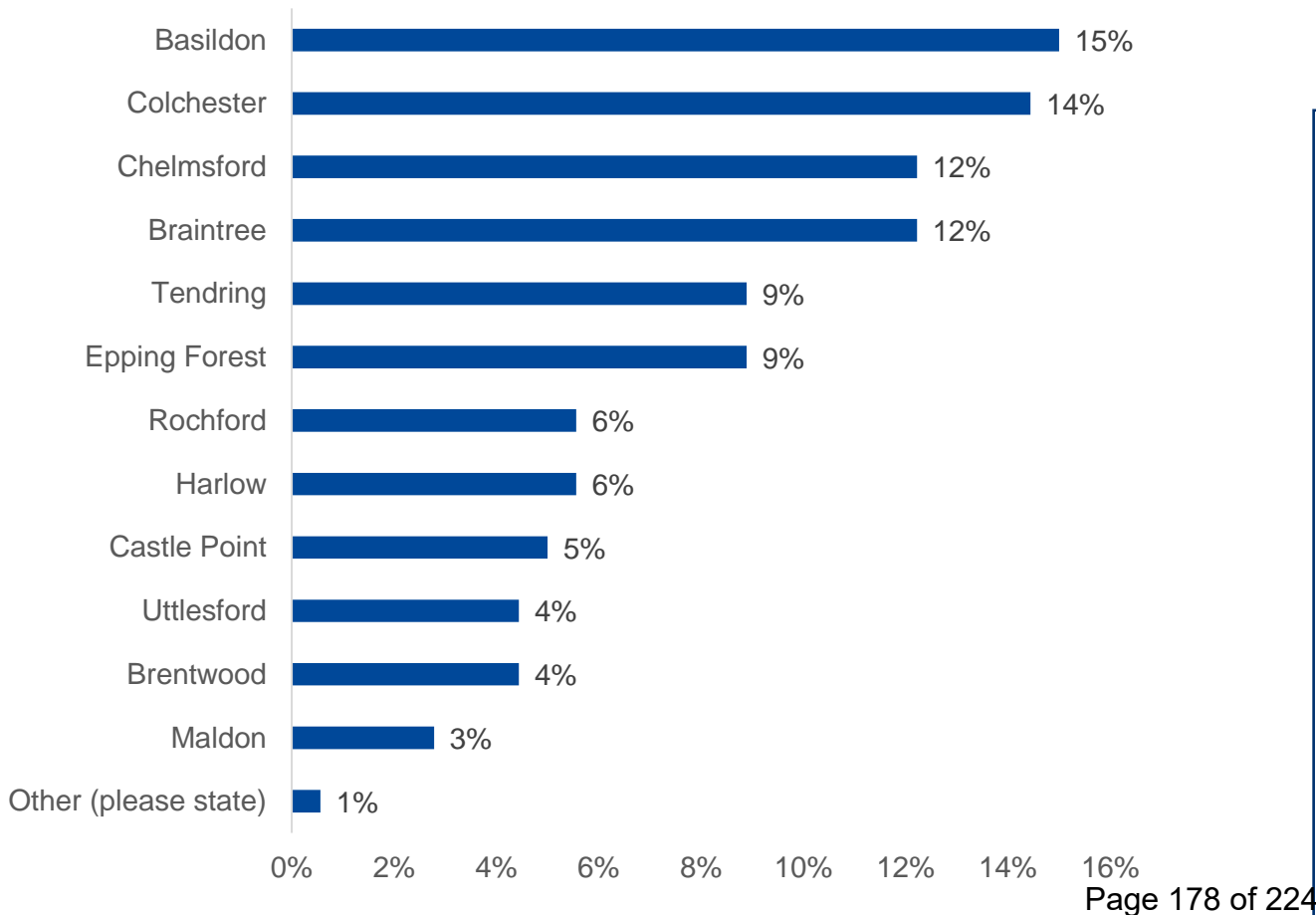
A more detailed overview of the findings can be found in the analysis below.

Who gave their views



Which district do respondents live in?

We received responses from all districts with most being from Basildon (15%) and Colchester (14%), and fewest responses were from Maldon (3%).



[Responses: 180]
Produced by Essex County Council Chief Exec's Office

Who responded to the survey?

Total response was 205 and of the 196 responses to the main survey 182 (93%) were from parent carers and 12 (6%) were from providers. 2 did not answer the question. From the Easy Read survey, 4 responses were from children and 5 from parent carers.

Easy Read responses

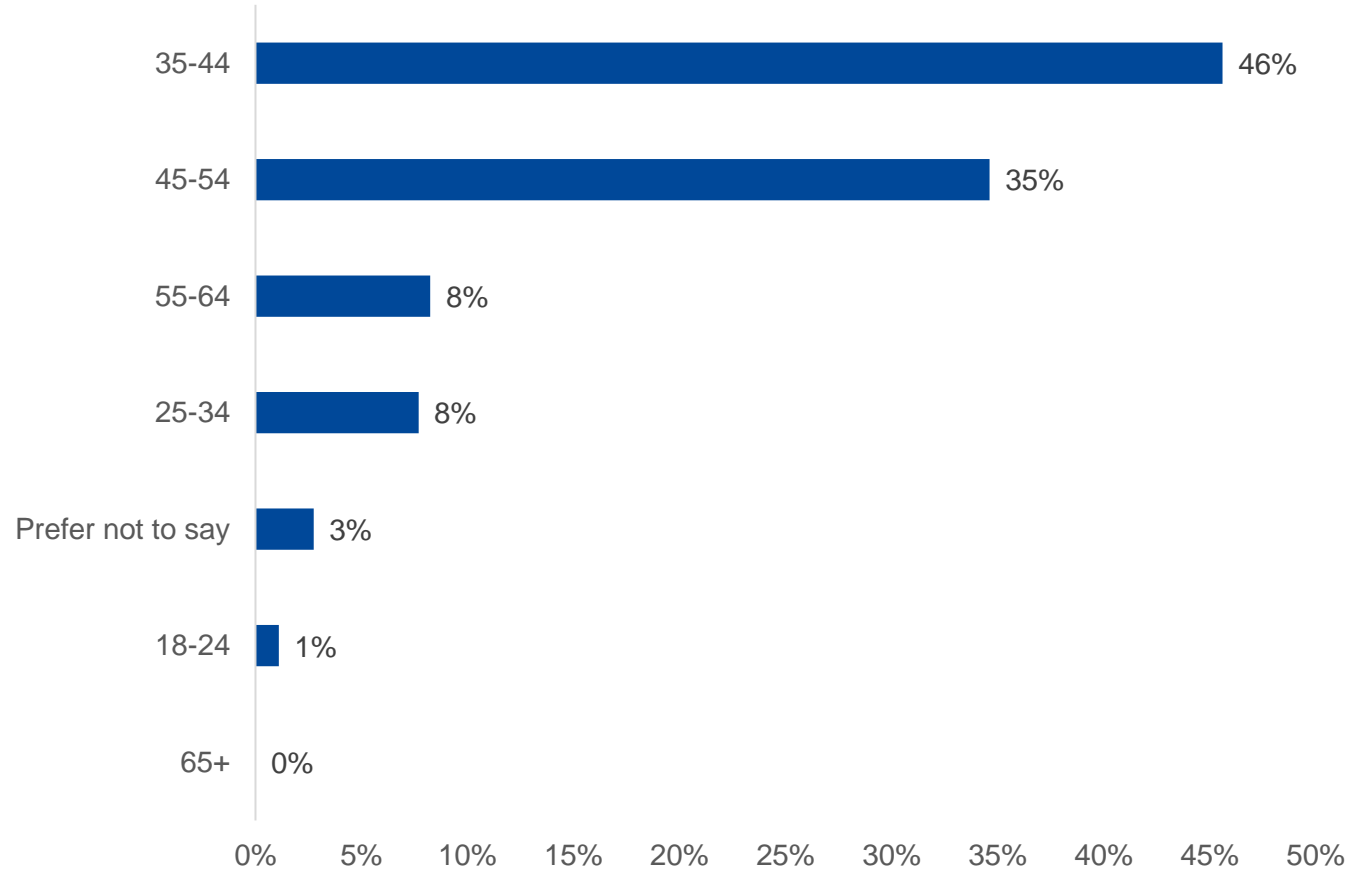
5 responses were from parent carers and 4 were from children, and they lived in the following districts:

- Brentwood - 1
- Castle Point - 1
- Chelmsford - 1
- Colchester - 2
- Epping - 1
- Harlow - 2
- Tendring - 1

[Responses: 9]

What ages are our respondents?

Nearly half of respondents were aged 35-44 (46%), closely followed by those aged 45-54 (35%), with fewest respondents being aged 18-24. There were no respondents aged 65+.



[Responses: 182]

Easy Read responses

The easy read survey was available for both children and adults to complete, hence differential in age range.

Child responses

There were **3** responses from children aged **5-11** and **1** response from a child aged **12-15**.

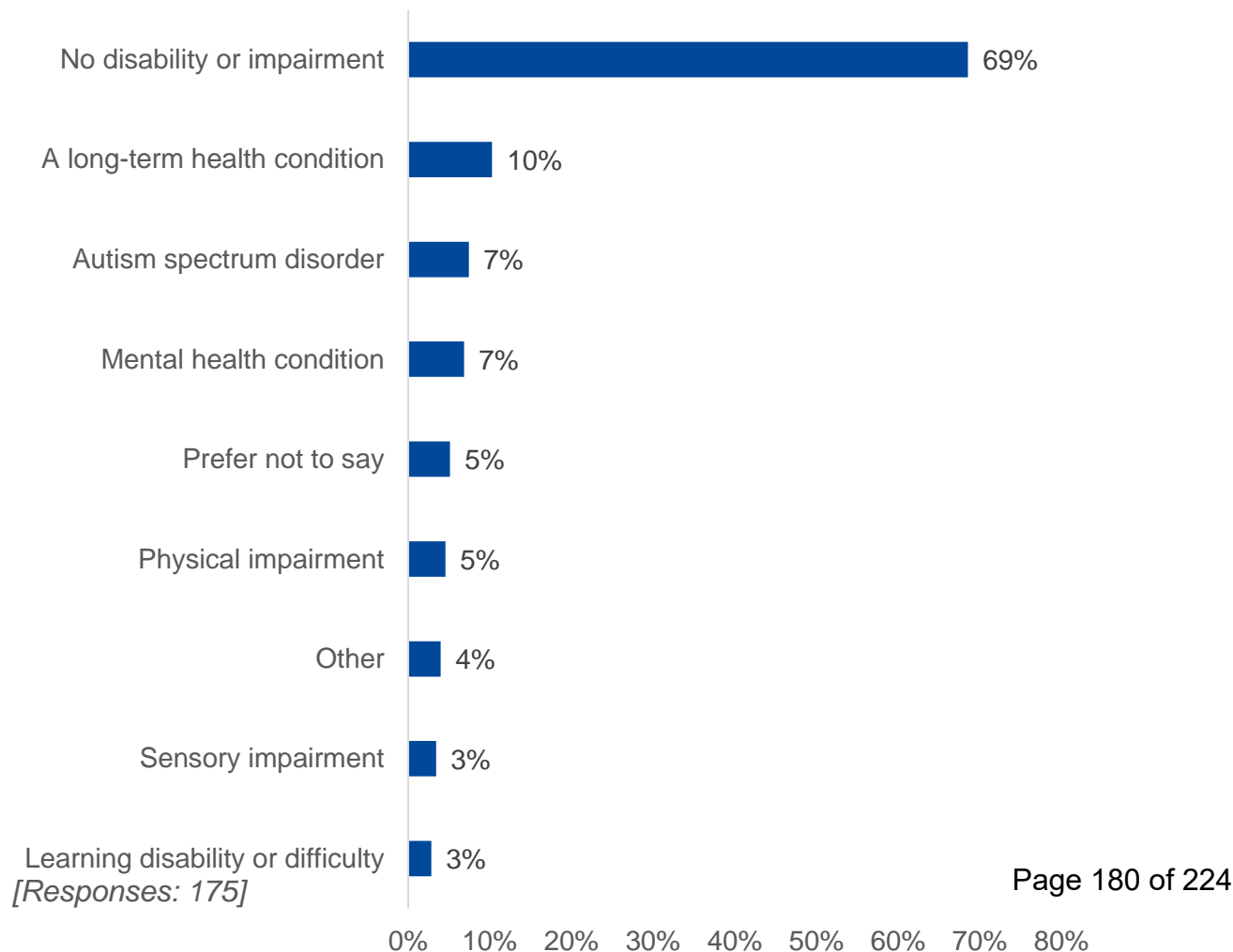
Adult responses

There were **3** responses from those aged between **35-44** and 2 responses where the respondents were **25-34** and

[Responses: 9]

Respondents with a special educational need or disability

The majority of respondents (69%) don't consider themselves to have a disability. 10% have a long term condition, 7% have autism and 7% have a mental health condition.



Easy Read responses

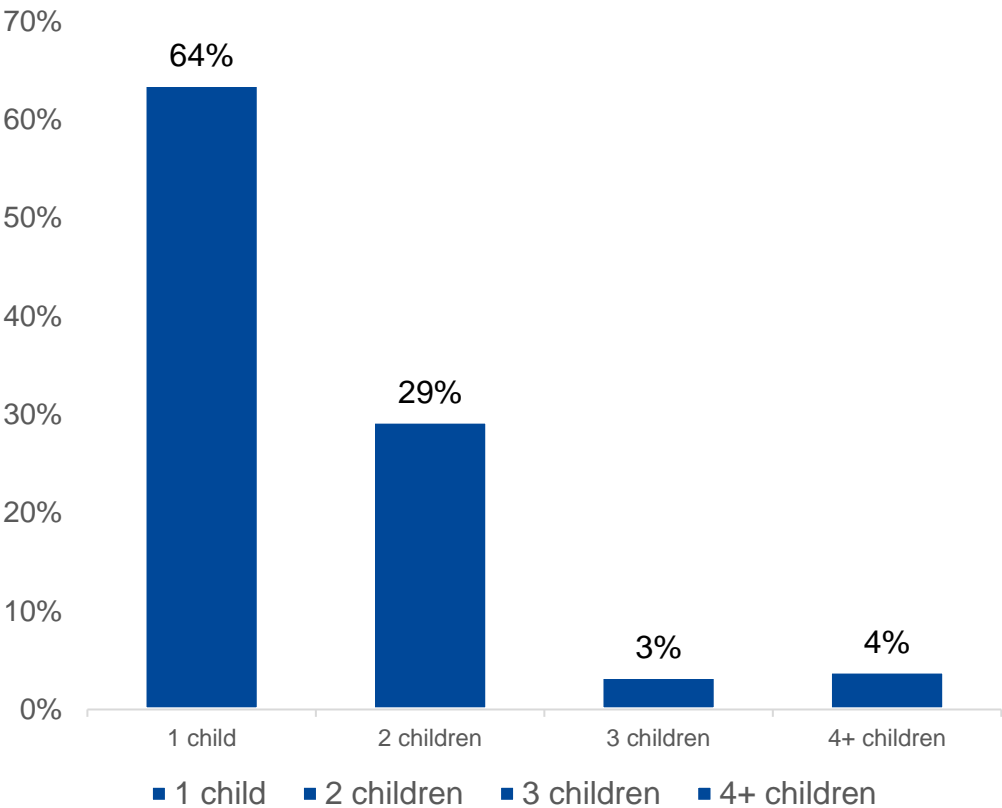
The easy read survey was available for both children and adults to complete, data below covers adults and children.

4 respondents have a disability, 4 do not and 1 person preferred not to say.

[Responses: 9]

How many children in each family have a disability?

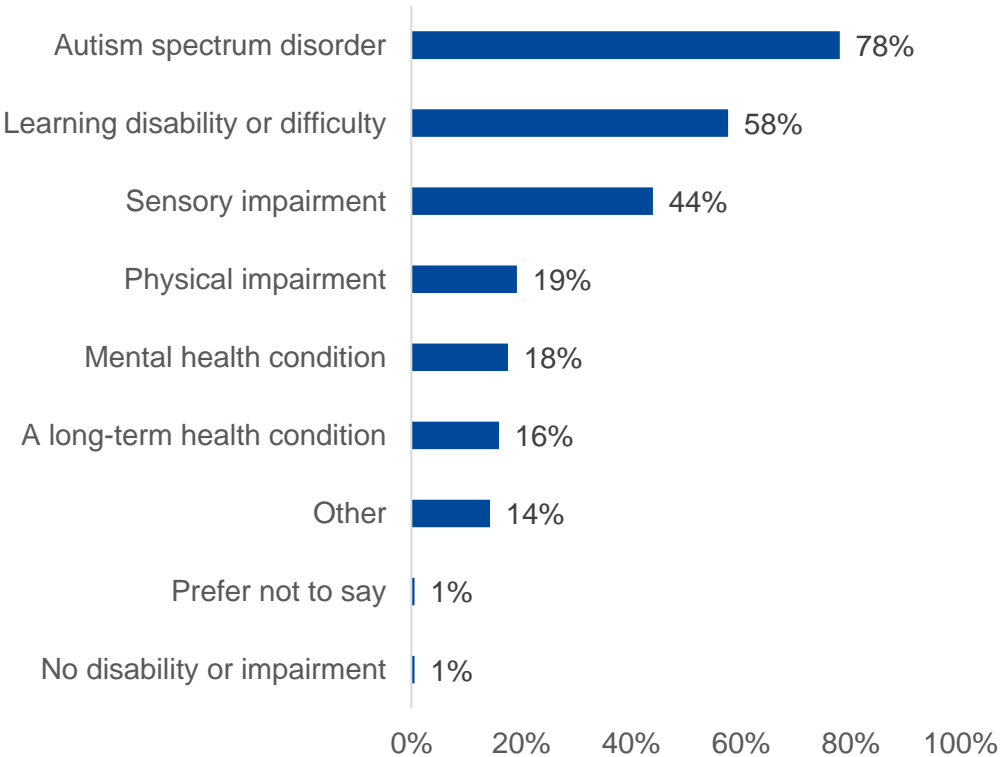
The majority of families have one child with a disability (64%), while 29% have 2 children with a disability.



[Responses: 181]

Types of disability of child/children

Most prevalent conditions were autism (78%), followed by learning disability (58%) and sensory impairment (44%).



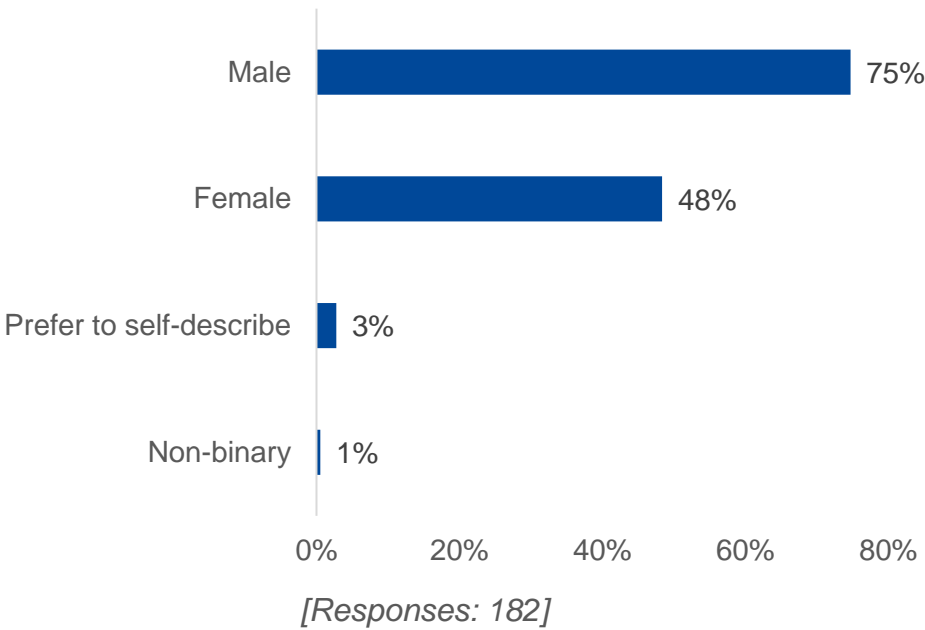
[Responses: 182]

NB: Respondents could give more than one response to this question.

Gender of child/children

75% of respondents had male children, and 48% had female children. 3% preferred to self-describe.

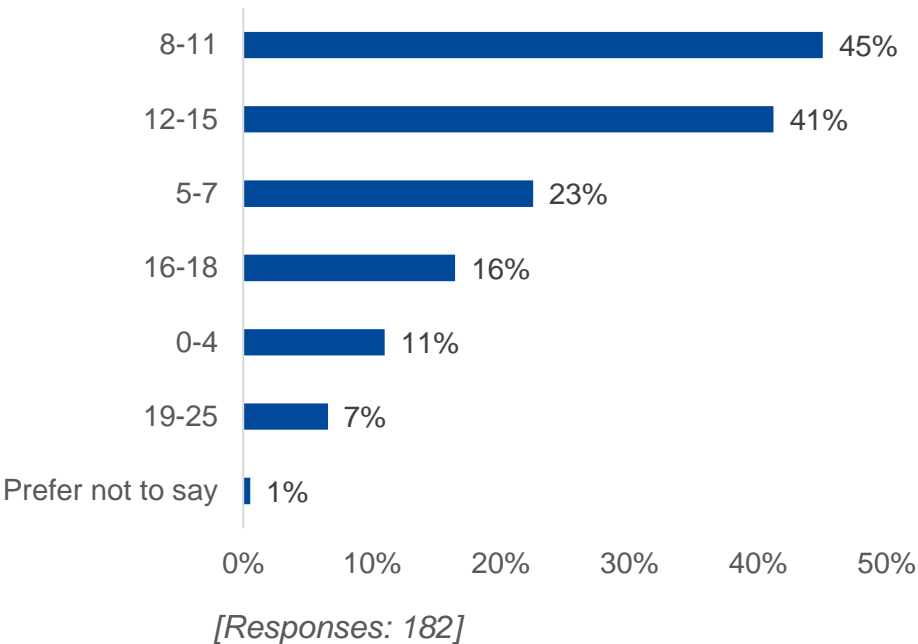
NB: Respondents could give more than one response to this question.



Age of child/children

45% of respondents had children aged 8-11, followed by 41% with children aged 12-15.

NB: Respondents could give more than one response to this question.



How many child/children are registered for short breaks?

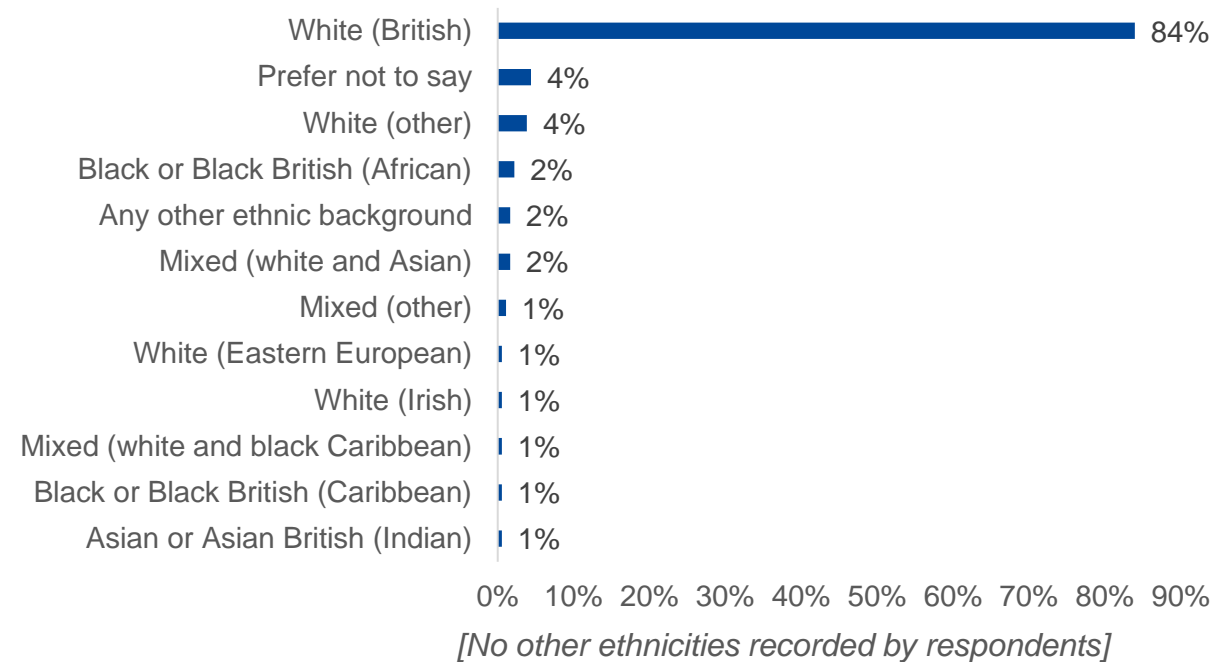
95% of children in the survey are registered for Short Breaks.

4% are not, and 1% preferred not to say.

Ethnicity of child/children

84% of children within the survey were White British.

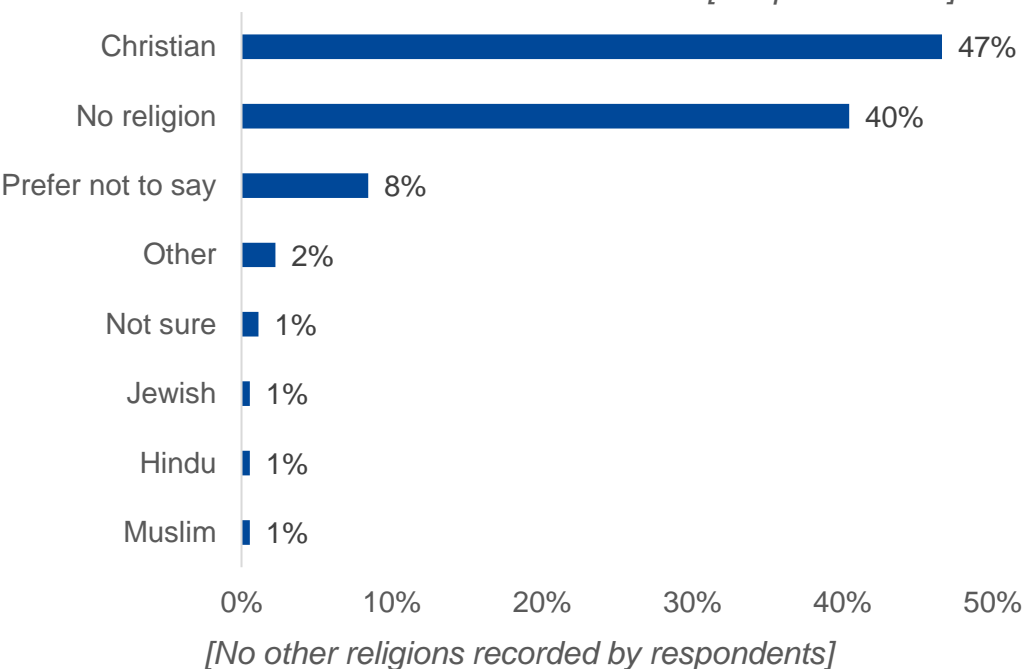
4% preferred not to say. *[Responses: 181]*



Religion/faith of child/children

47% of children identify as Christian, while 40% have no religion, and 8% preferred not to say.

[Responses: 178]



Easy Read responses: note these figures are a mix of parent carers and children

7 respondents within the survey were White British, 1 Asian Bangladeshi and 1 black African

[Responses: 9]

3 respondents identified as Christian, 1 Muslim, 3 no religion and 2 preferred not to say.

[Responses: 7]



Detailed findings Consultation

Proposals being consulted on are:

Proposal One: No change to the current short breaks offer

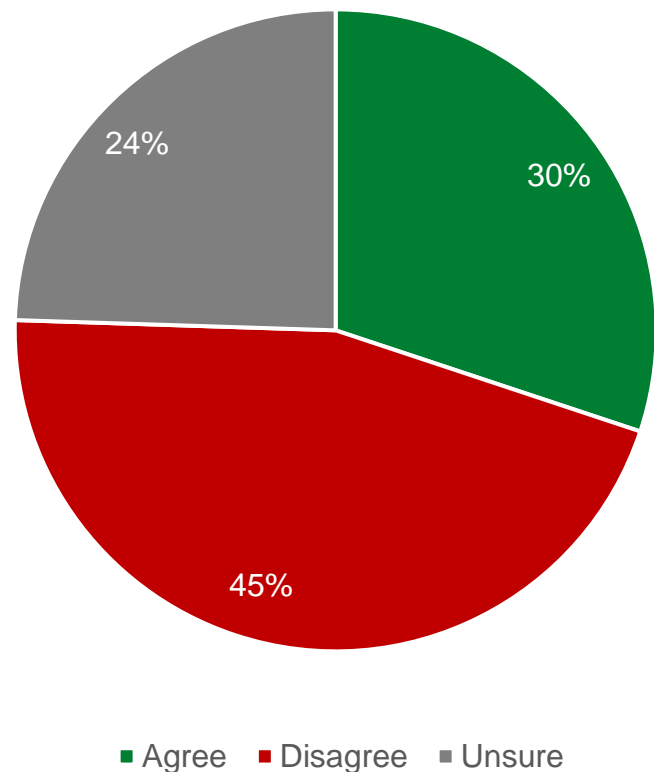
Proposal Two: Increase the types of venues where clubs and activities are delivered

Proposal Three: Improve the geographic location where Clubs and Activities are delivered by commissioning based on quadrants

Proposal Four: Commit to working towards a flexible activity allowance over the next 5 years

Proposal One: No change to the current short breaks offer

45% disagreed with this proposal, while 30% agreed and 24% were unsure.



[Responses: 196]

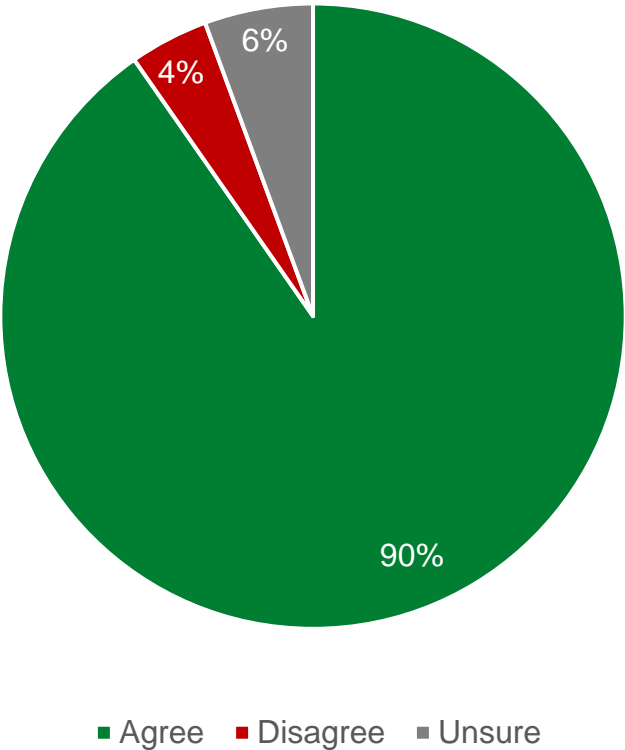
Easy Read responses

All 9 respondents answered this question

- 1 respondent liked this proposal best
- 4 respondents liked this proposal
- 2 respondents did not like this proposal
- 2 respondents liked this proposal least

Proposal Two: Increase the types of venues where clubs and activities are delivered

90% agreed with this proposal, while 4% disagreed and 6% were unsure.



[Responses: 196]

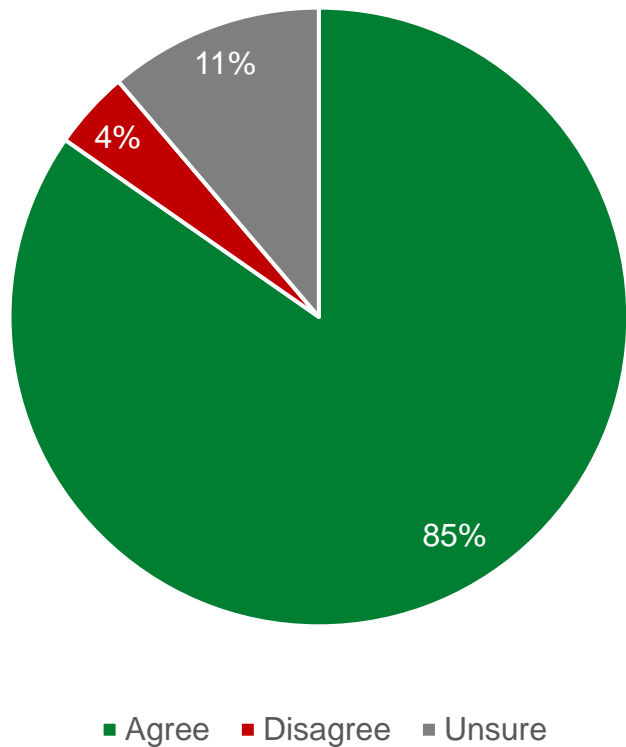
Easy Read responses

All 9 respondents answered this question

- 3 respondents liked this proposal best
- 3 respondents liked this proposal
- 2 respondents did not like this proposal
- 1 respondent liked this proposal least

Proposal Three: Improve the geographic location where Clubs and Activities are delivered by commissioning based on quadrants

85% agreed with this proposal, while 4% disagreed and 11% were unsure.



[Responses: 196]

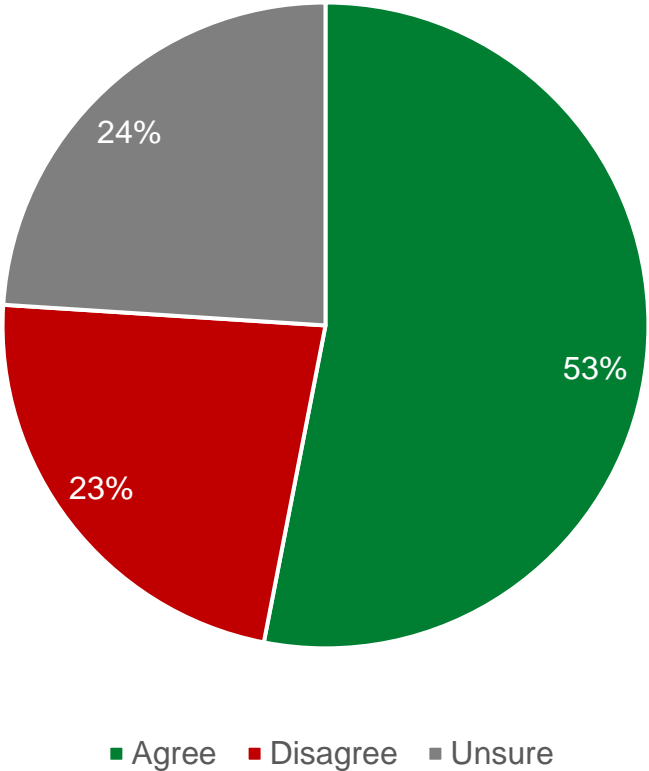
Easy Read responses

All 9 respondents answered this question

- 2 respondents liked this proposal best
- 6 respondents liked this proposal
- 1 respondent did not like this proposal

Proposal Four: Commit to working towards a flexible activity allowance over the next 5 years

53% agreed with this proposal, while 23% disagreed and 24% were unsure.



[Responses: 196]

Easy Read responses

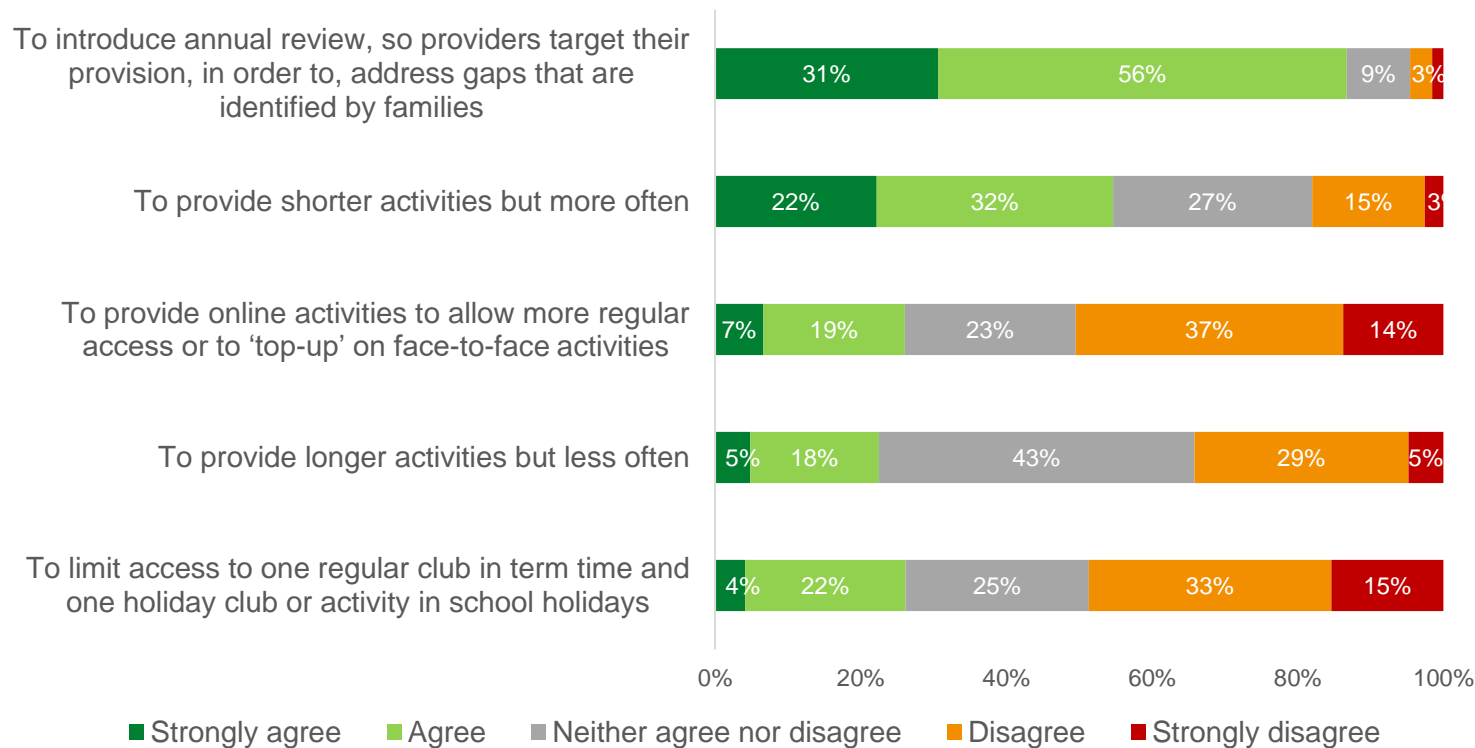
All 9 respondents answered this question

- 2 respondents liked this proposal best
- 1 respondent liked this proposal
- 6 respondents did not like this proposal

There is increasing demand for Short Breaks Clubs and Activities, and the Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy research has identified that some families access more provision than others. We need to strengthen the distribution of limited resources so that everyone who is eligible has a chance to access a Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activity offer.

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following proposals:

Agreement with these proposals was mixed. Respondents most strongly supported introducing annual reviews (87% strongly agreed/agreed), followed by providing shorter activities but more often (54% strongly agreed/agreed).



Easy Read responses

Responses from the easy read survey align with those from the main survey.

- 8 respondents agreed, 1 neither agreed or disagreed
- 3 respondents agreed, 4 neither agreed or disagreed, 1 disagreed, 1 did not answer the question
- 1 respondent agreed, 2 neither agreed or disagreed, 6 disagreed
- 1 respondent agreed, 4 neither agreed or disagreed, 4 disagreed
- 2 respondents neither agreed or disagreed, 7 disagreed

[Responses: 187-196]

A regular theme that has been identified through the Short Breaks Commissioning Strategy is the need to improve inclusion through mainstream settings such as leisure centres or community clubs for example. Mainstream providers and current Short Breaks Clubs and Activity providers told us that there needed to be better training and awareness for all providers.

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following proposals:

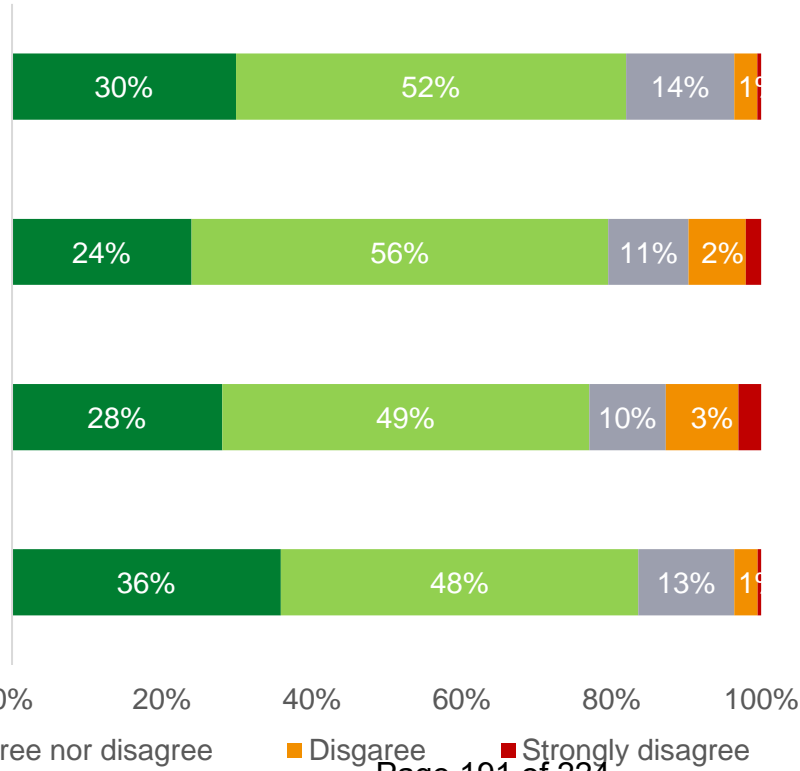
Agreement with these proposals was high. Respondents most strongly supported commissioning Short Breaks providers to deliver activities in mainstream settings (84% strongly agreed/agreed), followed by co-producing a SEND Trust Charter with families (82% strongly agreed/agreed).

To co-produce with families a SEND Trust Charter for providers to demonstrate their commitment to inclusion and accessibility. This would be open to any provider delivering clubs and activities within the boundary of...

To use a small percentage of the annual Short Breaks Clubs and Activities budget for mainstream providers to improve their equipment and/or facilities to help them become more inclusive

To use a small percentage of the annual Short Breaks Clubs and Activities budget for mainstream providers to undertake training that will help them become more inclusive.

To commission Short Breaks Providers to deliver activities in mainstream settings where appropriate



Easy Read responses

Responses from the easy read survey align with those from the main survey.

7 respondents agreed, 1 neither agreed or disagreed, 1 did not answer the question

5 respondents agreed, 3 neither agreed or disagreed, 1 disagreed

6 respondents agreed, 2 neither agreed or disagreed, 1 disagreed

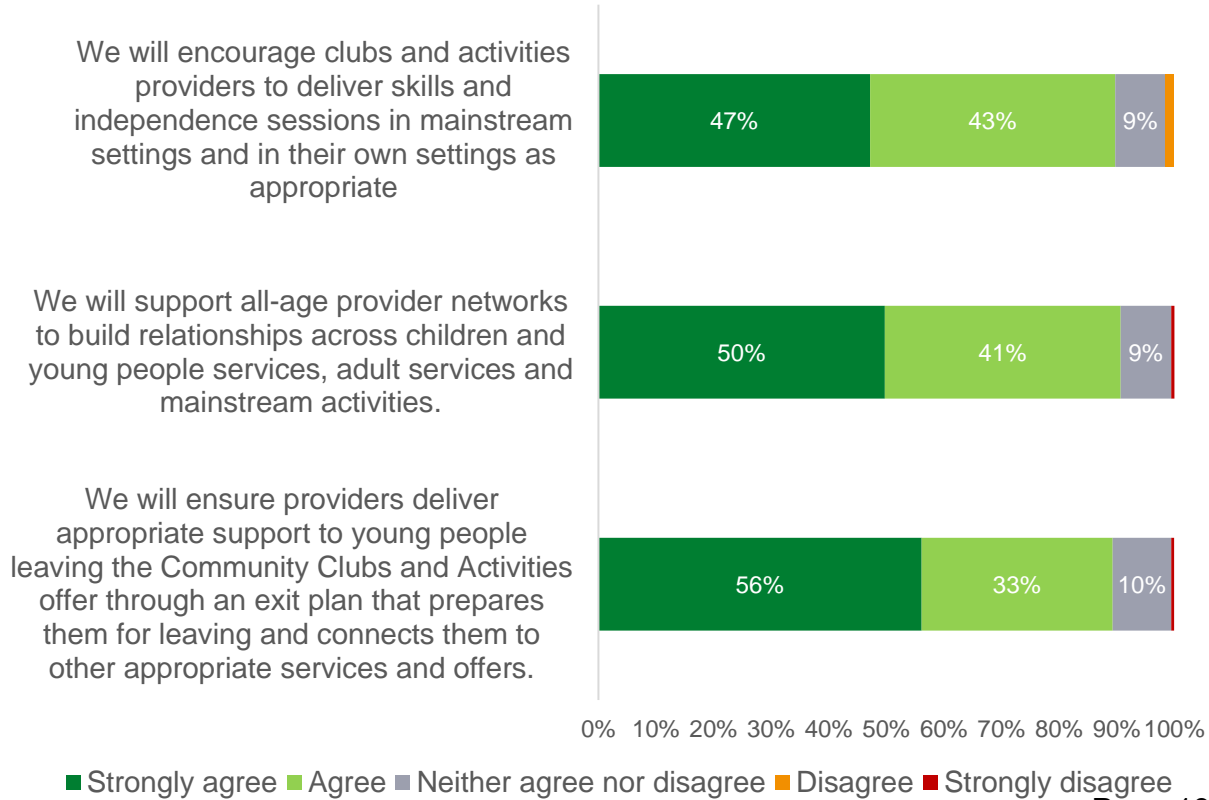
5 respondents agreed, 3 neither agreed or disagreed, 1 disagreed

[Responses: 194-196]

Previous consultation showed that we need to better plan transitions when young people turn 19+.

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following proposals:

Agreement with these proposals was high, ranging from 89% agreement for ensuring providers deliver appropriate support to young people leaving the offer, to 91% agreement with supporting all-age provider networks to build relationships across services.



[Responses: 193-196]

Easy Read responses

Responses from the easy read survey align with those from the main survey.

8 respondents agreed, 1 neither agreed or disagreed

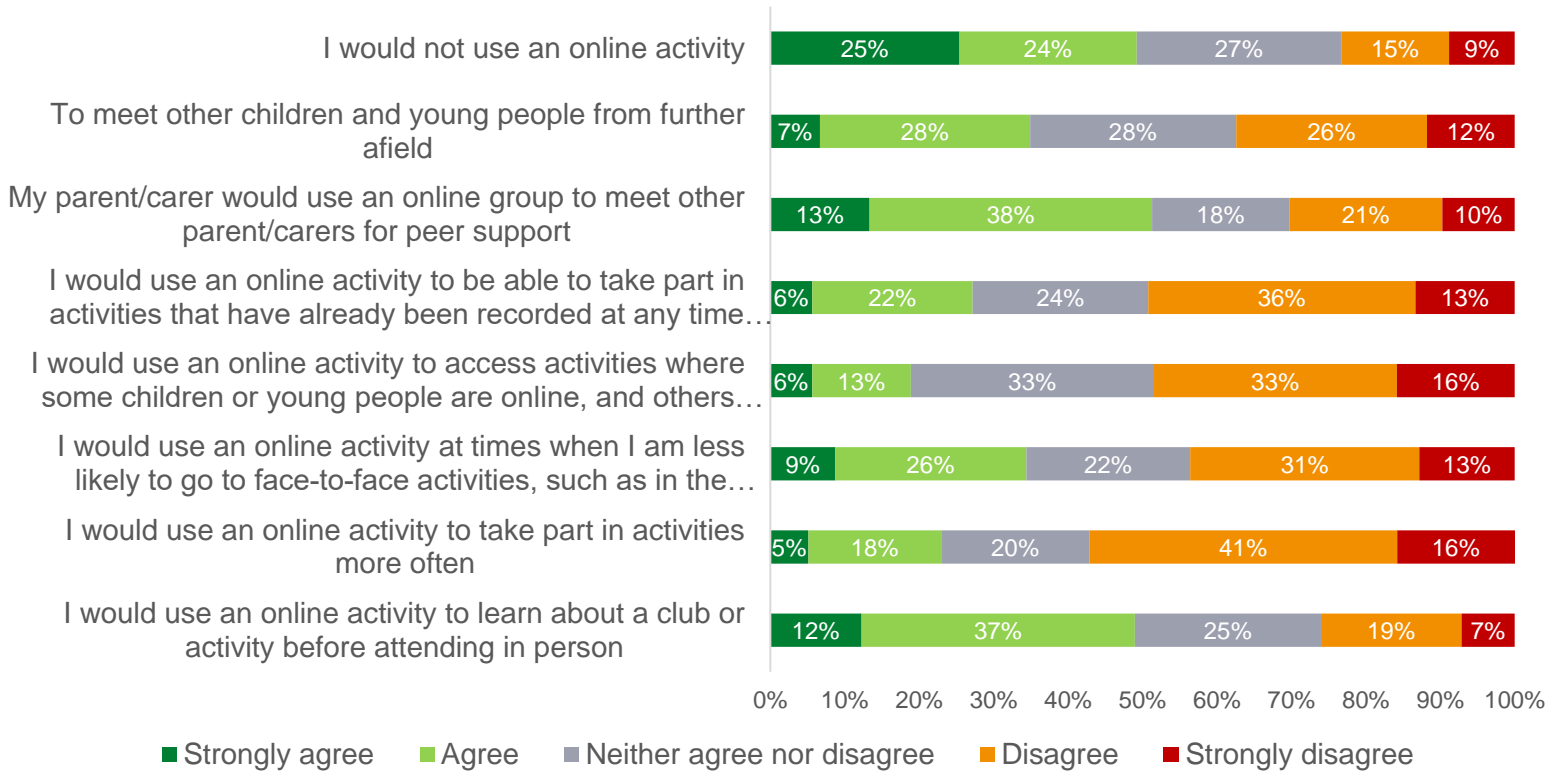
8 respondents agreed, 1 neither agreed or disagreed

8 respondents agreed, 1 neither agreed or disagreed

We recognise how valuable the covid-19 online offer was and are fully committed to developing it.
We do not intend to replace face to face activity but will develop online offers that enhance core provision.

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following proposals:

Agreement with these proposals was mixed, with just under half saying that they would not use an online activity (49% strongly agreed/agreed). However, 51% strongly agreed/agreed that their parent/carers would use an online group to meet others for peer support.



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Page 193 of 224

[Responses: 193-196]

Easy Read responses

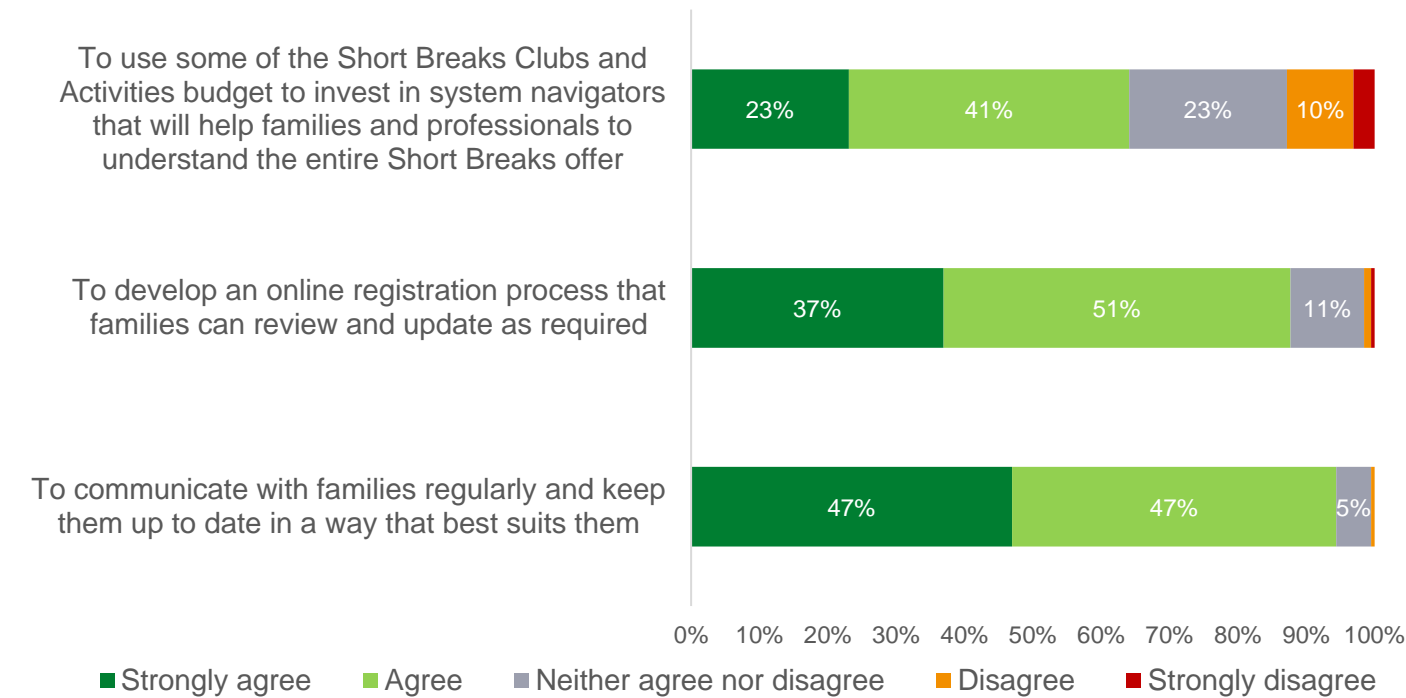
While responses to these proposals were low, they were in line with the main survey

- 4 respondents would not use online, 5 did not answer
- 1 respondent agreed, 8 did not answer
- 5 respondents agreed, 4 did not answer
- 2 respondents agreed, 7 did not answer
- No respondents answered this question
- 2 respondents agreed, 7 did not answer
- 3 respondents agreed, 6 did not answer
- 4 respondents agreed, 5 did not answer

Families have told us that we need to provide the right advice and information at the time in the right format and enable better navigation of the system.

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following proposals:

Respondents most strongly supported communicating with families regularly (94% strongly agreed/agreed), followed by develop an online registration process (88% strongly agreed/agreed). Support for using budget to invest in system navigators was more mixed, with 64% strongly agree/agreeing, 23% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 13% disagreeing/strongly disagreeing.



[Responses: 195-196]

Easy Read responses

Responses from the easy read survey align with those from the main survey.

9 respondents agreed

6 respondents agreed, 3 neither agreed or disagreed

9 respondents agreed

Any other comments?

Comments by theme	Number of comments	%
The current offer needs to change and does not work for some families and there needs to be a greater choice of clubs and activities which can offer a flexible approach and build independence for children and young people.	39	16.05%
Activities need to be suitable / able to cope with children and young peoples individual disability.	30	12.35%
Respondents want to be able to access clubs and activities in their local area.	30	12.35%
Integration post 19 is important, need more appropriate opportunities /activities for teenagers including building life time and independence skills	22	9.05%
The access to all provision within the offer including caravans/beach huts needs to be fairer	20	8.23%
The current offer is meeting the needs for some families and they value f2f clubs and activities	14	5.76%
There is a need for more holistic for support for the families	13	5.35%
Families need better access to information, with signposting posting to the offer, the website and booking process made simpler.	11	4.53%
More integration and opportunities with mainstream is needed.	11	4.53%
Some children and young people would not want/ be unable to access online activities/sessions.	8	3.29%
Families have responded to the consultation with concern that budgets will be reduced in the context of growing demand.	8	3.29%
Transport is an issue for those who don't drive and/ or trying to access clubs out of their local area.	7	2.88%
Families value the respite that face to face clubs and activities gives them and some have concerns that this may not happen using online activities.	6	2.47%
There is a need for more clubs and activities after school and in the school holidays.	6	2.47%
There needs to be greater disability training for providers, including mainstream providers.	6	2.47%
Mainstream clubs and activities are not suitable for some children and young people.	5	2.06%
There are concerns over the cost of clubs, activities and of mainstream provision.	4	1.65%
Good environment and quality accessible premises are important to families.	3	1.23%

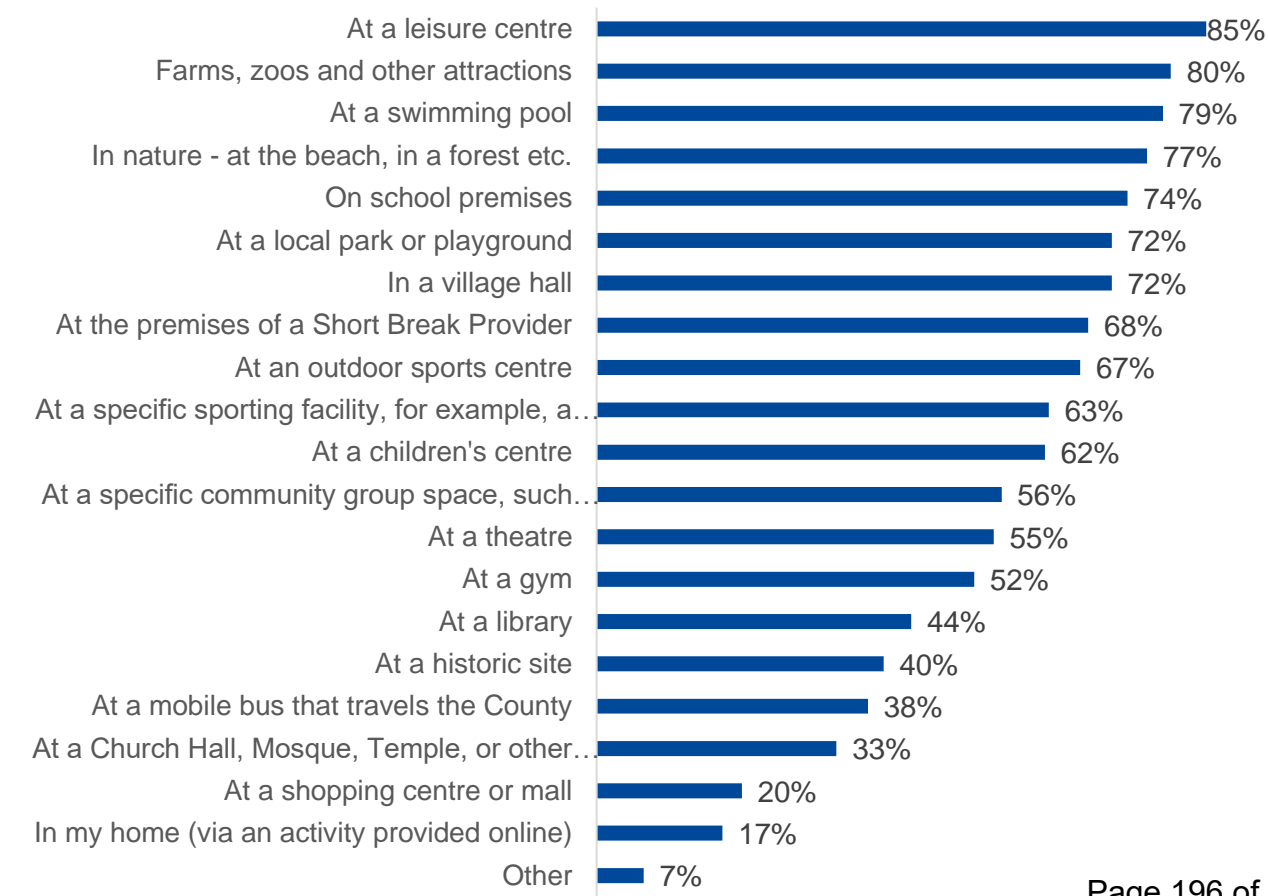
We received a number of comments that have been themed, coded and quantified and are below <1% so have not been included in the table.

Easy Read comments

We received a total of **8** comments from **2** respondents who completed the easy read survey. The responses all of which reflected the themes from the main consultation.

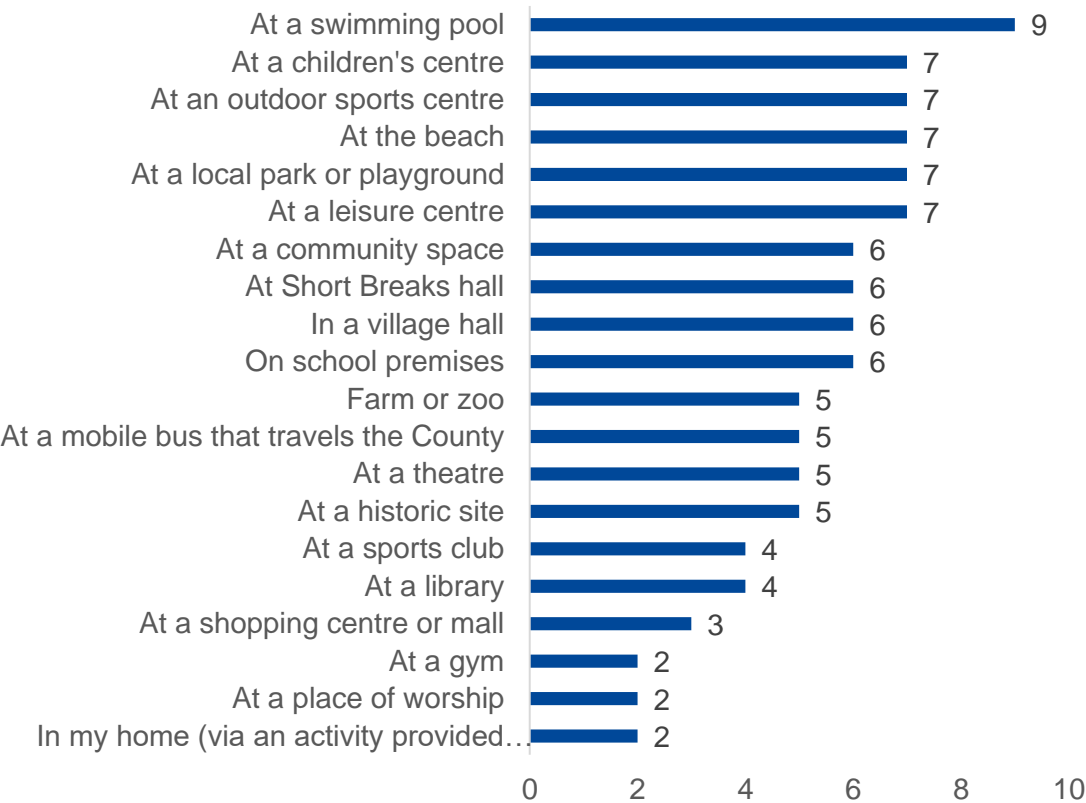
Where would families like to take part in clubs and activities?

Respondents would most like to take part in clubs and activities at leisure centres (85%) followed by farms, zoos and other attractions (80%). Swimming pools (79%), in nature (77%) and schools (74%) were also popular.



[Responses: 183] NB: respondents could select more than one answer.

Easy Read response (9 respondents)

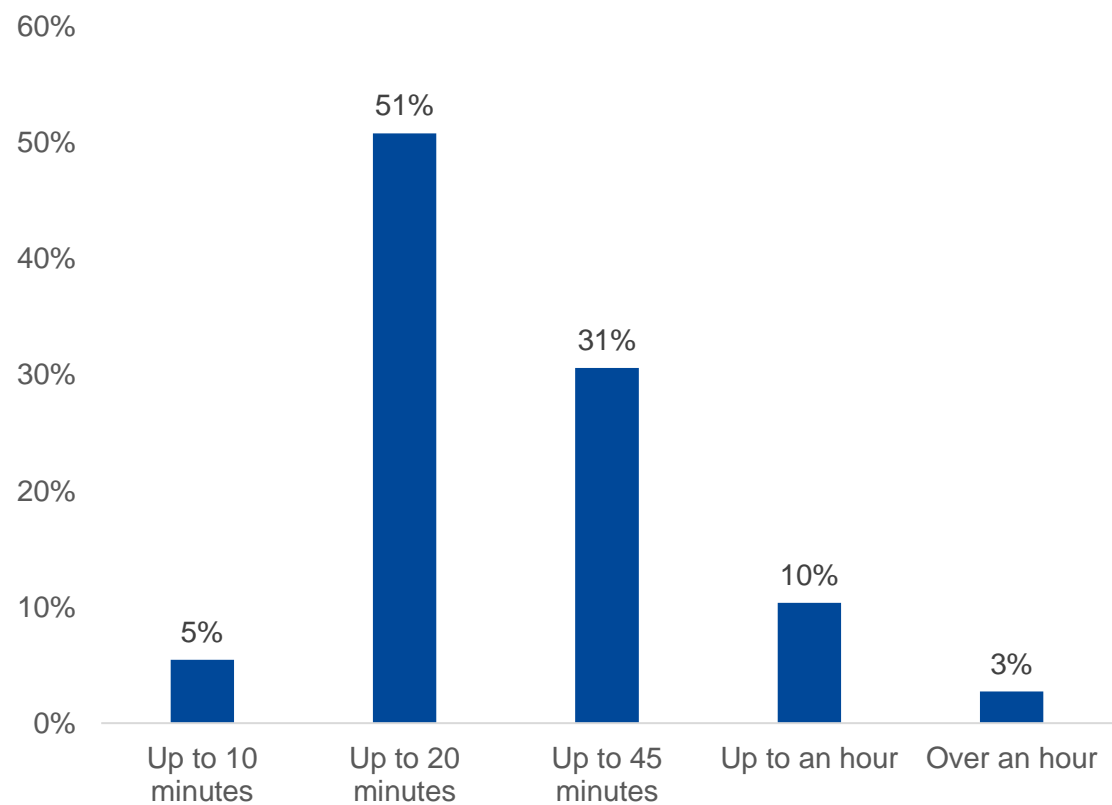


Comments under 'other' related to the following:

- Appropriate environment is important, i.e. for sensory
- Make more use of outdoor adventure playgrounds
- Cinemas could be used

How far are families prepared to travel to clubs and activities?

Up to 20 minutes was the most popular distance respondents are prepared to travel (51%), followed by up to 45 minutes (31%). Fewer than 3% are prepared to travel over an hour.



[Responses: 183]

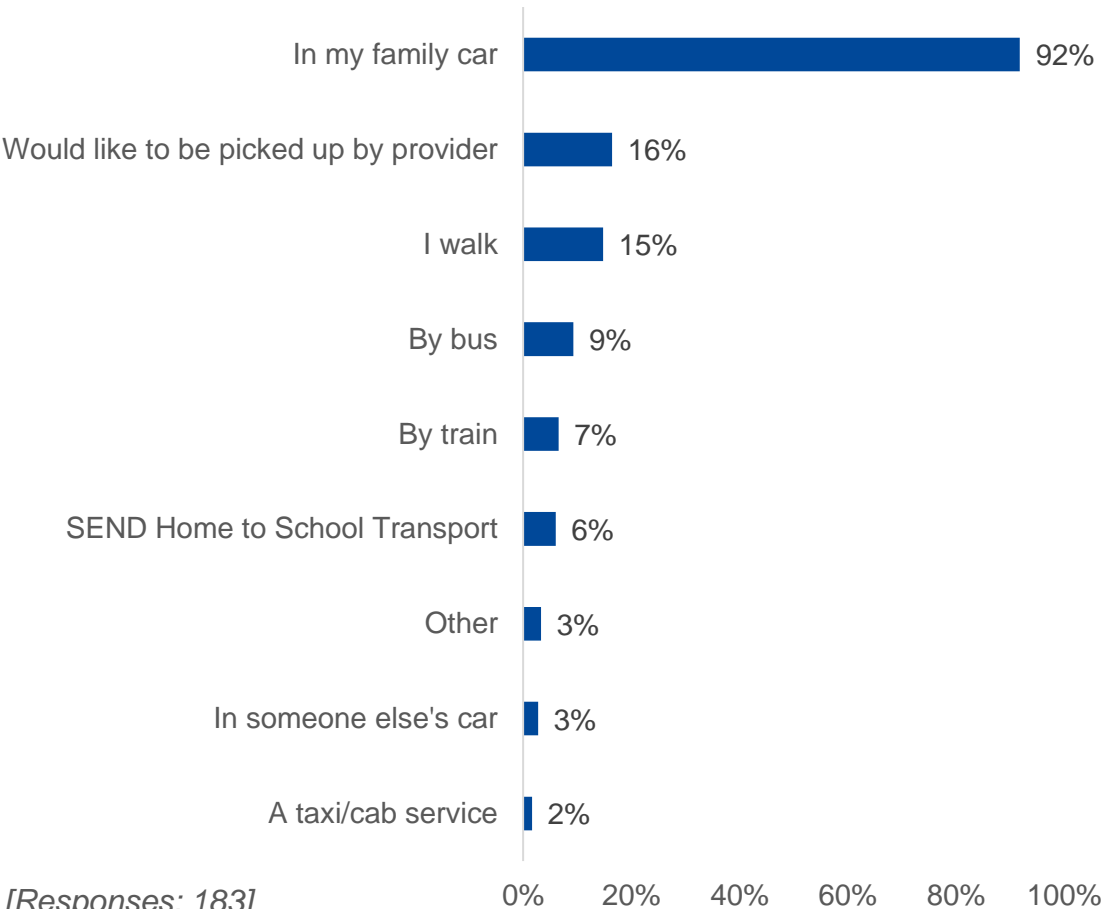
Easy Read responses

- Up to 10 minutes - 1
- Up to 20 minutes - 6
- Up to 45 minutes - 1
- Up to an hour - 1

[Responses: 9]

How would families travel to a short breaks club or activity?

92% said they would travel by car. 16% would like to be picked up by the activity provider, and 15% would walk.



NB: respondents could select more than one answer.

Easy Read responses

- In my family car - 5
- I walk - 5
- By bus - 4
- Would like to be picked up by the provider - 4
- By train - 3
- By taxi/cab service - 1
- Send home to school transport - 1

[Responses: 9] NB: respondents could select more than one answer.

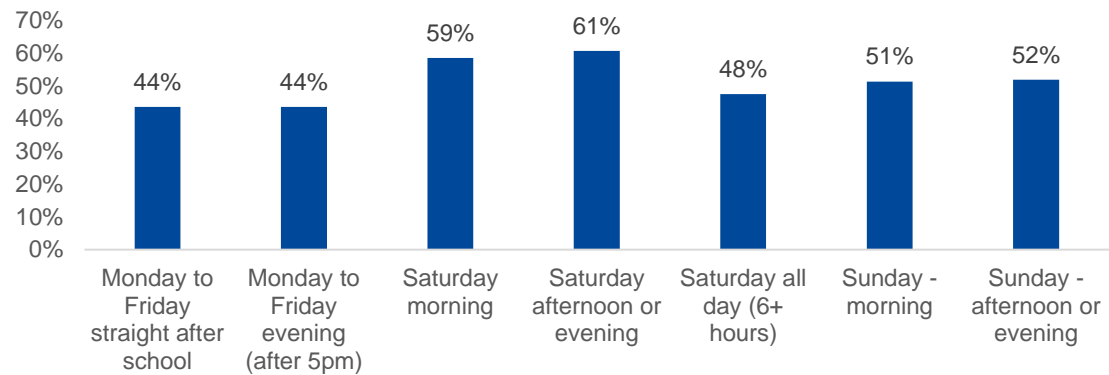
Comments under 'other' related to the following:

- Some use bikes and scooters to travel to clubs

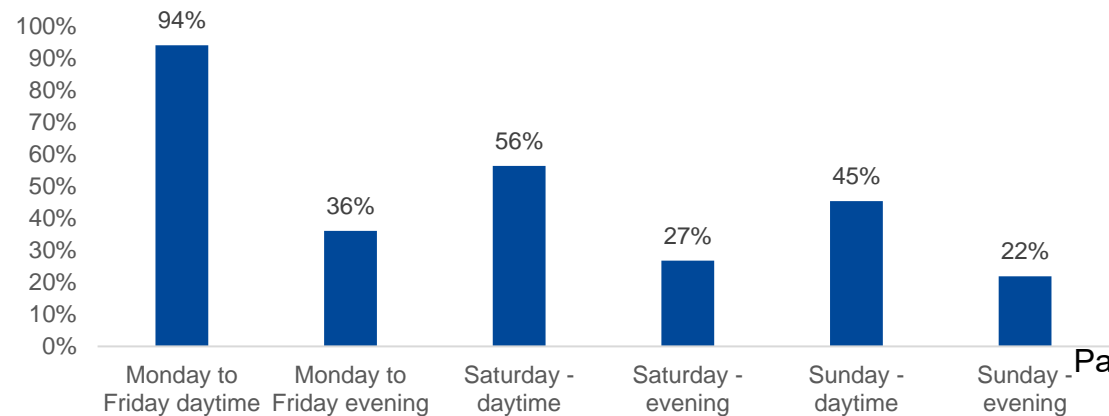
What times would families prefer to take part in Clubs and Activities?

IN-PERSON:

Term-time: During term-time, the most popular time families would prefer to take part in clubs/activities was Saturday afternoon/evening (61%), followed by Saturday mornings (59%).



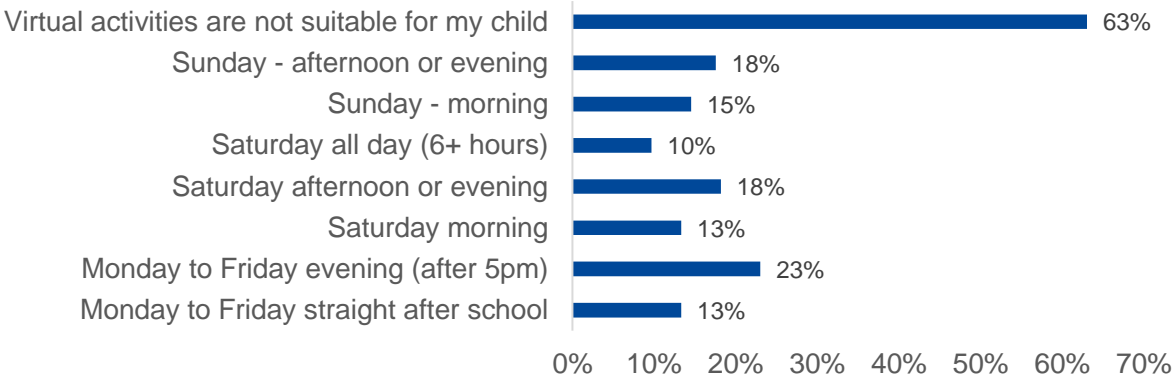
Holidays: During school holidays, the vast majority of families would prefer to take part in clubs/activities Monday-Friday daytimes (94%), followed by Saturday daytime (56%).



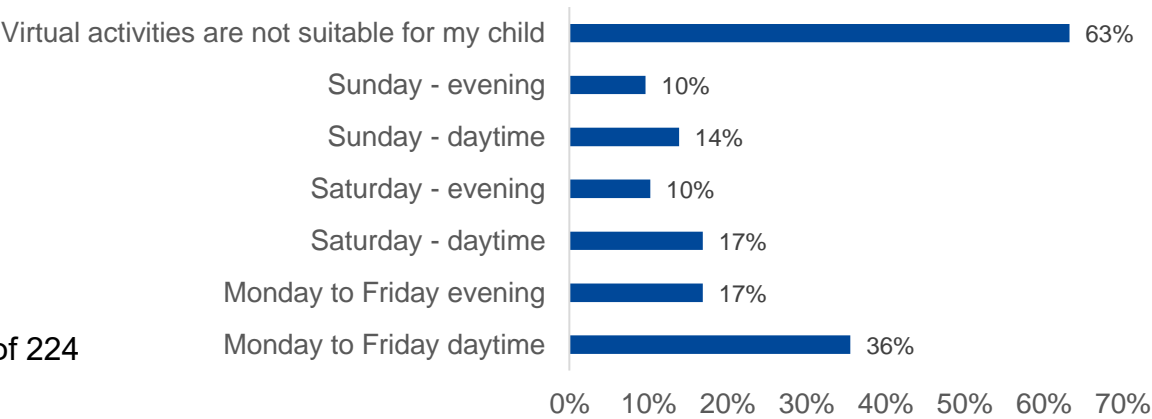
[Responses: 183] NB: respondents could select more than one answer.

VIRTUALLY:

Term-time: 63% said virtual activities are not suitable for their child. For others, the most popular times were Monday-Friday evening (23%) and Saturday/Sunday afternoons/evenings (18%).



Holidays: 63% again said virtual activities are not suitable for their child. For others, the most popular times during holidays were Monday-Friday daytime (36%).



[Responses: 165] NB: respondents could select more than one answer.

What times and how would you prefer to take part in clubs and activities?

Easy Read data by numbers of respondents to each section of the question

During term time

	Mon-Fri after school	Mon-Fri Evening	Sat AM	Sat PM & Evening	Sat all day	Sun AM	Sun PM & Eve
In person	3	2	6	5	6	6	6
Online	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
Not answered	5	6	3	3	3	3	2

Responses indicate that there is a very strong preference for **“in person”** clubs and activities both during term time and during the schools holidays. Both term time and school holidays families want in person clubs and activities.

During school holidays

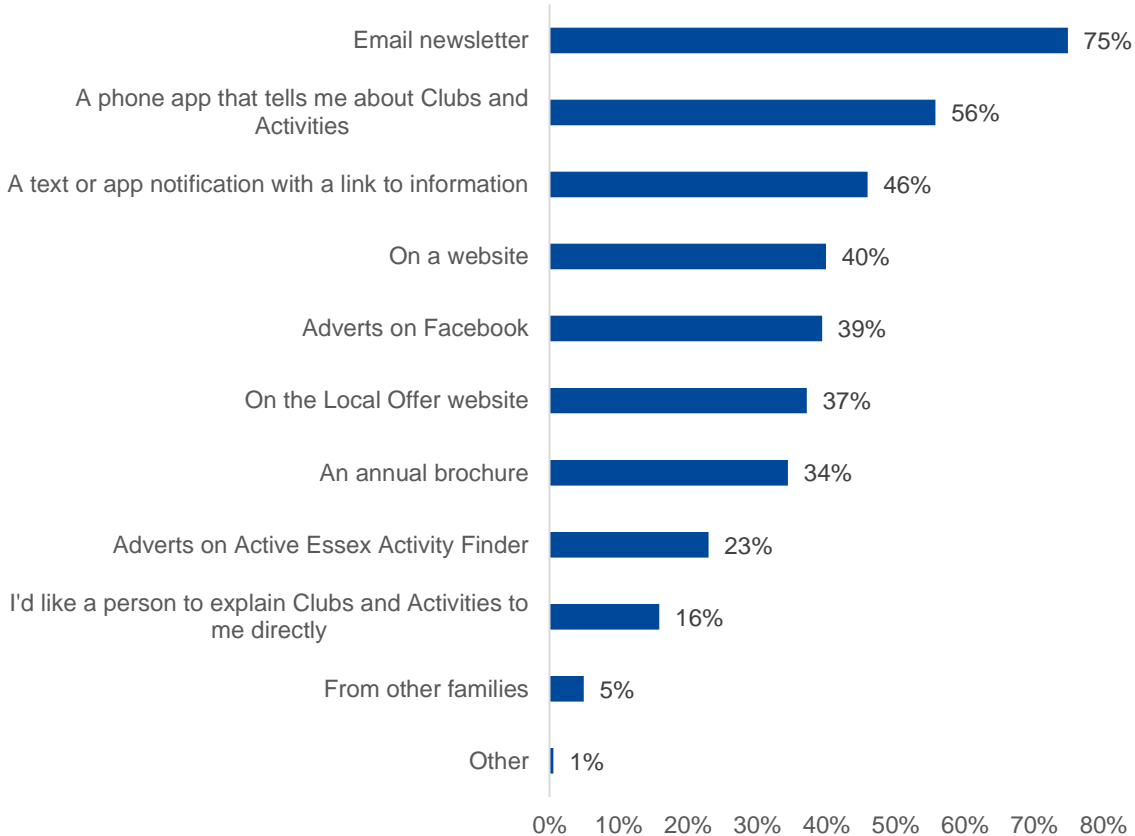
	Mon-Fri Daytime	Mon-Fri Evening	Sat Daytime	Sat Evening	Sun all day	Sun evening
In person	9	4	6	5	6	4
Online	0	0	0	0	0	1
Not answered	0	5	3	4	3	4

Page 200 of 224

[Responses between 3 and 9]

How would families like us to communicate with them about clubs and activities that are available?

Respondents would most like to receive communication via email newsletter (75%), followed by a phone app (56%) and text/app notification (46%).



[Responses: 183] NB: respondents could select more than one answer.

Easy Read responses

- Text message - 9
- Facebook - 7
- An app - 6
- From clubs themselves - 5
- On a website - 5
- Annual brochure - 4
- Newsletter - 4
- Active Essex Activity Finder - 2
- From other families - 2

[Responses: 9] NB: respondents could select more than one answer.

Do you have any other views about the commissioning of short break and activities?

We received **35** responses from the main consultation survey and **2** responses from the easy read version and the findings from both reflect the insights and themes captured earlier (see slide 25).

Comments by theme	Number of comments
There needs to be a greater choice of clubs and activities which can offer a flexible approach and build independence for all CYP	11
Need better access to information, with signposting to the offer, website and booking process made simpler	10
Want to be able to access clubs and activities in local area	8
Concern that budgets will be reduced in the context of growing demand	3
Good environment and quality accessible premises are important	3
Mainstream clubs and activities not suitable for some CYP	3
The current offer is working and meeting families' needs	3
Integration post-19 is important, as is more appropriate opportunities for teenagers including building life and independence skills	2
Safety/safeguarding is important and influences choice of club and activity	2
Transport is an issue for those who don't drive and/or trying to access clubs out of their local area	2
Activities need to be /able to cope with CYP's individual disability/more disability training needed for providers, including mainstream	2
Would not access/unable to access online sessions	2
Need for peer and parental support/advocates and more holistic support for families	2
Lack of childcare	1
Concern over the cost of clubs, activities and of mainstream provision	1
There is a need for more clubs and activities after school and in the school holidays	1

“I don’t think rationing short breaks is appropriate. Some children find short breaks activities more fun than others. I think improving the variety of opportunities and ensuring better training of providers in mainstream will help....ensure access and opportunities for all and have ongoing benefit ”

“There does not appear to be an equitable service across the county, and the current offer does not meet the needs of the families and CYP. For some there is nothing in their local area / and or some clubs/activities are just not suitable.”

Page 203 of 224

[Quotes consultation respondents]

Appendices

Easy Read survey



Main survey



Link to the Short Breaks Strategy:

<https://shortbreaks.essex.gov.uk/media/49656/essex-short-breaks-commissioning-strategy-2021-to-2026.pdf>

Link to the research report:

<http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/findings-from-the-essex-short-breaks-research/>

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Research & Citizen Insight

Contact us:
research@essex.gov.uk

County Hall
Market Road
Chelmsford
CM1 1QH

Sign up to Keep Me Posted email updates:
Essex.gov.uk/keepmeposted

 [Essex_CC](#)
 Facebook.com/essexcountycouncil

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

Published 7th March 2022.

Page 205 of 224

Forward Plan reference number: FP/327/03/22

Report title: Procurement of Additional Reablement and Bridging Services Capacity	
Report to Cabinet	
Report author: Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	
Date: 19 April 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Moira McGrath, Director Strategy Commissioning	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1. Intermediate care services are provided to help people either recover after spending time in hospital or avoid having to go into hospital in the first place. As such, they are a crucial part of the support Essex County Council provides, helping people to live the best life they can, independently, and in their own home for as long as possible. As part of this provision, bridging services enable same-day discharge home from hospital or same-day support in the community, for people before other services can begin. These other services, including reablement, support people to improve the quality of their lives and regain independence following a hospital stay or period of increased need.
- 1.2. Providing intermediates care services, which are available for all adults who need them, is crucial for our ambitions for health, wellbeing and independence for all ages, which are set out in Everyone's Essex, as well as our levelling-up agenda. It is also a statutory responsibility for the council which further demonstrates how important this service is to our residents.
- 1.3. Reablement services are primarily contracted to Essex Cares Ltd (ECL) but over the years we have sought to add additional capacity to the intermediate care system to best support our residents and utilise a diverse range of suppliers in the provider market. This has resulted in numerous contractual arrangements with varying contract end dates, as well as a lack of consistency of outcomes for adults.
- 1.4. We are working with NHS partners and the provider market on a medium to long-term approach for re-shaping the intermediate care system and bringing together reablement services, bridging services, short-term care home provision, as well as NHS intermediate care services, to improve outcomes for people and ensure a joined up and integrated approach to service delivery.
- 1.5. In the short-term this requires an interim step to secure additional reablement provision to replace in-lieu-of-reablement (ILOR) services across the county and to procure bridging services in North-East Essex and West Essex. This will drive consistency and improvements in our reablement and bridging capacity. Contracts will run from September 2022 to September 2024 with existing

arrangements extended to ensure continuity of service whilst this procurement process is undertaken.

- 1.6. This decision will allow the alignment of contract expiry timelines across this provision and secure necessary system capacity whilst we continue to work with our NHS partners to develop our longer-term strategy and drive further improvements through the rollout of our Connect Programme which has already delivered significant improvements in the reablement contract with ECL. This strategy and the longer-term plans for intermediate care will be presented back to Cabinet during 2023.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Agree to undertake an open procurement process to appoint providers to deliver additional reablement and bridging services across seven lots as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report commencing in September 2022 for a period of 2 years, with the option to extend for a further 12-month period at a maximum two-year cost of £16.5m.
- 2.2. Agree that the high-level evaluation criteria for the procurement will be 35% price and 65% quality, and that the Executive Director, Adult Social Care, is authorised to agree the detailed evaluation criteria for the procurement.
- 2.3. Agree that the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care is authorised to award the contracts to the successful bidders following completion of the procurement process.
- 2.4. Agree to extend the six current contracts for in-lieu-of-reablement services and two contracts for bridging services in North-East Essex and West Essex for a period of three months at a cost of up to £1.6m to ensure continuity of service during the mobilisation and commencement of the new services.
- 2.5. Agree that ECC will establish local arrangements with NHS partners to ensure delivery to the specification as part of ECC's continued ambition for health and care integration.
- 2.6. Agree to vary the S75 agreement that is in place between ECC and Basildon and Brentwood Clinical Commissioning Group to reflect the terms of an extension to a contract entered into between Basildon and Brentwood CCG and Mid and South Essex Foundation Trust, for the provision of bridging services. This is a service that is commissioned by Basildon and Brentwood CCG on behalf of ECC at a cost of £5.4m until September 2024.

3. Background and Proposal

- 3.1. As part of ECC's commitment to helping people either avoid going into hospital, or have a smooth journey out of hospital and back into independence, the Council provides a reablement service. This forms part of the Council's statutory

responsibility to provide intermediate care services. Currently Essex Cares Ltd (ECL) deliver this service and is contracted to do so until May 2024.

- 3.2. Given the increasing demand for reablement services, additional capacity was required. As a result, five contracts for In-Lieu-of-Reablement services (“ILOR”) were tendered and awarded in March 2020, with a further contract awarded in December 2020. These contracts deliver 4300 hours of support capacity per week and expire on 18 June 2022.
- 3.3. The aim of replacing the above ILOR contracts when they expire with a new service is to ensure consistency with the main reablement service delivered by ECL, which means that new providers will be required to:
 - Work with individuals to achieve their goals and maximise their outcomes.
 - Work with, and implement, the ways of working established by the Connect Programme
 - Work collaboratively with other reablement providers and community services.
- 3.4. The capacity to be procured remains the same as the current provision, with a total of 4300 hours per week being available across 5 lots. The split of the lots will align with each CCG.
- 3.5. As part of the Connect Programme, officers have been working with ECL and current ILOR providers to increase the throughput, efficiency, and effectiveness of services. Connect has so far supported ECL and Adult Social Care to ensure more people can access Reablement and, when they do, that they have a stronger recovery. This learning will form the basis for the new specification.
- 3.6. Due to the timelines and the financial envelope, therapies (which are an integral part of the ECL offer) will not be included in the base specification for the new services at this time. Instead, to support our longer-term ambitions for Intermediate Care, they will be commissioned separately as a ‘wrap around’ service and will be available to people receiving these additional reablement services and those who are receiving ‘spot’ purchased domiciliary care, where sufficient reablement capacity is unavailable.
- 3.7. In addition to the additional reablement capacity, bridging services are required to support the pace of response needed from providers to facilitate timely hospital discharge. The bridging service contracts include:
 - A rapid response hospital avoidance service that supports adults in the community;
 - A rapid response bridging service that supports adults to be discharged from hospital and supported in the community;
 - A reablement ethos in delivery of all aspects of service provision.
- 3.8. In order to ensure effective mobilisation and commencement of the new services, it is proposed that the six current contracts for in-lieu-of-reablement services and two contracts for bridging services in North-East Essex and West Essex are extended for a period of up to three months at a cost of up to £1.6m.

- 3.9. North Essex and West Essex bridging services will also be re-tendered as part of this procurement process. They will have their own lots. Commissioning activity for the Mid and South Essex (MSE) bridging services will continue to be led by Basildon and Brentwood CCG as part of our integrated service offer. The existing Section 75 agreement that is in place between ECC and Basildon and Brentwood CCG will be varied to reflect the terms of an extension to an existing contract that is in place between the CCG and Mid and South Essex Foundation Trust who provide these services.

4. Procurement Approach

- 4.1. It is proposed to run a single-stage procurement process, conducted in accordance with Regulation 27 (Open Procedure) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, to award a contract for two years (with the option to extend for a further 12 months) in five geographic lots with an additional two lots for Bridging Services in North-East and West Essex.
- 4.2. The contract will block purchase 100% of the expected annual activity levels (based on current ILOR block capacity and usage) for each of the seven lots (to include bridging).
- 4.3. The contracts will be awarded to the bidders who achieve the highest overall score using a Price / Quality split of 35%:65% with 10% of the quality score assessing social value and climate consideration. However, to ensure stability across the County, no provider will be able to win more than 2 lots.

5. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 5.1. This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:
- Enjoy life into old age
 - Develop our County sustainably
 - Connect us to each other and the world
 - Share prosperity with everyone
- 5.2. Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030:
- Renewable energy use where possible
 - Optimised route planning
 - Increasing use of hybrid and other alternative vehicles
- 5.3. This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':
- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
 - A high quality environment
 - Health wellbeing and independence for all ages

6. Options

6.1. Allow current In-Lieu-of-Reablement contracts to expire and commission any shortfall from the Long-Term Care market

This option is not recommended. The speed with which care can be sourced and started via the Service Placement Team (SPT) is a challenge and is not always conducive to support urgent hospital discharges and adults deemed to be 'at risk' in the community.

This option does not guarantee capacity, and current market pressures significantly increase the risk of high levels of unmet needs. It also may reduce capacity in the long-term domiciliary care market, which in turn reduces capacity in the reablement pathway.

6.2. Allow the In-Lieu-of-Reablement contracts to expire and increase the capacity of the main Reablement contract awarded to ECL

This is not recommended as ECL have, to date, been unable to meet all the demand. The use of subcontractors would increase capacity but could increase the risk of an unstable and inconsistent service.

6.3. Run a competitive process to appoint providers to deliver additional Reablement Services, including a separate lot for Bridging Services for North-East and West Essex – recommended option

This is the recommended option. It will ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the service to meet demand and to ensure that adults are achieving the best possible outcomes for living independently. It will ensure consistency by stabilising the market.

A contract period of 2 years will allow for permanent staff recruitment, better staff retention and development opportunities. A revised specification will allow for improvements to be delivered, including those within the Effectiveness Workstream. The aim will be for providers to collaborate and work closely with the wider system and other providers towards the longer-term future of Intermediate Care. Bridging services for North-East and West Essex will be tendered as part of this process, with a slightly revised specification to ensure consistency across Essex.

7. Issues for Consideration

7.1. Financial implications

7.1.1 The maximum cost of the recommendations in this report is £23.4m, which spans three financial years. This is based on the current 4,300 weekly reablement hours and the current level of bridging services across Essex. The breakdown by service and financial year is set out in the table below.

Service	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Reablement	£4.8m	£6.7m	£3.2m	£14.7m
Bridging*	£3.0m	£3.9m	£1.8m	£8.7m
Total	£7.8m	£10.6m	£5.0m	£23.4m

* Includes £5.4m commissioned by Basildon and Brentwood CCG

7.1.2 The actual unit rates paid will depend on the outcome of the competitive tender process. This is expected to vary across the 5 reablement and 2 bridging lots, as is the case with the current arrangements. The values above are based on current contract prices and applying higher-end estimates of inflationary growth in line with the cost of care model for domiciliary care. It should be noted that the estimates do not include commercial insight as to the impact of the revised specification and market behaviour, which will be addressed as part of the procurement process.

7.1.3 The cost of the reablement and bridging services will be funded through the iBCF grant as part of the overall Better Care Fund, which is set out in agreement with health partners and subject to national planning guidance, once published. This relies on drawing on funds released from the additional contributions received from CCGs in 2021/22, a planned £3.6m of the £8.2m total receipts.

7.1.4 The iBCF grant is not confirmed beyond 2022/23, although the Council's Medium Term Resource Strategy (MTRS) assumes continuation of this funding stream, or equivalent, in future years. If funding is withdrawn or reduced, this would need to be managed within the overall Adult Social Care budget.

7.1.5 There will continue to be a reliance on non-recurrent resource to fund bridging services. The growth of these services was supported in the 2021/22 financial year by the NHS hospital discharge programme funding (which ended on 31 March 2022) and iBCF balances brought forward from the previous year. The balance brought forward from 2021/22 will support the extensions and initial 2-year contract period.

7.1.6 There is a risk of a funding shortfall after the initial contract period, should the wider redesign of Intermediate Care Services not happen as planned, and if alternative funding streams cannot be identified. Putting these contracts in place allows time to focus on the goals of an integrated offer, providing better value for money and quality of care, established on a stable financial footing.

7.1.7 The purchase of block provision has an inherent risk of paying for void capacity. The Council is required to pay 100% of the contract value regardless of utilisation, emphasising the importance of close contract management in delivering value for money. A defined notice period will be included in the contracts to allow the volume purchased to be adjusted if contracted capacity is not being delivered. This flexibility will assist in the control of the overall expenditure.

7.1.8 If these services do not remain in place, then the likelihood is that the pressure on the Domiciliary budgets would be greater, due to increased long-term care

needs. This is due to the benefits of cost avoidance through delivering better outcomes and ensuring more adults can maximise their independence. There would also be increased reliance on spot purchasing of ILOR from domiciliary care providers to meet demand, which would be less effective overall, as both availability and outcomes of spot ILOR services are variable.

7.2. Legal implications

7.2.1 Reablement services and bridging services are “Light Touch” for the purposes of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). Although not a requirement, it is proposed that the standard open procurement procedure is used to tender these services, which is permitted by the Regulations.

7.2.2 Social value considerations should be relevant and proportionate to the contract and only relate to the metrics set out in the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. Evaluation criteria should be linked to the subject matter of the contract.

7.2.3 Therapy services are not being procured as part of the procurement and therefore the new contracts should contain provisions that help facilitate the new providers’ engagement with separately commissioned therapy services.

7.2.4 A variation to the s75 agreement with Basildon and Brentwood CCG will be required to reflect the terms of a new contract to be entered into between Basildon and Brentwood CCG and Mid and South Essex Foundation Trust, for the provision of bridging services by the Mid and South Essex Foundation Trust. This is a service that is commissioned by Basildon and Brentwood CCG on behalf of ECC.

7.2.5 The extensions to the existing contracts should be carried out in accordance with the terms of those contracts and in compliance with Regulation 72 of the Regulations.

8. Equality and Diversity Considerations

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

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

8.2. 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).

- 8.3. 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.

9. List of Appendices

Equality Impact Assessment

10. List of Background Papers

None declared.

Forward Plan reference number: FP/280/01/22

Report title: Colchester Rapid Transit System, ‘Section A’ – Decision to Publish Tender for Main Works Contract	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Councillor Lesley Wagland, Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning	
Date: 19 April 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Paul Crick Director, Highways and Transportation paul.crick@essex.gov.uk or Laura Ford, Project Sponsor laura.ford@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: Mile End and Highwoods, Abbey, Parsons Heath and East Gates, Wivenhoe St Andrew	

1. Everyone’s Essex

- 1.1 Everyone’s Essex has the aim of creating a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy, a high quality environment and a good place for children and families to grow. The provision of a Rapid Transit system in Colchester is critical to reaching our aims by providing alternative, sustainable transport options which mean that the sustainable transport options for residents is vastly improved, including being a better choice for them than cars. Part of this is also to create benefits across Colchester in terms of moving around town, so that the community has opportunities for growth in a sustainable way.
- 1.2 Everyone’s Essex includes a commitment to deliver and maintain high quality infrastructure to support a growing economy and the delivery of new housing and communities.
- 1.3 A Rapid Transit System (RTS) is a type of high-capacity public transport, the North Essex RTS scheme will initially be delivered using Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) technology that is capable of evolving and being upgraded to a trackless tram in the future.
- 1.4 Together with the proposed A120-A133 Link Road, the Rapid Transit System (RTS) will play a key role in unlocking land to provide up to 9,000 new homes, as well as business and leisure space, as part of the new Tendring/Colchester Borders Garden Community. The proposed Link Road will provide improved access to both the A120 and A12, reducing congestion on the network and throughout Colchester town centre, as well as providing a connection to the new RTS which will offer residents a high frequency public transport service on segregated or priority corridors.
- 1.5 Delivery of a Rapid Transit System will encourage residents in the new settlement and across Colchester to use public transport, reducing the number of vehicles on the network and further avoiding carbon emissions. There is a

requirement to alleviate congestion by providing sustainable and high capacity alternatives to car travel, an RTS is integral in supporting that objective.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council launches a competitive procurement for the Section A of the RTS (A134 Northern Approach Road) Works contract via the Eastern Highways Alliance Framework.
- 2.2 Agree that tender evaluation criteria to be used are 50/50 Price/Quality split with 15% of Quality represented by Social Value criteria to the extent that they are consistent with the most economically advantageous tender.
- 2.3 Agree that the Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning may award the contract if the successful tender is within the budget then available.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 Delivering elements of a Rapid Transit System was one of two key components in a successful Essex County Council (ECC) bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). The bid was submitted working in collaboration with Colchester Borough Council (CBC) and Tendring District Council (TDC) and supports key projects in the Local Borough and Districts' emerging draft Local Plans and the North Essex Garden Communities programme to deliver the Tendring/Colchester Border Garden Community (TBCGC).
- 3.2 Together the Link Road and RTS address a package of transport and access matters, enabling early implementation of sustainable transport options to stimulate behaviour change and address highways capacity constraints in East Colchester and West Tendring.
- 3.3 A Rapid Transit System will be in place to connect the Garden Community with the University of Essex, Colchester Town Centre, Colchester Railway Stations, Colchester Hospital, Community Stadium, Northern Gateway Sport Park and the existing Park and Ride on the North side of Colchester.
- 3.4 What makes an RTS unlike other public transport is that it will see a high frequency (every ten minutes or less) services on segregated or priority corridors, so it takes priority over other traffic. The most vital pre requisite to delivering a rapid transit corridor across North Essex is securing a dedicated alignment on which it can run and ensuring that new development is focussed along this alignment.
- 3.5 Whilst initially the North Essex RTS will be delivered using buses, it is proposed that the Council aims towards introducing a system akin to a trackless tram. This would combine the advantages of light rail with the practicality and

flexibility of bus rapid transit. This system would be built up incrementally adapting readily to early adoption of autonomous vehicle technology.

- 3.6 In addition to providing a sustainable travel choice, over private means of transport, the proposed scheme will provide journey time reliability through the sections, allowing the RTS to move through junctions with priority over other traffic.
- 3.7 The RTS is envisaged as a high frequency public transport service operating from early in the morning to late at night offering a realistic alternative to the private car reflecting the assumptions and objectives set out in local planning and transport policy.
- 3.8 ECC has commenced development of a detailed business plan on a target operating standard for the RTS and the phases of implementation of the operational service. This business plan will identify the detailed routings, service patterns, vehicle type and quality standards, branding and ticketing approached. It will be brought to the Cabinet for approval.
- 3.9 It will also set out a specific implementation plan including the method and timing of procuring the RTS service and its interaction with 'Park and choose' provision to the east of Colchester – a parking provision where motorists can switch to a more sustainable form of transport. The business plan will identify the initial phase of the RTS service as well as the standards from inception forming the basis for a procurement exercise for an operator who can deliver these objectives. ECC will work closely with partners in the development of the service model focussing on achieving modal shift, environmental and service quality and long term financial sustainability. The initial business plan will be completed in early 2023.
- 3.10 The HIF funding delivers the infrastructure, the scheme referred to as 'Section A' of the RTS covers from the existing A12 Park and Ride Site to the Albert Roundabout. This includes the existing permission for a 'segregated busway' adjacent to the Northern Approach Road. Section A will specifically deliver:
 - A dedicated segregated two-way RTS corridor running parallel to the A134 Northern Approach Road, connecting the Via Urbis Romanae and Bruff Close;
 - Realignment of the proposed RTS corridor, from the previous design, closer to the A124 and further away from residential properties;
 - Retention of the green corridor along the A134. New landscaping of semi-mature trees along the length of the western side. The RTS corridor will also provide dense native shrubs, grass verges, species rich grassland, groundcovers, mixed herbaceous planting and bulbs to create visual amenity and promote biodiversity;
 - Enhancement of Bruff Close through creation of amenity space around the halt area to facilitate mobility hub features as well as a pedestrian/cycle connection into the adjacent housing estate;
 - A dedicated bi-directional 3m wide cycle track and 2m wide dedicated footway along the corridor;

- Cycle/pedestrian crossing points along A134 at Bruff Close, Wallace Road, the existing Colchester General Hospital western access and the Mill Road Junction;
- Signalised crossings at side roads with intelligent priority for RTS;
- Revised junction arrangements at Mill Road, Dickenson Road and Wallace Road, to enhance pedestrian and cycle safety;
- Mobility hub halt features adjacent to the Colchester General Hospital and at Bruff Close to encourage intermodal travel.

- 3.11 Planning Permission for the initial development was granted by Colchester Borough Council under Variation of Condition 2 attached to planning permission ref: F/COL/01/1626 to take account of latest bus-way details for NAR3 in April 2014. The conditions associated with this application, as well as improvements to the original design noted above, were discharged through a successful planning application determined in January 2022.
- 3.12 The scheme is to be constructed largely within the highway boundary and on land that is owned by Colchester Borough Council whose agreement ECC have to deliver the scheme. It is expected that Highway Rights will be established over this land instead of land ownership transfer. The Council's property advisers are engaged on this matter. There are residual parcels of land required for the scheme that are in the process of being transferred between a Developer and Colchester BC and we are working with Colchester to conclude this process in advance of works commencing on site (not anticipated before January 2023). The land will then need to be dedicated, this has not yet been undertaken and so this is a risk to the scheme but we are working with CBC to complete this prior to a contractor being appointed.
- 3.13 With regard to infrastructure and connectivity, policy SP6 of the TDC/CBC development frameworks states that before any planning approval is granted for development within the Tending Colchester Borders Garden Community, the following strategic transport infrastructure must have secured planning consent and funding approval:
- a) A120–A133 link road; and
 - b) Route 1 of the rapid transit system as defined in the North Essex Rapid Transit System: From Vision to Plan document (July 2019).
- 3.14 Advertising the tender for the detailed design and construction of Section A of the Rapid Transit System will allow the scheme to maintain programme momentum and meet the above aims.
- 3.15 The overall HIF Contract is currently being discussed with Homes England due to a shortfall of funding on the Link Road. There is no proposal for any funding to be removed from the RTS budget to supplement the Link Road and so for the purposes of delivery the RTS budget is considered ringfenced.
- 3.16 In order to meet the programme for scheme delivery, the council will have to invite tenders before the conclusion of ongoing negotiations with Homes England/HM Government to secure additional funding for the Link Road and time to deliver the scheme, details of which can be found in this report.

- 3.17 The design works proposed relate to the RTS but it has not yet been determined how the RTS will operate or who will operate it. We do not yet know what vehicles will be used. The Director for Highways and Transportation considers that sufficient is known to provide assurance that the works will meet the needs of the RTS so as to enable it to operate with minimal changes before it becomes operational, but clearly there is a risk that technology will change and that the design of the RTS infrastructure is not optimised for the future of the RTS.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision

- Develop our County sustainably
- Share prosperity with everyone

5 Options

Option 1 (recommended):

- 5.1 Launch a procurement for the main works contract via Eastern Highways Alliance Framework, prior to the conclusion of negotiations with Homes England/HM Government. This will allow the scheme to maintain progress to meet the revised completion date.

Option 2 (not recommended)

- 5.2 Delay advertisement of tender until outcome of contract negotiation with Homes England is known. This will reduce the need for the scheme to progress at risk, however, this will impact the ultimate delivery programme of the scheme.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The estimated construction value of the proposed works for section A of the RTS (tender value including risk and inflation) is £14m.

- 6.1.2 The Capital Programme includes £42.9m to fund the entirety of the RTS works. This includes £12m of S106 of which £2m has been received and £10m has yet to be agreed, therefore this is a risk. The table below sets out the sources of funding for the RTS within the Capital Programme.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
RTS Budget	4	3,358	2,750	5,368	16,676	14,750	42,906
Funded by:							
HIF	4	3,358	2,750	5,368	14,676	4,750	30,906
S106					2,000	10,000	12,000
Total	4	3,358	2,750	5,368	16,676	14,750	42,906

6.1.3 The RTS will be built in 4 sections (A-D), the table below sets out the cost estimate and sources of funding for phases A to C. The construction of Section D is subject to the additional £10m S106 being agreed and received.

	Actual 2019/20	Actual 2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Colchester RTS	4	3,358	1,940	3,815	15,390	8,326	32,834
Funded by:							
HIF	4	3,358	1,940	3,815	15,390	6,330	30,838
S106						2,000	2,000
Total	4	3,358	1,940	3,815	15,390	8,330	32,838

6.1.4 The RTS is funded by the Housing Infrastructure Fund and will deliver on an infrastructure first approach to Housing delivery and the new garden community. The RTS is included within the same grant agreement with HE as the A120-A133 Link Road project. The Link Road project has experienced significant cost escalation and there is a risk that the programme will not be completed within the funding envelope and timescales previously agreed. ECC is in discussion with HE, as to how the cost escalation will be funded and whether the programme can be extended for the Link Road. In those discussions ECC has made clear the RTS project will be delivered within budget. There is a risk that funding will not be found to cover the cost escalation and HE may not be agreeable to the full programme extension for the Link Road. Whilst this risk is present, ECC remain committed to delivering both the RTS and Link Road.

6.1.5 If the scheme were to be determined to be financially unviable and a decision was made to terminate the agreement with HE and cease delivery of the scheme, there is a risk of significant abortive costs, resulting in an unfunded revenue pressure. To date, £6.387m has been spent or committed on the A133/A120 Link Road and £4.988m on Colchester RTS, a total of £11.375m. ECC would be required to repay HE the capital grant of £10.231m that has been drawn down to date.

6.1.6 The initial HE funding bid included an allowance for Part 1 claims of £800,000, to drawdown on the HIF grant; expenditure must be capital and incurred by 31 March 2024. ECC classifies part 1 claims as revenue expenditure and if these costs materialise it will certainly be post completion. ECC will need to engage in dialogue with HE to determine if additional revenue funding can be made available to cover these costs post completion, if this is not agreed there will be an unfunded revenue pressure. ECC will need to clarify with HE if the existing

£800,000 of capital funding can be used to service other capital costs in the project.

6.1.7 The bid included the feasibility assessment and identification of a preferred 'Park and Choose' site, however, there has been no decision as to whether ECC would operate this site and there is no revenue funding in the MTRS for this. Detailed design and delivery of this is proposed to be taken on by the Garden Community Developer. To date ECC have commissioned a Park & Choose report and preferred location in the South of the GC.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 It is important to ensure that the council is not committed to pay the construction contract unless and until it is satisfied that:

- the land ownership issues have been resolved so that the council has the right to build the RTS – Colchester BC may have agreed now, but they are entitled to change their mind.
- the County Council has complied with terms of the funding agreement with Homes England and that there is no reason to think that there will be future breaches
- funding has been identified for any increases in cost or for anything that won't be funded by Homes England
- planning permission has been granted for a satisfactory scheme.

6.2.2 In order to secure value for money it is important that the design of the works is as flexible as possible given that the RTS appears likely to be operated by buses initially and with the aim of using a 'trackless tram' in the longer term.

6.2.3 The Council has signed a legal agreement with Homes England with respect to grant funding for the road and the rapid transit scheme. The agreement makes ECC responsible for cost overruns and if ECC does not meet performance milestones in the contract then Homes England is entitled to cease to pay any further funding for either project. Since the council is claiming in arrears this could leave the council in the position of having spent significant sums of money which it is unable to reclaim as well as being contractually committed to deliver the remainder of the scheme without being able to claim any further funding. The legal risks were clearly set out in the report to the Cabinet before agreement was signed and the risks remain the same, except that the cost increase risk has to some extent materialised.

6.2.4 The Council is currently having discussions with Homes England concerning some aspects of the programme of work relating to the link road, which is being funded by this agreement. Homes England are under no obligation to find further funding. If they do not do so then ECC will have to either reduce the scope of the scheme, find additional funding or not award a contract for the road. If ECC does not award a contract it will not have to find the money but it will result in the non-delivery of the road and the rapid transit scheme which will

mean that we do not get the benefits outlined in section 1 of this report and relationships with others will be damaged.

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. The decision required will commit ECC to undertaking a tender process, this does not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. Please see the Equality Impact Assessment for further information,
- 7.4 Equalities and accessibility will be an important consideration when it comes to designing the procurement and operation of the RTS.

8 List of Appendices

Equality Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

Decision Notice on planning applications relating to this scheme.

Report title: Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members	
Report author: Secretary to the Cabinet	
Date: 19 April 2022	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/313/02/22** Acquisition and disposal of land at Knowles Farm, Maldon
- FP/341/03/22** Mercury Theatre LGF Covid Support Funding Approval
- FP/342/03/22** Getting Building Fund Award to the Braintree Station Approach Upgrade Project
- *FP/344/03/22** Settlement of the disputes in relation to the MBT Facility in Basildon, Essex
- *FP/311/02/22** Adjustments to the Better Care Fund in 2021/22

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

- FP/337/03/22** Community Challenge Fund
- FP/349/03/22** 2022/23 Proposed Fees and Charges – Essex Outdoors
- FP/359/03/22** Local Levelling Up Funds and Locality Funds Arrangements 2022/23

Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

- FP/346/03/22** Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years

- FP/357/03/22** Contract award for Inside Out Coaching Service

Cabinet Member for Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture

Cabinet Member for Finance Resources and Corporate Affairs

FP/352/03/22 Funding for Cultural Organisations

Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning

FP/363/04/22 ECC response to the Maldon District Local Development Plan Review (Regulation 18) – Issues and Options consultation, January 2022

Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

***FP/232/11/21** Addition to the Capital Programme for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1 funding programme and entering Memorandum of Understanding

Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Life Long Learning and Employability

FP/338/03/22 Proposed expansion of Tendring Primary School, from September 2023

FP/343/03/22 Appointment and Re-Appointment of School Governors by Essex LA - Schedule 398

FP/348/03/22 Appointment and Re-Appointment of School Governors by Essex LA - Schedule 399

FP/355/03/22 Appointment and Re-Appointment of School Governors by Essex LA - Schedule 400

FP/364/04/22 Appointment and Re-Appointment of School Governors by Essex LA - Schedule 401

Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

***FP/260/12/21** Covid Resilience Fund – Support to Adult Social Care Market

FP/351/03/22 Essex.gov.uk technology replacement

FP/358/03/22 Drawdown of £1m to support Cyber Resiliency Measures

FP/360/03/22 Resourcing for Health and Care Analytics

FP/361/03/22	Drawdown from Transformation Reserve: Children in Care Books Project
FP/362/04/22	Social Care Platform Programme – Drawdown from Reserves

*** Key Decisions: 5**

Exempt from call in: 1

Exempt from publication: 1