
Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council, held in the Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex on Tuesday, 14 February 2017

Present:

	Chairman:	Councillor J F Aldridge	
	Vice-Chairman:	Councillor J G Jowers	
J Abbott		M D Fisher	D Louis
B Aspinell		R Gadsby	M Mackrory
S Barker		K Gibbs	R A Madden
R L Bass		A Goggin	M Maddocks
A Bayley		R J Gooding	M McEwen
K Bentley		I Grundy	V Metcalfe
D Blackwell		C Guglielmi	A Naylor
K Bobbin		D Harris	Lady Newton
R G Boyce		A M Hedley	M J Page
A Brown		I Henderson	C Pond
M Buckley		T M A Higgins	J M Reeves
G Butland		R Hirst	S Robinson
S Canning		P Honeywood	C Sargeant
J Chandler		R C Howard	C Seagers
P Channer		M Hoy	K Smith
K Clempner		N Hume	J Spence
T Cutmore		A Jackson	A Turrell
M Danvers		E C Johnson	K Twitchen
J Deakin		D J Kendall	S Walsh
T Durcan		J Knapman	R G Walters
M Ellis		N Le Gresley	J Whitehouse
A Erskine		M Leonard	A Wood
F Ferguson		S Lissimore	J A Young
D Finch		J Lodge	

Prayers

The meeting was preceded by prayers led by The Right Reverend Hugh Allan o.praem, the Abbot of Beeleigh and Chaplain to the Chairman of Essex County Council.

Public Questions

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ingall, a resident of Harlow, who had registered to speak.

Mr Ingall addressed Council concerning the condition of the road surface at The Fortunes, Harlow. Mr Ingall explained that it was a narrow road, with parked cars and just sufficient space for cars to pass. The road had a number of potholes that had been reported over four years ago, inspected at intervals, but not repaired. The potholes were growing in depth and width and causing inconvenience. He reported that driving through the potholes was causing tyre and suspension damage to the cars and avoiding the potholes was endangering pedestrians and the parked vehicles. Mr Ingall questioned the criteria being used to assess the damage to the road surface, the danger to pedestrians and why the potholes had not been repaired.

Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, replied that he was very grateful that Mr Ingall had attended Full Council as it gave him the opportunity to explain that all the roads throughout the County are monitored and inspected regularly, which allowed highways inspectors to prioritise defects for repair as they deteriorated. He was able to confirm that The Fortunes had been routinely inspected a few weeks previously and was scheduled for repair within the current financial year.

He advised that The Fortunes is in Harlow and, like Basildon, suffers from 'delineation', that is, a thin layer of tarmac, laid over concrete, gradually wearing away. This means that the road can often look as if it's failing, but in actual fact is quite a solid surface. He announced that a pilot programme was about to commence to trial a cost-effective way of treating this type of surface.

Councillor Johnson hoped that Mr Ingall was reassured that the roads in Essex are monitored, and that although some defects get prioritised over others, the aim is to maintain a high quality of all road surfaces across Essex.

The Chairman formally opened the meeting

The Chairman reminded those present that the meeting would be recorded and broadcast live over the internet.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor J Huntman.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman reminded Members of the advice given by the Monitoring Officer that any Member with arrears of Council Tax outstanding for two months or more must make a declaration and would not be entitled to vote on the Annual Budget but not prevented from taking part in the discussion. He also advised them on the need to declare any other interest relating to the Budget debate.

3. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

Recent Death

Former Councillor Guy Mitchinson

The Chairman informed Council that former Councillor Guy Mitchinson had died on 9 December 2016 at the age of 53. He had sent condolences on behalf of the Council and with several other Members had attended his funeral.

The Chairman informed Council that after a successful career in the City of London former Councillor Mitchinson had been elected a Harlow District Councillor from 1983 until 1987 and was elected to Essex County Council in 2009 to represent the Division of Harlow West. He had served as a member of the West Essex Area Forum, the Economic Development Committee and the Environment and Executive Scrutiny Committees. He had also served as a Magistrate and a volunteer for the Samaritans.

Members stood in remembrance.

Awards

Education Investor Awards 2016

The Chairman invited Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing and Planning, to present an award and Members were informed by him that the Council's trading organisation Essex Education Service (EES) were presented with the School Improvement Award at the Education investor Awards recently. The judges commented on the innovative online self-evaluation tool that had been introduced by EES that enabled schools to collaborate and sustain self-improvement. The Cabinet Member stated that EES do excellent work providing commercial services to schools across the County and congratulated them on achieving the award.

Journalism Students

The Chairman welcomed Multimedia Journalism students and their Tutor from Essex University to the meeting to observe the budget debate.

5. Receipt of petitions and deputations

The Chairman received petitions concerning:

- a request for traffic calming measures from the residents of Waltham Abbey presented by Councillor Gadsby; and
- potholes and highway maintenance from residents of 'The Fortunes' in Harlow presented by Councillor Danvers.

The petitions were passed for the attention of Councillor Johnson, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

6. The Budget Report 2017/18

The Council received the Report on the Budget 2017/18:

Appendix A - Revenue Budget 2017/18 and Capital Programme 2017/18;
Appendix B - 2017/18 - 2019/20 Prudential Indicators, TMS and MRP Policy;
Appendix C – Pay Policy Statement 2017/18; and
Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments.

The recommendations as set out in the Report and amended by the 'Addendum Revenue Budget 2017/18 and Capital Programme 2017/18' were moved by the Leader, Councillor Finch, and seconded by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Spence.

It was moved by Councillor Mackrory and seconded by Councillor Whitehouse that the motion be amended as follows:

'Tackling the crisis in the NHS and social care

- Create a new Social Care Pressures earmarked reserve of £2.5m, subject to reducing the Transformation reserve by an equivalent amount. This can be drawn on to match fund joint initiatives with the NHS and care providers to speed the discharge of patients from hospital and increase the supply of urgently needed care outside hospital.

Supporting Essex's young people

- An increase of £350,000 in the budget provision for Youth Services (Education and Lifelong Learning portfolio) for the provision of youth service projects including support, mentoring and respite for young carers and school lunchtime clubs/drop in sessions run by youth workers. The increase is to be funded by a withdrawal from the Innovation Reserve in 2017/18 and thereafter added to the Medium Term Resources Strategy for action to be identified to determine a permanent funding solution, subject to the evaluation of the pilot.

- An increase of £86,000 in the budget provision for Passenger Transport (Highways and Transport portfolio) to continue transitional support for students in Uttlesford who are not entitled to free Home to School Transport. The increase to be financed by a withdrawal from the Transformation Reserve in 2017/18 and thereafter added to the Medium Term Resources Strategy for action to be identified to determine a permanent funding solution.

Investing in our infrastructure and keeping Essex safe

- An increase in the 2017/18 capital programme provision for Local Highways Panels (Highways and Transport portfolio) of £4m. This will be allocated to individual panels, to return their total funding to the 2015/16 level (i.e. to £8m).
- In addition, increase the 2017/18 capital programme provision for Local Highways Panels (Highways and Transport portfolio) by a further £2m to support more significant schemes proposed by the panels.
- The additional £6m referred to above will be funded by a transfer from the capital programme provision for Highways Infrastructure.

Reducing fly tipping

- An increase of £250,000 in the budget provision for Waste Disposal (Environment and Waste portfolio) to enable all Civic Amenity Sites once again to accept residents' DIY waste. This increase is to be funded from the Transformation Reserve in 2017/18 and thereafter added to the Medium Term Resources Strategy for action to be identified pending the outcome of the full review of the service.'

It was moved by Councillor Henderson and seconded by Councillor Danvers that the motion be amended as follows:

- 1) An additional £3,000,000 to reverse part of the All Age Increasing Independence savings planned for Adult Social Care and to restore and protect services to Vulnerable Adults, subject to increasing the budget for the Adult Social Care portfolio by £3,000,000.
- 2) An additional £3,000,000 to reverse part of the Health Investment in Prevention savings planned for Adult Social Care and to restore and protect services to Vulnerable Adults, subject to increasing the budget for the Adult Social Care portfolio by £3,000,000.
- 3) An additional £1,413,549 to reverse part of the Older People Intermediate Care Pathway saving and to restore and protect services to Vulnerable Adults, subject to increasing the budget for the Adult Social Care portfolio by £1,413,549.
- 4) An additional £934,000 to reinstate the funding for community equipment and reverse the Community Equipment Retail Pathway saving, subject to increasing the budget for the Adult Social Care portfolio by £934,000.

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- 5) An additional £1,474,000 to switch street lighting on across ECC from 1am to 5am, subject to increasing the budget for the Highways & Transportation portfolio by £1,474,000.
 - 6) An additional £900,000 to be made available through a hardship fund to support families that are 'just about managing' in order to alleviate home to school costs due to changes in the home to school transport policy subject to increasing the budget for the Education and Lifelong Learning portfolio by £900,000.
 - 7) An additional £499,000 to reinstate the 2017/18 planned savings in the Mental Health budget focused on early intervention and improved access subject to increasing the budget for the Health portfolio by £499,000.
 - 8) An additional £225,000 to pay for 'Careers Direct'; an early intervention scheme in house designed to offer mobile, adaptive, and targeted face-to-face careers advice for pupils studying from year eight to eleven working alongside the Essex Skills Board, subject to increasing the budget for the Education and Lifelong Learning Portfolio by £225,000.
 - 9) An additional £100,000 to reverse the planned savings on Community Transport, subject to increasing the budget for the Highways and Transportation Portfolio by £100,000.
 - 10) The above increases to be funded by an increase in Council Tax of 1.99% being recommended to the Council.
 - 11) An additional £20,000 to pay for a one-off report investigating the impact of Social Isolation and Loneliness on the Essex Population. Subject to increasing the budget for the Leader by £20,000 funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council.
 - 12) An additional £20,000 to have a complete review of the funding formula and the intervention level of highway maintenance to readdress the pothole and foot path crisis in Essex. Subject to increasing the budget for the Highways and Transportation portfolio, funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council.

Summary of Proposals	£
All Age Increasing Independence	3,000,000
Health Investment in Prevention	3,000,000
Older People - Intermediate Care pathway	1,413,549
Community Equipment Retail Approach	934,000
Street Lighting	1,474,000
Hardship fund for those affected by Home to School policy changes	900,000
Mental Health	499,000
Careers Service	225,000
Community Transport	100,000
Isolation and Loneliness Study	20,000
Review of the funding formula and the intervention level of highway maintenance	20,000
Total Cost of proposals	11,585,549
Funded by:	
Increase in Council Tax by 1.99%	11,545,549
Innovation Reserve	40,000
Total proposed funding	11,585,549

- 13) Under Sections 42A and B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as inserted by the Localism Act 2011, there is a requirement to disclose the budget requirement and associated Council Tax requirement. This is set out below:
- a. The net revenue budget requirement to be set at **£863.5 million (m)** (net cost of services less general government grants) for 2017/18
 - b. The net cost of services to be set at **£924.2m** for 2017/18
 - c. The total council tax funding requirement be set at **£608.7m** for 2017/18

	2017/18 £
Net cost of Services	924,201,944
General Government Grants*	(60,693,598)
Budget requirement	863,508,346
Less funding available:	
RSG	73,875,659
NDR	168,652,126
NDR Surplus/(Deficit)	(822,688)
Council Tax Collection fund surplus	13,121,931
	254,827,028
Council tax requirement	608,681,318
Tax base (Band D equivalent properties)	513,135
Band D council tax	1,186.20

- d. That a 3% social care precept and 1.99% Council Tax increase be levied and therefore the Essex County Council element of the council tax for charge for a Band D property in 2017/18 will be **£1,186.20**. A full list of bands is as follows:

Council Tax Band	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
Band A	753.42	790.80
Band B	878.99	922.60
Band C	1,004.56	1,054.40
Band D	1,130.13	1,186.20
Band E	1,381.27	1,449.80
Band F	1,632.41	1,713.40
Band G	1,883.55	1,977.00
Band H	2,260.26	2,372.40

7. Adjournment

With the agreement of Council the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 11:31. The meeting reconvened at 11:38.

8. The Budget Report 2017/18 (continued)

Upon being put to the meeting the amendment moved by Councillor Mackrory and seconded by Councillor Whitehouse was declared to be lost.

Upon being put to the meeting the amendment moved by Councillor Henderson and seconded by Councillor Danvers was declared to be lost.

In accordance with Standing Order 16.10.2 (Voting on budget decisions) the Motion as amended by the Addendum 'Revenue Budget 2017/18 and Capital Programme 2017/18' was put to a division by name and carried by 46 votes for, 18 against and 9 abstentions.

Those voting for the Motion were Councillors:

J F Aldridge	R J Gooding	R A Madden
S Barker	I Grundy	M Maddocks
R L Bass	C Guglielmi	M McEwen
K Bentley	A M Hedley	V Metcalfe
R G Boyce	R Hirst	A Naylor
A Brown	P Honeywood	Lady Newton
M Buckley	R C Howard	M J Page
G Butland	N Hume	C Pond
S Canning	A J Jackson	J M Reeves
J Chandler	E C Johnson	C Seagers
P Channer	J G Jowers	J Spence
T Cutmore	J Knapman	K Twitchen
A Erskine	S Lissimore	S Walsh
D Finch	J Lodge	R G Walters
R Gadsby	D Louis	A Wood
A Goggin		

Those voting against the Motion were Councillors:

B Aspinell	M D Fisher	M Mackrory
K Bobbin	D Harris	S Robinson
K Clempner	I Henderson	K Smith
M Danvers	T M A Higgins	A Turrell
J Deakin	D J Kendall	J Whitehouse
T Durcan	M Leonard	J A Young

Those abstaining were Councillors:

J Abbott	M Ellis	M Hoy
A Bayley	F Ferguson	N Le Gresley
D Blackwell	K Gibbs	C Sargeant

Resolved:

Revenue and Capital Budget:

1. That the net revenue budget requirement be set at **£852 million (m)** (net cost of services less general government grants) for 2017/18 – Appendix A (page 16)
2. That the net cost of services be set at **£912.7m** for 2017/18 – Appendix A (page 16).
3. That the total council tax funding requirement be set at **£597.1m** for 2017/18 – Appendix A (page 16).
4. That a 3% social care precept be levied but with no further changes to council tax, therefore the Essex County Council element of the council tax for charge for a Band D property in 2017/18 will be **£1,163.70**. A full list of bands is as follows:

Council Tax Band	2016/17	2017/18
	£	£
Band A	753.42	775.80
Band B	878.99	905.10
Band C	1,004.56	1,034.40
Band D	1,130.13	1,163.70
Band E	1,381.27	1,422.30
Band F	1,632.41	1,680.90
Band G	1,883.55	1,939.50
Band H	2,260.26	2,327.40

5. That Full Council approve the council tax for each category of dwelling and the precepts on each of the council tax billing authorities for 2017/18, together with the final tax base, as set out in the table below:

Billing Authority	2017/18 Final Tax Base Band D Equivalent	2017/18 Gross precept £000
Basildon	59,466	69,201
Braintree	51,547	59,985
Brentwood	32,084	37,336
Castle Point	30,077	35,001
Chelmsford	64,395	74,937
Colchester	61,132	71,140
Epping Forest	53,029	61,710
Harlow	25,032	29,130
Maldon	23,869	27,776
Rochford	31,421	36,565
Tendring	45,860	53,367
Uttlesford	35,224	40,990
Total for ECC	513,135	597,136

6. That Full Council agree to the proposed total schools budget of **£545.9m** for 2017/18 as set out on page 13 of Appendix A, which will be funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant.
7. That the underlying balance on the General Balance be set at **£59.2m** as at 1 April 2017 (Appendix A, page 66).
8. That the capital payments guideline be set at **£263.4m** for 2017/18.
9. Based on the information in the provisional Local Government Finance Report, Full Council noted that the increase in council tax is not such as to trigger a referendum

Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision for Debt Repayment Policy:

10. That the 2017/18 - 2019/20 Prudential Indicators and limits, together with updated limits for 2016/17 be as set out in Appendix B.
11. That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18 be as set out in Appendix B.
12. That the policy for making a prudent level of revenue provision for the repayment of debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision policy) be as set out in Appendix B.

Pay Policy Statement:

13. The Pay Policy Statement for 2017/18 be as set out in Appendix C.

Additionally:

14. That once the final Local Government Finance Settlement is known, the Section 151 Officer be authorised:
- (a) to transfer any increase in funding beyond that included in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, to the General Balance; and
 - (b) to fund any decrease in funding from the General Balance.

9. Adjournment

With the agreement of Council the Chairman adjourned the meeting for luncheon at 13:10. The meeting reconvened at 14:00.

10. Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation for Financial Management

Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing and Planning, presented a report seeking approval to the revised Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation for Financial Management.

Resolved:

That the revised Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation for Financial Management, as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

11. To receive the Leader's report of Cabinet Issues

Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, presented a report concerning matters considered by Cabinet since the last Council meeting.

Cabinet Members responded to questions as follows:

Participation in the North Essex Garden Communities Project

Councillor Whitehouse asked Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing and Planning, if the North Essex Garden Communities Project could be expanded to encompass other parts of the County?

The Cabinet Member replied that the project could perhaps be considered for other parts of the County, for example Harlow or Epping, and the County Council was willing to be involved.

M11 Junction 7A Harlow – Public Consultation Outcome and Designation of Preferred Route Status

Councillor Danvers asked Councillor Bentley, the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Infrastructure and Partnerships, what assurances could he give about the management of this project to avoid chaos on the roads and what was the anticipated time period for the project?

The Cabinet Member replied that the junction would greatly improve the prosperity in Harlow and the wider economy of this area by making it more accessible and alleviating congestion. The improvement is backed by the Government, by the County Council and the people of Harlow. He paid tribute to Councillor Bass, the former Cabinet Member for Highways, who had persisted with this scheme and the A120 improvements. Councillor Bass replied by giving his congratulations to Councillor Bentley.

12. To receive a report of matters reserved to the Council

Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, presented the report of matters reserved to Council. In relation to the item on Pooling of Pension Fund Investment Management Arrangements Councillor Bass, Chairman of the Essex Pension Fund Steering Board, explained that he had hoped to bring to Council a final Inter-Authority Agreement but there were ongoing discussions. He requested that Council note the decision and at a later meeting approve specific recommendations.

Resolved

Updated Scheme of Delegation to Officers

- (1) That with effect from 3 April 2017 the Constitution be amended as set out in the appendix to the report (additions shown underlined, deletions shown struck through).
- (2) That as a transitional arrangement, all delegations which were in force on 2 April 2017 shall continue to have effect with respect to any post which currently has delegated powers, until that post is deleted or until 31 December 2017, whichever is the sooner.

Development of pooling proposals

That Council notes the developments with regard to the pooling of pension fund investment management arrangements and that Council will be asked to agree to delegate certain decisions relating to this pooling and approve an Inter Authority Agreement which will be brought to a future meeting of Council once the shadow ACCESS joint committee has made a final recommendation to the 11 authorities on either a Collective Investment Vehicle or Collective Joint Procurement arrangement.

13. Written Questions

The published answers to the 22 written questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 16.12.1 were noted.

The following supplementary questions were asked as a result of having received a written reply:

- (6) Councillor Mackrory asked Councillor Walsh, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, if he could give an assurance that when the HSE survey was available he would share it with all members of the Council.

The Cabinet Member replied that he would so do.

- (13) Councillor Clempner asked Councillor Spence, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing and Planning, if he would reconsider the opening times of the Essex Records Office that were inconsistent and confusing.

The Cabinet Member replied that the variations in opening times were designed to enable different user groups the opportunities to use the facilities. He would ask officers to re-examine the opening times but he believed that they had been carefully designed. However, they will be reviewed over time.

- (14) Councillor Harris asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, why Walnut Tree Way in his Division which previously had been showing on the website as scheduled for repairs by January had been removed from the list.

The Cabinet Member replied that Walnut Tree Way had indeed been withdrawn from the schedule because additional work to pavements had also been identified and so it had been rescheduled for a later date to avoid disrupting the area twice.

- (17) Councillor Aspinell asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if he was aware that there were now 12 broken lamp-holders in a quarter of a mile stretch of the A128 in his Division. He added that it was a dangerous situation as cars overtaking find an unlit concrete obstacle in the middle of the road. He asked when the repairs would be undertaken.

The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Aspinell for his patience and informed him that the lights were scheduled for repair by the end of March 2017.

- (20) Councillor Abbott asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if when he had used the phrase 'total obstruction requiring action' was he suggesting that if the obstruction was only partial then the County Council would not deal with it. He also enquired what specific legal obligation was there on the County Council to clear such vegetation.

The Cabinet Member replied that he could not answer the legal matter but he would seek advice and would write to him directly. He also expressed regret that Councillor Abbott did not attend the Cabinet Member 'surgeries' at County Hall to raise such matters with him personally.

- (21) Councillor Abbott asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if he should not check that the Highway's Inspectors were correctly applying the criteria for repairs as he believed otherwise.

The Cabinet Member replied that he would look into this. He again invited Councillor Abbott to one of his highways surgeries.

- (22) Councillor Lodge asked Councillor Gooding, The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, if he could sleep at night in the knowledge that the Council, by using a narrow interpretation of the criteria, were requiring up to a quarter of the income of families who were 'just about managing' to be spent on home to school transport.

The Cabinet Member replied that he slept very well in the knowledge that all the children who were entitled to tax-payer funded home to school transport in Essex received it.

14. Questions of the Leader, Cabinet Member or the chairman of a committee upon any matter relevant to the business of Council

1. Councillor Aspinell asked Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, for his assistance with a matter that had arisen in Brentwood in a cul-de-sac road where thousands of children were travelling every day on a busy road with very narrow pavements. He believed that the Cabinet Member had commissioned a report in order to determine a better way forward.

Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, replied that he would speak with the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning to see what could be achieved.

Councillor Gooding, the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, added that he and Councillor Aspinell had been working together to find a solution to this problem. He pledged to continue to seek a solution, helped by the Borough Council and the schools affected.

2. Councillor Bayley asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if it were true that the cones marking the road closures on the A130 running south from the A12 now could not be removed as, having been there for so long, they had achieved historic status.

The Cabinet Member replied that it was not true.

3. Councillor Hoy asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if he was aware that Beeches Road, Rawreth, had been blocked by fly-tipping and it wasn't until the next day that the Council was notified which meant

that there was disruption during the rush-hour. He asked if he could look at the communication issues so that it could be 'smarter' and such blockages could be removed more quickly in future.

The Cabinet Member replied that it was difficult to speak of communication being 'smarter' when the only communication he had received on this matter had been from Councillor Hoy. However, he added, no route should be blocked by inconsiderate dumping of waste and he would examine the issue.

4. Councillor Hoy asked Councillor Gooding, the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, if he would consider changing the age criteria for use of Youth buildings. There were a number of groups, including Scouts and schools, who would use the premises but were prevented from doing so because of the restrictions imposed.

The Cabinet Member replied that he was aware of this issue and he recalled that Councillor Hoy had asked a similar question on a previous occasion. There were, he explained, some challenges in changing the age range for using a Youth Centre because of the safeguarding issues but he would be happy to explore ways that the particular youth centre to which Councillor Hoy referred could be being fully utilised.

5. Councillor Goggin asked Councillor Spence, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing and Planning, if he could explain how the Council builds the 'Invest to Save' portfolio without negative effects upon service propositions?

The Cabinet Member replied that Invest to Save is about saving costs, as the Council is doing with the independent living programme while investing in housing units that otherwise wouldn't be built in order to enable people to live independently and having a much better quality of life than in residential care. Other aspects that he would like to see more of are ways of earning revenues that save the taxpayers money and other areas of potential investment. He added that there is more work to do, but a start had been made.

6. Councillor Higgins asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if she would receive a response to the question she asked at the last meeting concerning the bridge on the Ipswich Road in Colchester before she left the Council.

The Cabinet Member replied that he would give a written reply to her question before she left.

7. Councillor Buckley asked Councillor Spence, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing and Planning, if he could explain how on the one hand the Council is disposing of properties whilst on the other hand developing sites for residential use will have a benefit to both taxpayers and service users

The Cabinet Member replied that the disposal of property was a matter for the Leader but what the Council is trying to do is to be more imaginative. The Council has been creating a directory of all public holdings of land across Essex to see if they can be linked in with

others to create a land assembly where the value of the whole is greater than would be the value of individual plots.

8. Councillor Harris asked Councillor Gooding, the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, if the roads around what will become the new school on the old site could be designed and improved to have good roads and access, coupled with safety around a school.

The Cabinet Member replied that the Council was looking at ways that cycling routes could be incorporated into the design of local access to the new school.

9. Councillor Lissimore asked Councillor Spence, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing and Planning, if he could explain the capital funding for schools in the Council's budget. At present, regardless of the school buildings being transferred to an Academy status, the borrowing cost of building the schools appeared to remain with the Council and fall to the Essex taxpayers. She asked if the Cabinet Member would continue to lobby Government to ensure that funding is fair for Councils and taxpayers?

The Cabinet Member replied that the issue was the residual net borrowing costs following the building of a school and it seemed to him unfair that after a school is built, should it transfer to an Academy Trust, the cost of the initial borrowing for the building of the school remained with the taxpayer. He stated that he, the Leader and others have been, and would continue to lobby Government on the matter.

10. Councillor Bobbin asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if he was aware that the traffic cones on the A130 were very dirty and difficult to see at night? He also asked when the third lane might be opened.

The Cabinet Member replied that the repairs to the banks are ongoing and will extend into early summer. He would look at the problem of the cones.

11. Councillor Howard asked Councillor Bentley if he was aware that the South Essex Strategic Highways Board was due to examine very seriously two schemes to improve Canvey Island: those two schemes were access to Canvey Island and the last stage of the development of Roscommon Way. He asked that, as this was the last Council meeting in which he would participate, Councillor Bentley would ensure that these schemes were looked at sympathetically.

Councillor Bentley stated that he understood that access to and from Canvey Island was very important. He paid tribute to Councillor Howard for his 32 years of service and his role as a champion for Canvey Island. He promised to do his utmost to continue the work.

12. Councillor Abbott asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, in the context of localism, if it were true, as he had been informed by Members Enquiries, that if someone volunteered to clear away vegetation from the footway they would be committing an offence. He asked if the Cabinet Member thought that such a response was helpful and did the advice extend to volunteers clearing litter, or repairing or replacing fallen signs?

The Cabinet Member replied that, in his view, unless such actions posed a danger to the individual or others, such actions should be applauded. However, he would find out the legal position and send a written reply to Councillor Abbott.

13. Councillor Abbott asked Councillor Walsh, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, if he agreed with the Council's policies to reduce road congestion, improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions and increase recycling. If so, can he explain why residents of Witham and the surrounding areas who present themselves at Witham Recycling Centre with clean domestic material are being turned away and directed to other centres because the drivers happen to have a trailer on the back of their car or they drive a van?

The Cabinet Member replied that drivers of vans would not be permitted to use the Witham Centre because it is a smaller site. He pointed out that the policy had been well advertised since October 2016 and the matter had arisen on a previous occasion in the Chamber. He stressed that garden waste was acceptable in all the sites but if drivers were using a van they would not be admitted.

14. Councillor Twitchen asked Councillor Walsh, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, if he was aware that a local newspaper had quoted Councillor Hoy as stating that recycling centres would no longer accept garden waste. She asked if the Cabinet Member would find time to inform Councillor Hoy on the facts and, more generally, she requested that all Members when speaking to the press should get their facts straight.

The Cabinet Member replied that he was certain Councillor Hoy and all Members were aware of the facts but should there be any need for clarification he would be glad to provide it. He took the opportunity to thank Councillor Twitchen for her work, as his portfolio deputy and mentor. He also thanked her for her attention to the country parks service, the results of which pay testament to her work and that of the Parks staff.

With the approval of the Chairman Councillor Hoy clarified that the press had not reported his comments accurately.

15. Councillor Pond asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, what replacement route would be available once the 167 Bus was withdrawn on 11 March and when might an announcement be expected on a possible replacement.

The Cabinet Member replied that he had no control over bus routes that were not provided by the Council. He would inform Councillor Pond once matters had progressed.

16. Councillor Pond asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if the recently received awards for highways were in recognition of the depth of the potholes on the Council's roads and the number of displaced kerbs, or perhaps the numbers of pedestrians who had fallen? He wondered if the Cabinet Member would only act in response to an impending legal case?

The Cabinet Member replied that he cared very much about the roads, pavements and infrastructure but as he had a finite budget he was compelled to ensure that repairs were targeted at high priority and dangerous locations.

17. Councillor Knapman asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if he had any indication of when the standing water in the middle of Vicarage Lane might be remedied?

The Cabinet Member replied that this matter had arisen at a recent highways surgery and he had asked officers to investigate. He would reply directly to Councillor Knapman when he knew more.

18. Councillor Knapman asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if when older lampposts have been replaced and left with their stumps sawn off and a hole, the old lighting furniture was simply left behind as a financial saving?

The Cabinet Member replied that if the councillor had reported it he would be grateful or alternatively send him an email and officers will deal with it. He was particularly concerned if there was a hole left. Cut lampposts taped over are not deemed as dangerous and workmen return to them when more urgent work has been finished.

19. Councillor Kendall asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, if he shared his concerns about the quality of pothole repairs recently opened up again in Brentwood and was the quality inspection and control regime fit for purpose?

The Cabinet Member replied that he believed the quality inspection and control was indeed fit for purpose. He clarified that potholes were not intended to be a finished job but only a temporary fix until the road can be resurfaced and some of them last longer than others because of weather conditions and other factors.

20. Councillor Kendall asked Councillor Madden, Cabinet Member for Adults and Children, if he could clarify what specific support was available to residents with disabilities and special needs when completing their personal budget form?

The Cabinet Member replied that he would respond directly to Councillor Kendall.

Councillor Bass, whilst noting that he was unable to ask a question of the Chairman nevertheless wondered if the Chairman might consider introducing a dress code for Members when attending Full Council.

The Chairman acknowledged his suggestion but declined to respond.

15. Questions of the representative of the Essex Police and Crime Panel on any matter of that Panel

There were no questions.

16. Questions of the representative of the Essex Fire Authority regarding the Report to the Constituent Authorities 7 December 2016

There were no questions.

17. Chairman's Concluding Remarks

The Chairman invited Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council to make some concluding remarks.

Councillor Finch thanked all Members present for an interesting four years and wished them all good fortune.

The Chairman added that it had been another interesting day and also a sad day as it had been the last meeting for a considerable number of Members. He thanked all Members for their hard work and he wished all those not returning to the Chamber good luck. He looked forward to greeting those who did return.

Chairman