
2009/10 EssexWorks Pledges

1 Introduction

Each year, as part of the EssexWorks Programme, Essex County Council makes nine pledges to the Essex public that we are committed to deliver by the end of the financial year. These pledges show what our priorities are and allow the public to check on whether we are delivering against our promises.

This report presents a summary of key achievements and outcomes for each of the nine 2009/10 EssexWorks Pledges.

2 2009/10 EssexWorks Pledges

2.1 Priority: Increasing Educational Achievement and Skills

Improve the quality of our school buildings by investing an additional £10m (increased to £15m) in maintenance and refurbishments

- 2.1.1 Following the acceleration of DCSF capital funding, Essex County Council's investment in school maintenance and refurbishment for this pledge increased from £10m to £15m during 2009/10. In all, this enabled 224 schemes to be completed, to improve the quality of school buildings. The majority of works were programmed to take place during school leave periods to ensure minimal disruption to children's education.
- 2.1.2 The benefits of these schemes are being felt by many people working, teaching and learning across Essex. The types of pledged works have been broad - variously including environmental enhancements, refurbishment of teaching spaces, improvement in environments for disabled pupils, repairs to roofs and heating systems, and upgrades to spaces for both learning and play.
- 2.1.3 For example, Woodville Primary School now has a new, reliable electrical supply, energy efficient heating systems and electric distribution boards with monitoring facility, a safe and level car park and playground surfaces with effective drainage, new internal lighting and ceilings, and other works to make the school more attractive and user friendly to staff and pupils.

2.2 Priority: Improving Transport

Upgrade and refurbish local communities' roads and footpaths with £10m of additional investment

- 2.2.1 In total, Essex County Council injected an additional £10.2m into the highway maintenance programme during 2009/10 to fulfil its pledge to upgrade and refurbish local communities' roads and footways.
- 2.2.2 Footways are often important to older residents, residents without their own transport, parents with pushchairs or prams and to young children – all of whom are more likely to use these footways on at least a daily basis to make short, local trips.
- 2.2.3 In all, 120km of improvements to roads and footways have been made (exceeding the target of 110km). Also, by adopting a strategy of early intervention in road/footway deterioration, Essex County Council has ensured maximum effectiveness from this investment
- 2.2.4 Local satisfaction ratings with the work carried out have exceeded target at 8.7 out of 10 (target 8.5 out of 10). Customer satisfaction rate is derived from customer surveys (forms distributed to residents living in the vicinity of improvement works).
- 2.2.5 Despite the success of this Pledge, 2009/10's harsh winter weather resulted in a rapid deterioration across the whole highway network. £0.5m of highways revenue budget was re-profiled to react to the immediate winter damage and more than £4m of highways capital budget was re-profiled to support larger resurfacing repairs.

2.3 Priority: Reducing and Recycling Waste

Increase recycling of waste to over 45% in 2010 and to over 50% within the next 3 years, in partnership with the District and Borough Councils

- 2.3.1 The first year of this three year pledge has exceeded target, achieving an outturn of 46.24% recycling of waste (against a target of 45%). All Essex councils have improved performance over the last 12 months in reducing waste and increasing recycling. District and borough councils have increased participation in existing recycling services and new services have been rolled out, with the assistance of funding from Essex County Council.
- 2.3.2 The adoption of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy and underlying Inter Authority Agreements, combined with the allocation of

over £100 million of PFI credits to develop the necessary waste infrastructure within Essex have also been notable successes over the last 12 months.

- 2.3.3 Significant operational service enhancements have been rolled out in the last 12 months. For example, enhanced kerbside collections have been rolled out across Harlow in a major programme spanning kitchen organic and residual waste. Chelmsford and Brentwood have launched services for trade waste, enabling small businesses to recycle. Existing green waste collections in Epping Forest have been expanded to include kitchen organic waste, and Braintree has rolled out organic recycling services across the district.
- 2.3.4 Essex County Council's strategy to develop enhanced customer focused Recycling Centres for Household Waste currently results in sites diverting over 63% of waste from landfill, with a new facility shortly to be opened in Braintree
- 2.3.5 This Pledge will remain in place until March 2012, and key activity milestones have been defined for future years. The investment and development of services in 2009/10 has ensured that we are on track to achieve our goal of over 50% recycled and composted within the next 2 years.

2.4 Priority: Supporting Vulnerable People

We will offer Telecare equipment and support to all Essex residents over the age of 85 (80 with effect from 15.12.09 + other vulnerable groups) enabling them to live safely and independently in their own home

- 2.4.1 This pledge offers a one year Telecare trial to all residents living within the local authority boundary, aged over 85, who are currently without a telecare service. Telecare describes any service that uses information and communication technology to bring social and/or health care directly to a user, most often in their home, enabling them to live safely and independently. The one year period of free Telecare provision will extend until February 2011 for those people who began the scheme in March 2010.
- 2.4.2 Since extending our 12 month free trial of Telecare equipment to all residents over 80 plus other vulnerable groups in December 2009, (originally free to residents over 85), monthly take-up targets have been exceeded, resulting in a total of 4176 residents benefiting from this one-year free service (significantly above target of 3,000 people).

2.4.3 The benefits to local residents taking part in the scheme have been varied, as packages are specifically tailored to individuals' needs. Therefore these benefits can best be described using case studies, one of which is outlined below:

2.4.4 Mrs. B is in her 80's and received regular support from both her GP and District nurse. A hospital admission resulted in an above knee amputation and future care planning was needed. During discharge planning, Mrs B expressed her anxiety about coping at home in the event of a fall, fearing that she may become unconscious and unable to summon assistance. It was noted that prior to this admission, she had left the gas on and also feared she may do so again. Telecare was discussed and Fall & Gas detectors were provided to facilitate her discharge, with reablement to support her independence & confidence. At review, Mrs. B confirmed that she had not experienced a fall since returning home, that she is now totally independent of care support, and feels safe in the knowledge that if an incident did occur, her careline would be able to respond as needed. Mrs. B remains at home and retains her independence, which was the goal of intervention

2.5 Priority: Promoting Sustainable Economic Growth

We will support Essex businesses through the downturn by thinking local, buying local.

2.5.1 Essex County Council implemented a package of measures to support the Essex economy during 2009/10, many of which are encapsulated in the Essex Economic Recovery Action Plan.

2.5.2 Our procurement systems have been adjusted to remove barriers that prevent small to medium enterprises (SME) from supplying us. Previously, the value of any contract tendered by ECC could not exceed 25% of a company's turnover. This locked out SMEs, labelling them high-risk because their turnover was relatively small compared to national suppliers. We have created a new category for SMEs, opening our doors to more Essex businesses.

2.5.3 Similarly, unrealistically high compulsory levels of Professional Indemnity Insurance for ECC suppliers stopped many SMEs from doing business with us. We now assess the appropriate level of cover required on a case-by-case basis.

2.5.4 Our e-sourcing portals (Bravo and PAE) offer a simple, efficient means of advertising tenders and managing negotiations, reducing time and costs for both buyers and suppliers. We have ensured that tendering opportunities for both portals are shown as links on both ECC and the

PAE sites and have actively promoted this portal to Essex SMEs. An additional 1,428 local SMEs have registered to use our e-sourcing portal since June 2009.

- 2.5.5 We established a target to pay all local SMEs and voluntary organisations within 10 days, and have implemented a number of measures to support this. Our purchase to pay team now provide monthly trends, summary and transaction information to all service areas regarding their payment performance.
- 2.5.6 We invested £20,000 pump priming towards the set-up of Build Essex, an initiative that uses our e-sourcing software to develop the Essex construction supply chain, helping SMEs in the construction industry to learn about, bid for, and potentially win contract work from large building contractors.
- 2.5.7 We established a working group of Essex based businesses and a representative from the Federation of Small Businesses, which meets to look at how the Council can conduct its procurement activities differently to benefit local businesses. Through this we are identifying ways to improve access to contract opportunities for small and medium enterprises, increase the diversity of suppliers we contract with, develop and increase the capacity and capabilities of both potential and existing suppliers and level the playing field through fairer tender practices and simpler tender documentation.
- 2.5.8 Following feedback from local businesses which suggested they wanted an opportunity to meet “real people” from within the council, to access opportunities and discuss what we are doing, we held a series of business networking events to both meet this need, and to support small businesses by introducing them to others with whom they could form consortia or trade links. These events included: business support trade fairs, aimed at helping local businesses through the downturn; Business Continuity Conferences for Social Care Providers, to help residential care homes, etc, develop emergency plans and learn from the best practice of other providers; Essex Apprentice events, introducing our ambitious apprenticeships programme to local manufacturing firms; export networking events introducing local businesses to distributors in China and the USA, and also “Meet the Supplier” sessions allowing Essex subcontractors to bid for work with our major contractors, as part of our Building Schools for the Future and Highways programmes. In all, we met with over 1,000 Essex small businesses.
- 2.5.9 Essex County Council has written to over 2,000 local businesses in the food and catering industry, to encourage them to register on CompeteFor to access current and forthcoming opportunities provided by the 2012

Olympic and Paralympic Games. We have been working with the Federation of Small Businesses to promote specific 2012 contracting opportunities, as and when they are released by the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The number of Essex businesses registered on CompeteFor has increased from 2,076 (3.3 per cent of Essex business stock) in April 2009 to 3,612 (5.8 per cent of Essex business stock) at the end of March 2010. Essex also has more businesses registered on CompeteFor than any other county in the East of England. To date, Essex businesses have won over sixty contracts directly related to the 2012 Games. Essex County Council has worked with regional partners to host two workshops targeted at those businesses already registered on CompeteFor to help them develop their online profiles and support them to tender for more opportunities.

2.5.10 We have also promoted thinking and buying local directly to Essex residents, for example promoting the benefits to our economy of “buying local” in our own publications and the local media and supporting local food festivals - providing funding for events in both West Mersea and Maldon to showcase local food and drink producers within the community.

2.5.11 Work in this area has not ceased with the closing of this Pledge. Going forwards, the Procurement team will be working closely with Banking on Essex and the Economic Development team to identify further ways that Essex County Council can help support our local economy.

2.6 Priority: Protecting the Environment

Improve the appearance of Essex’s coastal paths, gateways and verges

2.6.1 Essex has over 300 miles of coastline, offering rural landscapes, historic and archaeological features and nature conservation areas. In keeping with our plans to bring more tourism to the county, we have improved accessibility to 37.5km of coastal paths so that people of all ages can enjoy this valuable resource.

2.6.2 Essex County Council’s Natural Environment team have worked with external partners such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, our Districts, the Rural Community Council for Essex, Keep Britain Tidy, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Essex Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, English Heritage, the Country Land and Business Association and its membership, Balfour Beatty, May Gurney, Parish councils and community groups.

2.6.3 As a result, there is now improved access to coastal paths throughout the county, with St Peters' (Bradwell-on-Sea) featuring in the Saturday

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- Telegraph as one of the UK's top secret places to walk. Other coastal improvements include increased access to the Essex Way and the RSBP site at Stour Woods near Harwich; improved access to the sea wall walk and the RSPB site at Canvey Marshes; a linked walk from Marsh Farm to an adjacent Chelmsford Borough Council wildlife reserve; installation of a boardwalk at Brightlingsea; extension of RSPB footpaths to link with sea wall access in Castle Point; and a link opened between Cudmore Grove offering a continuous accessible coastal path walk around Mersea Island.
- 2.6.4 In addition over 55.5km of Essex's special verges have been improved and Special Verge bio-diversity training has been provided to operational highways staff and their contractors to improve the future understanding and management of wildlife in our verges.
- 2.6.5 With colleagues in district councils and Keep Britain Tidy, we have carried out litter picks to improve the appearance and biodiversity of A road verges. In rural areas, ECC's Trading Standards, supported by the Country Land and Business Association and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, have targeted fly tipping, whilst colleagues from district councils and Keep Britain Tidy have targeted car littering in our urban areas. External partners, such as the Probation Service, the Environment Agency and the Essex Association of Boys Clubs have also helped with clean up work. Specific actions undertaken include: multi agency Operation Mermaid, Liberal and Barrier Up aimed at deterring rogue traders and the causes of fly-tipping at sites throughout the county; covert surveillance of car parks with fast food outlets in Chelmsford; covert surveillance to alleviate fly-tipping at the Braxted Park Estate; clean up of highways depots off main highway in Castle Point and Harlow using Community Pay back probation teams; and covert surveillance at Co-op farm in Uttlesford, identified as a fly-tipping hot spot.
- 2.6.6 Enhancements to Gateways to Essex include: clean up of highways depot in Harlow and Castle Point using Community Pay back probationers supervised by BTCV; surveillance equipment installed at St Osyth's amenity to alleviate to causes of fly tipping and rogue trading; maintenance and health and safety improvements to roundabouts (entrance to international port in Tendring) using community pack back probationers; and the largest local authority grouping in the UK to tackle littering and poor public image of key sites and support of the national KBT campaign, "don't be a pig", in addition to training and benchmarking to improve performance through the County.

2.7 Priority: Promoting Health and Leisure

We will make available a £1m 'life raft trust' to keep open a range of Essex attractions during the economic downturn.

- 2.7.1 The Life Raft Trust has provided Essex attractions experiencing severe financial difficulty as a result of the recession with a financial life raft to ensure their continuation. To date Essex County Council has allocated over £350,000 in grants to support 15 viable Essex attractions through this difficult economic climate. Thanks to that funding, gardens, theatres, galleries, museums, performing groups, music venues and children's activity centres are still able to provide enjoyment to many thousands of visitors.
- 2.7.2 Organisations receiving Life Raft Trust funding have demonstrated that their business is viable in the long-term but their short-term survival is threatened by present economic conditions. In addition to funding, complementary support such as business planning and marketing advice has also been provided to maximise and sustain the financial support given.
- 2.7.3 During 2009/10, Life Raft Trust grants have: saved at least three attractions from imminent closure; saved 14 full time and 24 casual jobs; and enabled other local suppliers and businesses to continue to benefit from attractions' custom
- 2.7.4 There will be a second funding round in 2010, using funds from the £1m budget set aside for this Trust. A project plan for 2010/11 is already in place to ensure successful implementation
- 2.7.5 The benefits to local attractions have been varied, as each application to the Trust is made in response to a unique need. Therefore the benefit may best be described using a case studies, one of which is outlined below:

Colne Valley Railway Case Study

- 2.7.6 Attracting over 25,000 visitors a year, CVR was founded in 1974 by two enthusiasts who began the arduous task of transforming a mile section of the train line at Castle Hedingham. The station was moved brick by brick to its new site in the 1970s along with every artefact, signal box, locomotive and carriage, all brought by road to establish a railway.

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- 2.7.7 Run entirely by committed local volunteers it provides a unique educational outreach service to pre-school and Key Stage 1 and 2 schoolchildren whilst preserving a beautiful example of steam age heritage which is open to all.
- 2.7.8 Brian Smith, General Manager said “The railway needs constant maintenance but with falling revenue and increasing fuel and utility costs some of this was delayed or postponed”. This was a major concern to CVR, and the award made it possible for urgent repairs to be made within their longer term programme of works.
- 2.7.9 “The LRT has given a much needed lifeline to the CVR and it comes highly recommended. With the recession affecting so many areas of our society, this scheme offers the real potential to give breathing space for your business.”

2.8 Priority: Delivering Value for Money

We will further reduce bureaucracy, freeing up £35m for investment in front-line services.

- 2.8.1 With the current squeeze on public finances, the Council pledged to find £35m of efficiency savings in 2009/10 in order to keep council tax down. In total, £37.445m worth of new efficiency savings were realised during 2009/10, surpassing this target.
- 2.8.2 By exceeding our target we remain on track to realise our overall objective of £300m savings, which represents the largest local government efficiency drive in history

2.9 Priority: Making Communities Safer

We will deliver, with Essex Police and partners, ten local operations to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour in identified areas.

Activities undertaken within this Pledge also contribute to our ongoing, five-year EssexWorks Pledge to Make Essex the Safest Place to live by 2012/13

- 2.9.1 Essex County Council pledged to deliver 10 operations to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour with Essex Police and partners, in identified areas. These operations, running under the name ‘Operation Impact’ were developed with ECC, Essex Police and other partners to address specific need in local areas. Operations were identified and implemented in partnership with Essex Police according to local needs and priorities. The operations varied in duration, cost, intensity, scope of partnership

involvement and aim, and took place in all districts of Essex. All 10 operations were delivered in-year, and each operation is being fully evaluated through a number of appropriate measures including local consultation, reviewing crime and anti-social behaviour related outcomes and through feedback from partners involved.

- 2.9.2 The operations were targeted around local need and addressed a number of priorities including: reducing crime and anti-social behaviour; forming a legacy for increased, more efficient multi-agency working across the county in relation to crime and disorder and linked aspects; providing re-assurance to local communities both in terms of improving feelings of safety and ensuring their concerns are addressed; and implementing, where appropriate, long term mechanisms for sustainable improvements through situational crime prevention techniques and/or diversionary schemes to prevent/divert young people from offending.
- 2.9.3 Overall the 10 operations are considered to have been a success and to have helped Essex County Council take a step towards achieving the Essex Works Pledge, 'Make Essex the Safest Place within 5 Years' while also contributing to a number of other key indicators. Some key successes include:
- 2.9.4 Operation Christmas Cracker was active in eight of the main shopping towns in Essex and addressed personal safety issues over the festive period to ensure safer shopping. Throughout December acquisitive crime reduced in total by a third (33.5%) in the operational areas, equating to 161 fewer incidents of crime compared to the same period the previous year. This is in contrast to the pattern seen elsewhere in the county where acquisitive crime rose in line with seasonal trends over the same period.
- 2.9.5 Operation 8 took place in an area of Harlow called 'The Stow' which had experienced some of the highest levels of anti-social behaviour in Essex, which improved following an intensive, multi-agency campaign. The operation saw the number of anti-social behaviour reports in the area reduce by a massive 86% (14 reports from Sep-Dec '09, compared with 97 the previous period).
- 2.9.6 Results from the Jaywick operation showed that, when asked 'how safe do you feel living here?' prior to the operation, 106 out of 191 residents surveyed (55%) felt safe in their area. After the operation had taken place, despite slightly fewer people participating in the survey, an increase was seen whereby almost three-quarters (74%) of residents who answered the survey felt safe (139 out of 187 people rated their feelings of safety as 6 or above on a scale of 1-10). This equates to almost 20% more people feeling safe following this joint operation than prior to the operation. The operation in Jaywick also complemented the wealth of regeneration work

taking place in the area, and is a good example of the benefits that multi-agency work can achieve. As well as an improvement in feelings of safety, feelings towards local police also remained high with 121 out of 169 responses (72%) rating their local Police as 6 or above on a scale of 1-10 prior to the operation taking place, rising to 80% (139 out of 174 responses) rating the local police service positively after the operation. Over the course of the operation and the 28 days following, 30 fewer ASB incidents and 20 fewer crimes were experienced compared to the same period the previous year.

- 2.9.7 In addition to reducing crime and disorder, and increasing community reassurance, a number of the operations also aimed to leave a legacy to prevent crime and offending behaviour and provide long term strategies for improvements in localities. Partners hail these aspects of the operations a success in terms of achieving sustainable improvements from this work. In some cases this was through introducing situational crime prevention tools such as CCTV, or street lighting on an estate in Jaywick. In other areas it was through providing activities for local youths such as BMX track in Meadgate, Chelmsford and diversionary schemes in Operation Pumpkin, Epping and in Jaywick. Implementing appropriate provision for young people has been key to keeping them off the streets, diverting them from offending behaviour and providing them with links to appropriate professionals.
- 2.9.8 Some broad cost benefit analysis has been carried out in relation to crimes in Essex, which can also provide an indication of potential immediate and longer term benefits from the operations. This uses evidence from recent publications to estimate potential costs of crime, anti-social behaviour and dealing with offending behaviour to public services. To date, this cost analysis suggests that the cost of the operations has potentially been far outweighed by the cost benefits achieved, both immediate and long term.