

Setting ambitious goals for Essex is important – we place no limits on the aspirations we have for our county. But it is also important that we follow through on what we say we're going to do – that's how we build trust with the people of Essex

I said at the outset that I intend to be open and transparent about the progress we are making towards our ambitions. That is why I'm pleased today to issue our first We Said, We Did report: outlining what we said we would do, and what we have done.

I will recap some of the highlights here. Based on the principles of Renewal, Equality, and Ambition, Everyone's Essex outlines 20 commitments across 4 aims:

- for a strong, inclusive, and sustainable economy
- for a high-quality environment
- for health, wellbeing, and independence for all ages; and
- for a good place for our children and families to grow

Alongside these commitments, we're also working hard to tackle climate change and levelling up the county, which underpin everything we do. I am a great believer in two things. That everyone should have the chance to reach for the stars, it doesn't matter if they touch them but they should have the opportunity to do so; and that a society is judged by how it cares for the elderly and most vulnerable.

To build **a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy**:

- We launched a levelling up programme in four locations: beginning by investing in a new Electric Vehicle skills programme in Harlow; a £500k community fund; social supermarkets; and literacy corners in libraries
- We worked with the Kickstart scheme to create over 600 new roles to help unemployed young people into paid employment
- We invested £10.5million in a Business Adaptation Grants, supporting more than 3,500 businesses to apply for grants of up to £5000
- We invested £100,000 in the COVID Recovery Academy, supporting 200 unemployed adults with training to get into jobs in key sectors
- We completed repaired over 1 million square metres of roads and 40 thousand square metres of footpaths and cycleways

To create **a high-quality environment in Essex**:

- The Climate Action Commission published the plan for how everyone can make Essex carbon neutral by 2050. In response we've established a £200million climate action plan
- We launched a £500,000 Challenge Fund, offering grants up to £20,000 for community projects tackling climate change – with over £100,000 already awarded
- We installed more than 27,000 LED streetlights
- We have begun net zero expansion work on three secondary schools. We've also helped install solar panels at 29 schools
- We enabled over 350,000 e-scooter journeys

To build **health, wellbeing and independence for all ages**:

- We launched the “Find your Active” campaign and a £1.25 million fund enabling hundreds of local clubs to provide activities for local people
- We also launched the “Fit for the Future” Strategy to level the playing field, tackling the inequalities that prevent people from being active
- We provided more than 1,500 local residents in Clacton and Jaywick Sands with a free bike through Essex Pedal Power
- We have provided people with care needs with the latest technology to live as independently as possible and improve their quality of life

To ensure Essex is **a good place for children and families to grow**:

- We invested £1million via the Education Task Force into the Year of Reading, addressing young people’s loss of learning during Covid
- We delivered school improvement with 89.5% of schools across Essex judged to be good or outstanding
- We have had 15 firms employing over 37,000 employees join our Family Friendly Employers Charter, helping parents and carers manage their work and care commitments
- We launched a pilot in Basildon and Clacton to support emotional wellbeing and behaviour in schools, investing £100,000
- We established the Safety Advisory Group for women’s safety in Essex, researching local needs and helping make Essex a safer place

Our work over the past year to deliver Everyone’s Essex has been a down-payment on creating the future we want for this county. We won’t achieve everything in one year or even four, but we have started the process of delivering real change.

There is more to come. More hard work will be needed. No doubt there will be challenges and setbacks. But we will remain alongside our residents every step of the way, building the county we want together, so that everyone in Essex has the chance to fulfil their dreams.

We are facing huge challenges – particularly in the short term – around inflation and cost of living that will make things difficult for many. But that makes us even more determined not to be distracted from our commitment. Economic prosperity, educational opportunity, strong communities, efficient infrastructure, and joined-up public services remain the core ingredients needed to help our people and places thrive.