

Essex Organisation Strategy 2017-21

Foreword

This document sets out Essex County Council's (ECC's) Organisation Strategy for the four year period 2017-21.

Essex is a great county, from towns inside the M25 to coastal villages looking out to Suffolk. We have vibrant urban centres, international ports and airports, universities and world class firms, alongside beautiful rural countryside and the longest coastline in England.

At ECC we are passionate about better lives for people in Essex. We believe prosperity is the best route to achieve that - so people can help each other, and themselves. We are also ready to step in - to protect vulnerable children, to help care for older people, and to support our economy to flourish.

As a public body it is important we spend taxpayers' money wisely, on the issues that matter to our residents. To offset reductions in government funding, we must constantly manage demand, reshape and reimagine services and look for opportunities to generate income. It is also important we work tirelessly to secure investment into the county that can help make Essex an even better place to live and work.

Our role is changing. The digital revolution opens up new opportunities for how services are delivered and how residents access information and choices. Increasingly our job is to create opportunities for people and communities to choose and act themselves, rather than to simply deliver services over which the public has no say.

This Organisation Strategy sets out our areas of focus over the next four years. It articulates how we will achieve better outcomes for Essex and secure the ambitions set out in the Vision for Essex.

To do that, we will need to change the way we work as an organisation. Our ambition, at the end of this period is for Essex to be the best local authority in the country – because that is what the people of Essex deserve.



Cllr David Finch, Leader



Gavin Jones, Chief Executive

Essex Organisation Strategy

Our Strategic Aims

Enable inclusive economic growth

Help people get the best start and age well

Help create great places to grow up, live and work

Transform the council to achieve more with less

Our Strategic Priorities

Help people in Essex to prosper by increasing their **skills**

Enable Essex to attract and grow large **firms** in high growth industries

Target economic development to **areas** of opportunity

Help keep vulnerable **children** safer and enable them to fulfil their potential

Enable more vulnerable **adults** to live independent of social care

Improve the **health** of people in Essex

Help to secure stronger, safer and more neighbourly **communities**

Help secure sustainable development and protect the **environment**

Facilitate growing communities and new **homes**

Limit cost and drive growth in **revenue**

Develop the capability, performance and engagement of our **people**

Re-imagine how residents' needs can be met in a **digital** world

Our Organisation Building Blocks

Our people are our most important asset. We will be demanding a lot from our employees over the next few years as we shift the culture and have the best employees in local government.

Our transformation will be underpinned by securing the benefits of **digital approaches** to service and outcome improvements. We will use digital to rethink current provision and fundamentally re-imagine what we do and how we do it.

Commissioning is a key capability for the organisation. Our redesign process has focused on ensuring that commissioning as a capability is built into our DNA.

ECC is embedded in one of the most complex public policy systems in the country. We have a large number of **partners** who are critical to our ability to secure key outcomes.

Strategic Aim - Enable Inclusive Economic Growth

Faster economic growth will improve not only the living standards of people in Essex but also their health and wellbeing, opportunities and life chances. Securing economic prosperity is the best means of helping people help themselves; and an inclusive economy is one where the benefits of growth are shared by all. In 2015 Essex contributed over £31bn to the national economy. Essex has international gateways in Stansted and Southend Airports and Harwich Port as well as major economic engines in Chelmsford, Harlow, Basildon and Colchester. We host some of the world's best companies, creating world-leading technologies including Raytheon, E2V and Arrow as well as being the best place in the UK to start a new business with an average of 235 start-ups for each £1bn of GVA (gross value added) – a rate that is higher than London's.

We also have a strong small and medium enterprises market and Essex is well-known as one of the most entrepreneurial counties in the UK. However, we must strive to grow our economy in order to meet the aspirations and aims of the future. We have had a growth rate of 0.9% a year over the last decade and while growth is good this currently sits below the UK average, and the gap between our wealthiest and most deprived places is too wide, with economic inactivity remaining particularly high in Tendring (26.5%) and Maldon (25.1%) compared to Essex as a whole (19.8%). Ninety-four per cent of schools in Essex have an Ofsted rating of 'good' or 'outstanding' and progress has been made in raising qualification levels. However only 29% of residents have at least a level 4 qualification compared to 37% for the rest of the UK. We are working with our education colleagues to ensure this level is increased and opportunities in growth sectors are offered, particularly in the digital economy, science, technology, engineering and mathematics and Care. Longer term the lack of appropriate skills for a digitally driven economy will be a critical gap if not addressed. Already we are seeing how the internet is changing industries; delivering a new type of competition, which provides both opportunities and challenges to the jobs market. Over the next 20 years it is estimated that artificial intelligence will take 35% of existing jobs leading to a longer term impact on the job market.

There is enormous untapped opportunity in the economy of Essex and an entrepreneurial spirit that is hard-wired into our DNA – which is why we can be confident in asserting an overarching ambition not only to accelerate the pace of growth in the economy compared to similar areas but also to ensure the growth we do achieve benefits local people and places.

Strategic Priorities

We have set three Strategic Priorities for this strategic aim: increasing skills levels; attracting large firms in high growth industries; and targeting economic growth to areas of opportunity.

1. Help people in Essex to prosper by increasing their skills

While the number of well qualified people in Essex has increased, the workforce is less well qualified than the UK as a whole, and there is a mismatch between the courses offered to learners after the age of 16, and the skills our employers need, especially in the growing technology sector.

2. Enable Essex to attract and grow large firms in high growth industries

We need to attract more large firms, given the size of our economy, and more firms in the sectors that are growing fastest. Many of our roads are congested at rush hour and commuters to London travel on crowded trains, making some people in Essex wary of further development.

3. Target economic development to areas of opportunity

Essex has significant untapped economic potential compared to the rest of the South East. We need to focus our economic activity on those areas with significant development opportunities whilst at the same time making sure we secure the benefits of economic growth for local people.

Strategic Aim - Enable Inclusive Economic Growth

Priority One	To do this we will:
Help people in Essex prosper by increasing their skills	a. Offer children good economic prospects, by providing an outstanding education in Essex, in particular for disadvantaged children and in lower performing places
	b. Improve the skills of young people and adults in occupations that Essex firms require, by ensuring skills providers reflect local employers' needs now and in the future
	c. Raise the aspirations of young people for careers in growth sectors by ensuring better career information, advice and guidance is available to them
Priority Two	To do this we will:
Enable Essex to attract and grow large firms in high growth industries	a. Attract new large firms, and improve Essex's reputation beyond the county by providing an outstanding investment offer
	b. Enable Essex firms in high-growth sectors to consolidate and expand, by providing advice and increasing business space
	c. Support trade, by better connecting key economic centres, especially along major transport corridors, and helping people to travel by public transport, bike and on foot
	d. Increase the number of businesses with access to good broadband by rolling out the broadband programme
Priority Three	To do this we will:
Target economic development to areas of opportunity	a. Optimise the potential for economic growth, by targeting places with strong development opportunities
	b. Optimise the benefit of economic growth for Essex residents, by linking new investment to areas with lower employment
	c. Deliver economic growth in partnership, by building strong relationships with partners in opportunity areas

Strategic Aim - Helping people get the Best Start and Age Well

ECC has a critical role to safeguard and support the most vulnerable people in the county. Our focus is on ensuring that children get the best start in life, and that everyone can enjoy health and well-being and is enabled to fulfil their potential.

One fifth of Essex's population (20%) is over 65 and this is projected to increase to almost one third (32%) by 2030. With demand for services growing faster than income, especially in adult social care, we need to help people to help themselves and make the best choices. We will work with communities and the NHS to achieve this change. Technology offers significant opportunities for residents to manage their own care more effectively. From monitoring at home, to online social networks facilitating care support, ECC and partners will ensure services are designed to always take advantage of the benefits technology brings.

ECC also has a critical role to play in safeguarding and supporting the most vulnerable people in the county and currently supports over 6,500 children and young people, including 1,000 who are in care, and 17,000 adults with social care needs. We want to ensure that the most vulnerable children and young people are supported to have every opportunity of achieving the same social, educational, health and economic outcomes as their peers.

While the overall life expectancy in Essex for both men and women is higher than the England average, there is a significant gap (7.2 years for men and 5.5 years for women) between our wealthiest and most deprived places. Our focus is on ensuring everyone can enjoy health and well-being and is able to prosper.

We will never compromise on our paramount responsibilities to keep vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfil their full potential and to ensure as people enter old age they can live the lives they choose for themselves.

Strategic Priorities

We have set three Strategic Priorities for this strategic aim: keeping vulnerable children safer and helping them to fulfil their potential; enabling vulnerable adults to live independent of social care; and improving the health of the people of Essex.

1. Help keep vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfill their potential

The council's innovative approach has helped make it safer for children to live at home, reducing the number of children who live in care. We face new challenges that include dealing with sexual exploitation and gangs but it is our priority to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children, young people and families in Essex.

2. Enable more vulnerable adults to live independent of social care

Essex has a growing and ageing population and demand for care is growing. But 13% of over 65s are in work and this figure is increasing. Satisfaction with adult social care is rising but is lower than our peers.

3. Improve the health of the population

Life expectancy is higher than national averages but varies by geography within Essex and is lower for vulnerable and socially excluded groups due to deprivation. Lifestyle choices can exacerbate these inequalities. Avoidable deaths from heart disease and mental health remain key issues. Obesity, diabetes and dementia are growing problems.

Strategic Aim - Helping people get the Best Start and Age Well

Priority One	To do this we will:
<p>Help keep vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfill their potential</p>	<p>a. Protect the most vulnerable - including through tackling sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, youth violence and e-safety - by strengthening safeguarding across the children's partnership and putting things right when they go wrong</p>
	<p>b. Close the gap in outcomes for the most vulnerable children, young people and families by improving school attendance and attainment, embedding national programmes of reform and increasing access to preventive health care as well as support for emotional well-being and mental health</p>
	<p>c. Build resilience by providing practical advice that enables children, young people and families to make positive choices and resolve their own difficulties before accessing services</p>
	<p>d. Achieve better outcomes by innovating, collaborating with partners and using our resources efficiently to increase our collective focus on the needs of young people through early help and the mobilisation of community assets, and an increased focus on young people's needs through the Community Grant Programme</p>
	<p>e. Help children, young people and families achieve better outcomes by developing a well-trained and supported workforce across the system, with the right culture and capability to deliver effective interventions</p>
Priority Two	To do this we will:
<p>Enable more vulnerable adults to live independent of social care</p>	<p>a. Reduce the need for hospital admissions or formal care services, by delivering community based solutions</p>
	<p>b. Support elderly people and those with learning disabilities to live independently by working with the market and community to make sure there are high quality solutions available and providing extra care where needed</p>
	<p>c. Fully engage service users and carers in the design and delivery of our support offer, by coproducing it with them where possible</p>
	<p>d. Support people to support themselves, where appropriate, by innovating, including through digital and community solutions</p>
	<p>e. Ensure people can plan for, source and pay for their care, by accessing information and digital infrastructure</p>
Priority Three	To do this we will:
<p>Improve the health of people in Essex</p>	<p>a. Reduce health inequalities and improve levels of health, by reducing economic inequality between more affluent and deprived communities</p>
	<p>b. Give all children the best chance of an outstanding education, by offering targeted parenting and school readiness initiatives</p>
	<p>c. Enable people to make healthier choices, by facilitating community programmes and enabling access to good, appropriate health and dental care services for children in care</p>
	<p>d. Improve mental health and the life chances of people with mental health issues, by prevention, early intervention and enabling better lifestyle choices, social inclusion and economic opportunities</p>
	<p>e. Help people live longer, by ensuring that targeted health checks and health programmes are available to those most at risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes</p>

Strategic Aim - Helping to create great places to grow up, live and work

Essex is a county of immense contrasts with a combination of rural, urban and coastal communities. It has a total population of 1.44 million and a series of large urban settlements, however, at almost 1,500 square miles in size, almost three quarters (72%) of the county is considered to be rural. Over a third of the population in Essex (36%) call these rural areas home. Residents enjoy a high quality of life in the county and 82% have indicated that they are either 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with their local area. But they are also concerned about the pace of change and the character of development the county will need to accommodate – 136,000 new homes over the next 20 years - and don't want to see the characteristics of the county they cherish compromised by these changes. Great places are the products of their people and communities, supported by good public services and private enterprise. City, district and borough councils, and the emergency services in Essex, have important roles to play in shaping our communities as places to live. We are also keen to work with the thousands of voluntary and community groups we have across Essex to make sure they can continue to play a key role in supporting the communities they serve.

People live their lives in places. We recognise the key role we have to play in ensuring our communities are safe, neighbourly, and linked to opportunities. That is why, in addressing our housing challenge, our key concern is the quality of the communities that will be created, not just the number of houses that will be built – ensuring house building is led by the needs of the economy and always supported by the provision of social infrastructure.

Strategic Priorities

We have set three Strategic Priorities for this strategic aim: helping to secure stronger, safer and more neighbourly communities; helping to secure sustainable development and protecting the environment; and facilitating growing communities and new homes.

1. Help to secure stronger, safer and more neighbourly communities

Individuals, families and communities are the best guardians of their own interests. Where it is appropriate to do so, we should support communities to help themselves by seeking to foster and build community capacity and capability. But we also recognise there are times when public services need to step in – we will continue to work with communities and partners to address crime and the fear of crime.

2. Help to secure sustainable development and protect the environment

Essex is 72% rural with 350 miles of coastline. Resident satisfaction with Essex as a place to live is high. Housing growth needs to be linked to economic growth and supported by appropriate infrastructure to ensure jobs are available and communities are sustainable. Essex also has areas of flood risk that need protecting.

3. Facilitate growing communities and new homes

Essex's residents recognise the importance of high quality homes. As a county, we need a flexible housing market that reflects changing needs and affordability at various stages of life. At the same time our residents value the diversity of the county's landscape and question what the consequences of housing growth will do to the county they love. Essex will need to build 136,000 new homes over the next 20 years. That is an increase of 24% on the existing housing stock. We are committed to facilitating that housing growth and we will do so, working with partners, in such a way that the characteristics of the county that we cherish are protected and enhanced not undermined. We are not just building new homes, we are building communities.

Strategic Aim - Helping to create great places to grow up, live and work

Priority One	To do this we will:
<p>Help to secure stronger, safer and more neighbourly communities</p>	<p>a. Realise the strength of our communities, by enabling residents to develop their independence</p>
	<p>b. Enable local communities to identify their own local issues and tackle them, by using their own assets</p>
	<p>c. Improve the well-being of residents, by working with the voluntary and community sector to address local social issues</p>
	<p>d. Make communities in Essex safer, in particular for our most vulnerable residents, by working collaboratively with partners</p>
	<p>e. Address discrimination wherever we find it, by taking action to tackle the root causes of disadvantage across Essex</p>
Priority Two	To do this we will:
<p>Help to secure sustainable development and protect the environment.</p>	<p>a. Reduce the impact of flooding, by working with local communities to increase their resilience to flooding</p>
	<p>b. Improve the quality of life for Essex residents, by continuing to improve our open green space and making the most of the Essex countryside for the wider benefit of all</p>
	<p>c. Reduce the environmental impact and cost to the taxpayer of dealing with waste, by operating efficient waste management services and working effectively with partners and communities</p>
	<p>d. Improve the image of the county, by enhancing our cultural offer and promoting the very best of Essex</p>
	<p>e. Reduce carbon emissions and energy costs for the public and businesses, by developing new strategies that promote clean growth and affordable energy</p>
Priority Three	To do this we will:
<p>Facilitate growing communities and new homes</p>	<p>a. Protect and enhance the quality of places, by promoting high quality, forward-thinking design of communities and homes</p>
	<p>b. Deliver new homes, by working with partners to develop new settlements on garden community principles, and releasing public land</p>
	<p>c. Deliver sustainable new communities, by effectively identifying and securing sufficient investment in infrastructure for new development</p>
	<p>d. Ensure growing communities are sustainable, by offering quality opportunities for work and leisure that people can access, alongside new homes</p>

Strategic Aim - Transform the Council to achieve more with less

We are fortunate to have some of the best public employees in the country. To deliver our priorities and maximise our positive contribution to the lives of people and businesses in Essex we need to continue to develop as a proactive, efficient and effective organisation.

Over the last five years we have saved £597 million and during the course of this Organisation Strategy we will need to identify a further £186 million through savings or income generation. Given the commitments we have made in the strategy, that means we will need to think very differently about how we operate. We will need to be more innovative, more open to risk and risk mitigation, more entrepreneurial and more commercially-minded than ever before. But we are building on a solid platform for change. Almost three-quarters (72%) of our residents are open to new technological innovations and over half (57%) of all Essex households are prepared to contact ECC through online channels. To deliver our priorities and maximise our positive contribution to the lives of people and businesses in Essex we need to seize the opportunity that new digital technologies provide to both lower costs and improve customer experience.

Just as our county is changing, so too must the organisation that serves it. We are already a long way down that path – having run local government’s largest transformation programme. But the pace will accelerate during the life of this Strategy. We will invest in our employees to make sure they can drive the transformation our communities need and we will embrace the opportunities created by new technology to make ECC the leading local authority for digital transformation in the country.

Strategic Priorities

We have set three Strategic Priorities for this strategic aim: limiting cost and driving growth in revenue; developing the capability, performance and engagement of our people; and re-imagining how residents’ needs can be met in a digital world.

1. Limit cost and driving growth in revenue

During the course of this Organisation Strategy, the County Council will transition to becoming more or less fully self-financing – through Council Tax and possible changes to Business Rates retention. That means we must continue to ensure we operate as efficiently as possible and maximise the value of every pound of taxpayers’ money we spend while seeking out new opportunities to grow our income streams.

2. Develop the capability, performance and engagement of our people

We employ approximately 7,500 people. They are our greatest asset. All public services are at heart people services. We are building an organisation that values doing the right thing for the people we serve above everything else. And we will continue to invest in our people to make sure they have the skills and capabilities to serve the people of Essex as they deserve.

3. Re-imagine how residents’ needs can be met in a digital world

The digital revolution is transforming the way we live our lives. Over the next decade artificial intelligence and big data will reshape the possibilities that are open to us. Right now we are living through an age when products are dissolving into services, and services are being recreated on shared platforms. We must reimagine our role and the services we enable, to better meet people’s needs and expectations in the internet age.

Strategic Aim - Transform the Council to achieve more with less

Priority One	To do this we will:
Limit cost and drive growth in revenue	a. Maximise income for us and the districts, by facilitating appropriate housing and business growth to create sustainable communities
	b. Optimise revenue from services, by charging appropriately and realising commercial benefit
	c. Drive out inefficiency, by reducing costs, increasing productivity including through lean methods and better tools for sharing, collaboration and flexible working
	d. Get maximum value out of every pound of taxpayers' money spent in Essex, by working collaboratively with partners
	e. Reduce the financial burden on taxpayers and enhance facilities, by the targeted use of capital investment
Priority Two	To do this we will:
Develop the capability, performance and engagement of our people	a. Promote high performance and new, effective ways of working across the organisation and with partners, by driving a shift in our culture
	b. Better understand and develop the skills and capabilities the organisation needs, by working with employees and partners in the private and community sectors
	c. Ensure everyone understands how their work contributes to the delivery of our mission and operating strategies, by engaging appropriately
	d. Enable employees to work effectively and feel valued, by providing a good working environment and fit for purpose tools
	e. Have the right people in place to meet changing requirements, by understanding the people we have and the people we need
	f. Have employees who understand the need for and deliver change, by creating a highly engaged and forward thinking workforce
Priority Three	To do this we will:
Re-imagine how residents' needs can be met in a digital world	a. Deliver successful services designed around the user, by providing appropriate access to information as an enabler
	b. Design services in collaboration with partners, driven by the needs of users
	c. Drive cheaper, better, faster service delivery, by embracing technology
	d. Use digital as the engine to drive whole system change, by building digital skills into our core capability in our workforce

Making it Happen: Building Blocks

This Organisation Strategy represents the most ambitious and comprehensive statement of our medium-term priorities the County Council has published. It is based on a realistic assessment of where we currently are, the challenges we face, and the opportunities we must seize.

Everything we are seeking to achieve in this Organisation Strategy is built on four key building blocks and it is important this Strategy is understood in relation to these key elements.

Building Block	Why it's Important	Key Strategy	Content	Date for Agreement
People	We are a people business. Our people are our most important asset. We will be demanding a lot from our employees over the next few years as we shift the culture in the ways described in this Strategy and it is important that we make the investment that will be required to ensure we can continue to secure the best employees in local government.	Workforce Strategy	The Workforce Strategy will transform the way in which we work, to enable us to achieve our strategic priorities. It will clearly define and prioritise our approach to building the critical people capabilities and culture the organisation needs. It will set out our framework for attracting, retaining and developing talent, and the way our people are led, engaged and deployed.	November 2017
Digital	Our transformation will be underpinned by securing the benefits of digital approaches to service and outcome improvements. We will use digital not just to rethink current provision but to fundamentally re-imagine what we do and how we do it.	Digital Principles	The digital principles set out on the next page will underpin how we drive transformation in ECC. We will start with the user, take an agile approach, manage performance and run excellent systems.	July 2017
Commissioning	Commissioning is a key capability for the organisation. Our redesign process has focused on ensuring commissioning as a capability is built into our DNA. We will not be able to secure the aspirations set out in this Strategy if we do not get right our approach to commissioning.	Re-imagining Commissioning Report	The Re-imagining Commissioning Report will help us re-think our approach to commissioning and how the organisation, with partners, can equip itself to be a truly great commissioner for the outcomes our communities need.	September 2017
Partners	ECC is not an island entire to itself. We operate in one of the most complex public policy systems in the country. We have a large number of partners who are critical to our ability to secure the outcomes set out in this Strategy. It is therefore important that we have an agreed sense of where we need to go with our key partners.	Vision	We have many strategies agreed with our partners but the one that sets out comprehensively our collective sense of long-term ambition is the Vision for Essex. The Vision for Essex sets out our long-term aspirations for the county to 2035.	September 2017

Principles that will drive our approach to Transformation

Derived from the Government's Digital Service Standards, the following principles will drive our approach to change and service-based transformation.

Digital Principles	
Start with the user	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand user need• Make users succeed first time• Encourage everyone to use digital• Ensure a consistent online user experience• Test end to end service
Deliver agile projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use agile methods• Have a multidisciplinary team• Iterate and improve frequently• Do ongoing research
Manage performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify performance indicators• Collect performance data• Report performance data• Test with Cabinet lead
Run excellent systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use open standards and common platforms• Make all new source code open• Understand security and privacy issues• Evaluate tools and systems• Make a plan for being offline

Making it Happen: Assessing our Impact



Strategic Planning Framework and the Golden Thread

Through the publication of this Organisation Strategy we are strengthening our business planning framework. The Organisation Strategy is driven by the Vision – what is it that we, with partners, want to achieve for Essex over the long-term. Our specific contribution to that is set out in this Organisation Strategy. Each of the County Council’s functions will then plan out in detail what they will do to give effect to the commitments in our Organisation Strategy. A detailed plan will be derived from those business plans every year so we are clear about what our key priorities are for the next 12 months. Each service can develop its own plans setting out how it will contribute to the achievement of these key outcomes. And ultimately every individual in the organisation, through their individual performance plans, should be able to link their daily work back to the organisation’s strategic aims and priorities and ultimately to the Vision for Essex.

Measuring Success

Success statements for the Organisation Strategy are being developed through the Business Plan process alongside our medium-term resource planning. These statements will be translated into measures and targets. On an annual basis those measures and targets will be published as part of our Organisation Plan and we will report on our success in delivering against the targets in an Annual Report.