



Essex County Council

Summons

To all Members of Essex County Council

You are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of the County Council to be held as shown below to deal with the business set out in the Agenda.

11:30	Tuesday, 13 July 2021	Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre. CM1 2EH,
--------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------

Gavin Jones
Chief Executive

Officer Support to the Council:

Andy Gribben, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 03330134565

Email: Democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

Prayers The meeting will be preceded by Prayers led by Councillor John Spence, a lay Canon in the Church of England.

		Pages
1	Apologies for Absence	
2	Declarations of Interest	
	To note any declarations of interest made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct	
3	Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2021	4 - 26
4	Public Speakers	
5	Chairman's Announcements and Communications	
6	Petitions	

7	Executive Statement	
8	Motions	27 - 29
9	Organisation Strategy	30 - 42
10	Annual Report of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee 2020/2021	43 - 59
11	Annual Report of the Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board 2020/2021	60 - 70
12	Cabinet Issues	71 - 85
13	Council Issues	86 - 87
14	Clarification of answers provided in response to written questions asked by Members of the Council	
15	Oral questions to the Leader, Cabinet Member, chairman of a committee or the representative of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel	

Essex County Council and Committees Information

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972. If there is exempted business, it will be clearly marked as an Exempt Item on the agenda and members of the public and any representatives of the media will be asked to leave the meeting room for that item.

The agenda is available on the [Essex County Council website](#) and by then following the links from [Running the Council](#) or you can go directly to the [Meetings Calendar](#) to see what is happening this month.

Access to the meeting and reasonable adjustments

This meeting will be live streamed to the [ECC Democracy YouTube Channel](#) and via audio broadcast [here](#). The public are entitled to admitted to the meeting, which is being held at the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre, Salerno Way, Chelmsford, CM1 2EH. However, space for the public is extremely limited due to COVID secure requirements. In addition, due to the venue size, it is likely that the members of the public will only get a limited view of proceedings. It's likely that members of the public will get a better view by watching on YouTube.

Members of the public who wish to attend are asked to email full.council@essex.gov.uk in advance so that we can reserve a seat, as numbers are limited. Members of the public who do not reserve a seat will be admitted to the meeting if there are spare seats available.

With sufficient notice, documents can be made available in alternative formats, for further information about this or about the meeting in general please contact the named officer on the agenda pack or email democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

Audio recording of meetings

Please note that in the interests of improving access to the Council's meetings, a sound recording is made of the public parts of many of the Council's Committees. The Chairman will make an announcement at the start of the meeting if it is being recorded.

If you are unable to attend and wish to see if the recording is available, you can find out by checking the [Calendar of Meetings](#) any time after the meeting starts. Any audio available can be accessed via the 'On air now!' box in the centre of the page, or the links immediately below it.

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

Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council, held at the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre on Tuesday, 25 May 2021

Present: Chairman: Councillor E C Johnson
Vice-Chairman: Councillor J M Reeves

B Aspinell	I Grundy	M Platt
T Ball	C Guglielmi	R Playle
L Barber	M Hardware	C Pond
S Barker	D Harris	S Robinson
K Bentley	A M Hedley	P Schwier
D Blackwell	I Henderson	L Scordis
L Bowers-Flint	J Henry	L Scott
A Brown	P Honeywood	L Shaw
M Buckley	M Hoy	A Sheldon
G Butland	J G Jowers	C Siddall
C Cannell	S Kane	M Skeels
M Cory	D King	K Smith
S Crow	D Land	C Souter
T Cunningham	S Lissimore	J Spence
J Deakin	D Louis	W Stamp
M Durham	L Mackenzie	M Steel
B Egan	M Mackrory	M Stephenson
J Fleming	B Massey	M Steptoe
M Foley	P May	P Thorogood
P Gadd	A McGurran	M Vance
M Garnett	J McIvor	L Wagland
A Goggin	L McKinlay	C Whitbread
M Goldman	A McQuiggan	H Whitbread
R J Gooding	Dr R Moore	A Wiles

Broadcasting

The Chairman, Councillor Jowers expressed his thanks to the employees of the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre and Chelmsford City Council for their support in making today's meeting possible. He also reminded those present to maintain social distancing and that the meeting would be recorded and broadcast live over the internet.

Prayers

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

Councillor Jowers formally opened the meeting.

1. Election of Chairman

It having been proposed by Councillor Gooding and seconded by Councillor Souter and there being no other nominations it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Johnson be elected Chairman of the County Council for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

Councillor Johnson made and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

At the invitation of the newly elected Chairman the Council passed a vote of thanks to the retiring Chairman, Cllr John Jowers and Mrs Sue Jowers.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It having been proposed by Councillor Barker and seconded by Councillor McKinlay and there being no other nominations it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Reeves be appointed Vice-Chairman of the County Council for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

Councillor Reeves made and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Lumley.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2021**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 23 February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**Recent Death****Former Councillor Councillor Elwyn Bishop**

The Chairman informed members of the death of former Councillor Elwyn Bishop, who had died on 26 February 2021 at the age of 90.

Members were advised that former Councillor Bishop had represented Braintree East between 1993 and 2001 and Braintree Town between May 2005 and 2009 and had served on the library, heritage and social services committees. He had also been a Braintree District Councillor and been elected Chairman of that Council between 1996 and 1997.

At the request of the Chairman Members stood in silent remembrance.

Welcome and welcome back

The Chairman welcomed the 31 new members to the Council and was also pleased to be able to welcome back those members who had been re-elected

To those former members who were not re-elected or did not stand, the Chairman expressed his thanks for their service to the people of Essex. He also wished them and their families good health and happiness and the very best for the future.

Awards**UK Complaint Handling Awards**

The Chairman informed members that the Council two awards in complaint handling and at his invitation Councillor Christopher Whitbread addressed the meeting.

Councillor Whitbread informed members of the success of the Compliance and Complaints Team at the UK Complaint Handling Awards that were held earlier in May. The Council's Compliance and Complaints Team were awarded the Bronze award for Complaint Team of the Year and Robbie Watson-Levey who heads up the Team also won 'Professional of the Year.'

He explained that Essex County Council was the first local authority ever to be finalists at the awards and were in competition with well-known private sector companies.

UK Youth EmpowHer Team Award

The Chairman informed members that the Youth Service had also won an award and at his invitation Councillor McKinlay addressed the meeting.

Councillor McKinlay informed members that the Youth Service, South Essex Team were winners of the UK Youth EmpowHer Team Award that took place on 5 May 2021.

Margaret Lee

The Chairman paid tribute to Margaret Lee, Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services who would be leaving the Council after 38 years at the end of June.

He asked members to show their appreciation to Margaret who had been the Council's Section 151 Officer during the most turbulent years of financial transformation. She had built the finance team in Essex into one of the strongest and most professional finance functions in local government, with a track record of delivering savings year after year, whilst also protecting front line services for the good of the people of Essex.

She had also been President of the Society of County Treasurers and had led discussions from the finance community with central government departments securing £300m additional resources for County Councils across the country.

She had been the finance lead on the Northamptonshire peer review and assisted the London Borough of Croydon with its recovery programme.

The Chairman thanked her for her deep commitment to Essex and wishing her every happiness for the future.

7. Receipt of petitions and deputations

The Chairman invited:

- Councillor Harris to present a petition regarding the road surface of the Shrub End Estate, Colchester and
- Councillor Gooding to present a petition regarding the closure of North Hall Road, Ugley

The Cabinet Member for Highway Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, Councillor Scott responded.

8. The Chief Executive's Report following the County Council Elections 2021 including the Return of Members Elected and Proportionality

The Chief Executive presented a report announcing the results of the County Council Elections held on 6 May 2021, setting out the results of the review of political proportionality, the consequent numbers of seats on committees and the names of the political group leaders and their deputies.

The numbers of members who had indicated their membership of the political groups were:

The Conservative Group:	52
The Non-aligned Group	10
The Liberal Democrat Group:	8
The Labour Group:	5
Others:	0
Total:	75

It having been proposed by Councillor Bentley and seconded by Councillor McKinlay it was

Resolved:

That the report be noted and seats on committees and other bodies be allocated to registered political groups in accordance with the table at appendix 2 of the report.

9. Leader and Cabinet

It having been moved by Councillor Spence and seconded by Councillor McKinlay and there being no other nominations it was

Resolved:

- a) That Councillor Bentley be elected Leader of the Council and
- b) That the appointment of the Cabinet including the Deputy Leader of the Council, the powers delegated to them and the appointment of Deputies be noted.

Councillor Bentley then made a statement. The statement is available on the ECC website via [the audio recording of the meeting.](#)

10. To note the Political Groups' appointments to committees

It having been proposed by the Leader, Councillor Bentley and seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor McKinlay, it was

Resolved

That members be appointed to committees as set out in the report circulated to members prior to the meeting.

11. Appointments of Chairmen of Committees

It having been proposed by the Leader, Councillor Bentley and seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor McKinlay, it was

Resolved

That chairmen of committees be appointed as set out in the report.

12. Other Appointments and Nominations

The Chairman asked Members to note that there had been an amendment to the resolution in the Order Paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

It having been proposed by the Leader, Councillor Bentley and seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor McKinlay, it was

Resolved

That:

1. the three County Council nominations to the Health and Wellbeing Board,
2. the County Council's representative on the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel and
3. the County Council's representative on the Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board

be appointed as set out in the report and amended in the Order Paper.

13. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Reeves, formally Chairman of the Scrutiny Board presented the report and it being moved by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Egan it was

Resolved

That the report be noted.

14. External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Hedley, Chairman of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee presented the report and it being moved by Councillor Hedley and seconded by Councillor Platt it was

Resolved

That the report be noted.

15. The Leader's Report of Cabinet Issues

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Bentley, the Leader of the Council, presented the report and it having been moved by Councillor Bentley and seconded by Councillor McKinlay it was

Resolved

- a) to note those decisions that have been taken as urgent key decisions, not on the forward plan (Constitution para 19.17), or non-key decisions exempt from call-in on the grounds of urgency (Constitution para 20.15) as attached as Appendix 1 to the report; and
- b) to receive the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 16 February, 16 March, 26 March and 20 April 2021.

16. Council Issues

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Bentley, the Leader of the Council, presented the report as amended by the Order Paper and it having been moved by Councillor Bentley and seconded by Councillor McKinlay it was

Resolved**1. Approved Bodies**

That the list of Approved Bodies in Appendix 3 of Part 26 of the Constitution be amended to remove

- a) the Locality Boards of Braintree, Epping Forest, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford,
- b) IGNITE the Enterprise Centre at Braintree and
- c) Hadleigh Country Park Forum.

2. Dates of Council

That the anticipated dates of the meetings of Council be noted as Tuesdays on 13 July, 12 October and 7 December 2021 and Thursday 10 February 2022.

17. Written Questions

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

Members sought points of clarification from the relevant Cabinet Members, details of which are available on the ECC website via [the audio recording of the meeting](#).

The written questions and answers were:

1. By Councillor Harris of the Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training

‘Could the portfolio holder update me on the current progress on consultation with residents surrounding Paxman Academy School in my division on the installation of a MUGA within school grounds. Whether they have been engaged with and are supporting the investment in this school’s facilities.’

Reply

‘The all-weather pitch will be extremely important to the school and local community. As such, Essex County Council is very supportive of the scheme. Residents will be able to participate in an online exhibition to review the latest build proposals, and to have their say before the plans are resubmitted to the County Planning Authority. This will also include comment forms online, which will capture and consider the views of the local community.

This online exhibition/consultation will be available from Tuesday 1 June until Tuesday 15 June, and can be viewed at:

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/infrastructure-delivery/consultation-for-paxman-academy> or <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/>

In addition, ECC, Barnes Construction and the Sigma Trust will be engaging with residents at the school on the evening of the 10 June. Due to the continuing Covid pandemic, we are only able to support this by meeting outside and with the use of facemasks. To ensure we do not exceed any prescribed limits and to ensure appropriate track and chase systems are in place, residents must register interest beforehand with the school.

ECC will consider all comments received. A summary of the consultation responses will accompany the planning application.’

2. By Councillor Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training

'The *Children Missing Education Cross-Party Working Group Report*, was agreed and published in January 2020. The report was forwarded to the Secretary of State for Education for consideration on 10 February 2020.

The portfolio holder will note the following concerns included in the report:

"What our data tells us

The number of children and young people across Essex being removed from a school roll in favour of elective home education is increasing. Between June 2018 and June 2019, Essex County Council noted an increase within this cohort of 33.8%."

Can the portfolio holder report:

How many additional children have been removed from school rolls (off-rolled) since the working party report was published and forwarded to the Secretary of State for Education.

How many of those children removed from the school roll in favour of elective home education have been monitored/inspected by the appropriate education department.'

Reply

'Our records show that, between 1 February 2020 and 14 May 2021, a total of 1688 children and young people have been removed from a school roll to be electively home educated within Essex.

In respect of 851 of the 1688 children and young people (50%) within the scope of this response, no concerns in respect of parental capacity to offer a suitable home education were raised or identified via local authority intelligence checks.

Parents/carers of each of these children were sent a letter by the Education Compliance team to confirm that the local authority has been made aware of their decision to home educate, to share key information regarding the implications of their decision and to signpost parents to the advice and information which is available to home educating parents via the Essex County Council website.

In addition to the afore-mentioned letter, all families who have elected to home educate their child/ren since July 2020, for whom no concerns have been raised/identified, have received telephone contact from the Education Compliance team which has covered the following points:

- The full implications of a decision to home educate – financial and/or otherwise;
- Process that will need to be followed if parents wish for their child to return to a school roll (e.g. once their Covid-related anxiety has eased);
- Online safety considerations that parents are advised to be mindful of whilst home educating their child/children;

- Details of the support available should mental health concerns arise in respect of their child/ren.

The Education Compliance team has contacted 816 of the 1688 children and young people (48%) to arrange an assessment of elective home education provision. These assessments were deemed necessary as a direct result of:

- concerns having been shared by school colleagues or identified via available local authority intelligence; and/or
- local authority records showing that the family have been known to Essex Social Care (either currently/historically).

Assessments have been successfully carried in respect of 439 of the 816 children and young people (53%) identified for such intervention and in cases where parents have chosen not to engage with our contact or have been unable to satisfy the local authority of their ability to provide a suitable home education, steps have been taken to return the children and young people to a school roll.

It is important to note that, of the total 1688 children and young people who have been removed from a school roll in favour of elective home education since the working party report was published, 463 (27%) were only home educated on a temporary basis and are no longer listed as home educated. Some parents will have chosen to return their child to school of their own volition, whilst others will have been instructed to do so following their failure to provide evidence to the local authority of their capacity to offer a suitable home education. In a small number of cases, it was confirmed that the family had moved out of Essex jurisdiction, either having moved abroad or to another local authority area, resulting in their being no role for the Education Compliance team at the time of de-registration.

The Education Compliance team makes full use of available statutory powers in respect of children believed to be missing from education and will not hesitate to instigate School Attendance Order proceedings, under section 437 Education Act 1996, in cases where parents choose not to engage or are unable to evidence their capacity to offer a suitable home education.

The local authority strongly believes that more could be done to safeguard the educational rights of children and young people who are home educated. We have taken a proactive approach in sharing our concerns in respect of the existing DfE guidance to local authorities for elective home education and submitted a comprehensive response to the Education Select Committee's Inquiry into Home Education, in November 2020. In addition, I appreciate the work that was carried out by the Cross-Party working group last year and will be writing to leaders of the opposition to re-establish this group so that we can rekindle this vital work.'

3. By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

'Can the portfolio holder please confirm whether they will follow through with plans to implement bus franchising across Essex?'

Reply

'Thank you for your question. In March the Government published 'Bus Back Better' an ambitious strategy to put buses at the heart of transport and supported by £3bn of funding. We in Essex intend to take full advantage of the funding on offer, building on our success in previous funding rounds such as the recently secured Rural Mobility funding of £2.5m. As part of this, Cabinet will consider in June the optimal way forward for Essex, including whether franchising or an enhanced partnership (the two statutory routes available) is the best way forward in giving our residents a good quality bus service that supports de-carbonisation.'

4. By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance

'Can the portfolio holder alleviate local concerns in Colchester and confirm that Colchester's local history and records will remain in situ for the foreseeable future?'

Reply

'I can assure you that the local studies room at Colchester Library is not closing and never was. The room was temporarily used for storage whilst the library was closed during lockdown. Staff are now gradually moving these items and the room is now available again as of Monday 17 May, providing access to the lending and reference stock, as well as the local newspaper archive microfilms held on site.

Over the past few weeks, the library service has undertaken an audit of the items held in the local studies area at Colchester Library. This has been in line with the local studies stock policy guidelines, drawn up in conjunction with Essex Records Office and the CILLIP Local History Group toolkit.

The library service is in fact planning to exhibit some of the more interesting and unique items in the main part of the library, so we can make it more visible to our customers, increase its use and make it easier to access. We wish to highlight local stock that residents are unaware of and have an attractive display area with rotating displays of items of interest.'

5. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

'The strict rules that new driveway applications must be at least 5 metres in length; has and is filling the inboxes of elected members from constituents that have driveways that are as little as 20cm short of this 5-metre rule.

With more and more vehicles being purchased that are electric and the Government's support for the Nation switching to electric vehicles. A driveway application being as little as 20cm short is deterring motorists from buying an electric vehicle as they have nowhere to charge it.

Members have to plead and pester the Cabinet Member for Highways to gain dispensation to help individual cases. Would the Cabinet Member for Highways

Maintenance and Sustainable agree to establish a member led appeal board? My suggestion would be along the line of a four-member strong appeal board and where the resident concerned can make their case. This would only be for cases that are less than 20cm short of the 5 metre rule and for electric vehicles.'

Reply

'Thank you for your question and the issue that you have highlighted, and whilst I do appreciate that 20cms or less may not feel like very much for residents, the guidance that we adhere to aims to make pavements safe for all our residents.

As you will be aware, the 5-metre depth of frontage is written in the Essex Parking Standards which were written by the Highways Authority in consultation with all the Local Planning Authorities and were published in February 2009, so have been in place for some time. The standards were based on evidence from around the County where footways were being obstructed by poorly parked cars, creating a pedestrian safety risk which is the reason for specific depths for parking spaces of 5.5 metres (depth in front of a building) x 2.9 metres (width) which provides space to walk around the vehicle/open the boot etc.

The dimensions in question were based upon research into vehicle lengths and the implication of getting this wrong is that footways are obstructed by overhanging vehicles with resultant impacts on walking, pushchair users and residents who use wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

However, in recognition that space is tighter in front of existing buildings, ECC has already reduced the depth to 5 metres to try and balance the needs of car owners and pedestrians. Since this date, the standards have been consistently applied and only in very rare and exceptional circumstances are relaxed on appeal to allow slightly less than the already reduced 5 metres and I am told by officers that very few are overturned on appeal.

I do recognise that this may cause some frustration for residents, particularly those, as you say, who wish to use an electric car and need a driveway to charge their car and so as part of our work in this area we will be recruiting an Electric Vehicle and Electric Charge Point manager who will be creating ECC's EV strategy and we will commit to investigating concerns regarding driveway length as part of this process as car users' needs evolve alongside our ambition to encourage more active travel through walking and cycle use.

I'd also like to take the opportunity in this response to highlight that we have reviewed the application process for vehicle crossings and the process for applying online. As a result of this review, we will be launching a new process from 1st June 2021, which will split the application and costs into an approvals phase (£158) and a construction phase (£150).

These fees cover the cost for the site visit and assessment of the application to determine eligibility against the standards and criteria and the subsequent construction should the application be successful. We will also be updating the

vehicle crossing web pages to try to clarify the process for residents so that they are better informed of the criteria prior to applying to avoid some of the issues you have described.

I hope this response provides you with useful information that you can share with your residents that explains how ECC tries to balance the needs of all of our residents.'

6. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

'Since the launch of the trial for the Spin e-scooters, complaints of pavement riding and minor/youths using these scooters have been constant in Basildon. In March, I nearly hit a child driving the wrong way exiting a roundabout as they drove towards me on the wrong side of the road. Had I drove a car bigger than a Fiesta; I would have injured or killed this child. I did complain at the time and still I see children using the Spin e-scooters.

No one wants to see a tragedy, but the operator needs to get their house in order now, before a serious incident ends this trial and their further possible use in Essex.

Rather than throw the so-called baby out with the bathwater, what is to be done to make sure that only adults with a driving licence can hire these e-scooters to be used only on the highways of Essex? '

Reply

'Thank you for your question Councillor Smith as I know you have been very interested in the e-scooter pilot and I agree with you that no one wants to see dangerous or irresponsible scooter use or an accident. In order to hire an e-scooter users need to use the SPIN App which requires that you upload a photo and a driving license and therefore no-one without a valid driving licence should be riding these scooters. Since we started the trial, the operator has added additional secondary license checking measure to ensure that adults with driving licenses cannot sign up and then allow another (younger) user to ride the scooters. In Basildon specifically, where there have been examples of anti-social behaviour, SPIN have deployed more operatives on the ground, closed out areas where anti-social behaviour was happening more frequently and reduced the speed of e-scooters countywide. We are continuing to monitor feedback throughout the pilot and adapt the operation of the scooters including banning repeat offenders to prevent them from hiring scooters. As of 4 May we have had over 100,000 rides in Essex including 600 half-price rides through SPIN Everyday Heroes and SPIN Access programmes, so without wishing to minimise your concerns I am hopeful that the issues you describe are with a minority of riders. I can reassure you that I will be meeting regularly with officers and we will continue to monitor the pilots and make changes if required.'

7. By Councillor Lumley of the Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling

‘The Castle Road, Rayleigh recycling centre in Rayleigh town centre is no longer fit for purpose. There are limitations to its location and size. For many residents of Rochford District it is a 50 miles plus round trip to use the site in the centre of Rayleigh which is very bad for our carbon footprint.

The changes implemented a number of years ago, which removed large vehicles from using the site, had a noticeable beneficial impact on queuing levels at the site. The more recent tweaks have made a little difference to the daily frustration for local residents and the heavily congested roads around the town centre although there are still regular confrontations and incidents at congested times between staff and frustrated residents, some quite unpleasant and definitely not acceptable.

Could the Cabinet Member please confirm that he will therefore be reviewing whether further policy steps could be taken to reduce the use of this centre and divert users to other sites better able to manage the throughput.

What plans have been put in place to replace the recycling centre and has consideration been given to finding suitable alternative land for a new recycling centre for delivery of this service in the District of Rochford?’

Reply

‘I thank Councillor Lumley for raising this important issue. Although I have just taken over the portfolio, I am aware of the issues surrounding a number of locations, in particular at Castle Road, Rayleigh.

I appreciate that those residents who live in the more rural areas of the District tend to have further to travel, however I can confirm that a review of the County Council’s recycling centre provision is planned this year. This will identify whether there are any opportunities for improvements or relocation of facilities and whether there are any actions that can be taken to deal with demand at peak period.

Councillor Lumley will be aware that the impact of Covid has placed additional pressure on the sites due to a shift in usage patterns. An even more significant impact has been from the operational changes we have had to implement to ensure social distancing, which has slowed throughput of users at the sites. As lockdown measures ease we expect the restrictions to start to have less impact, thereby reducing site pressure.

On the matter of confrontations between staff and public this is unacceptable, and staff should be prepared to call for Police assistance if necessary.’

8. By Councillor Goldman of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

'In the local elections, potholes and pavements were the number one issue that voters raised on the doorstep. They are understandably frustrated when they are told that the defect they have reported isn't likely to get fixed anytime soon. Most residents understand that repairs must be prioritised, but when something has been reported several times, and a subsequent trip and fall results in serious injury, as was the case for an elderly Chelmsford resident who tripped on some very loose paving slabs in Moulsham Street, which have now - somewhat magically - been repaired after they have caused injury, I can completely understand why residents are losing faith in the system.

What hope can the Cabinet Member offer to residents that it will be safe to walk or cycle throughout Chelmsford and indeed the whole of Essex in the near future?'

Reply

'Thank you for your question. As those members who attended the initial highways member training session on 17 May will have heard, we must prioritise what is a limited resource which means we apply a risk-based approach to defects reported to us, continually reviewing them for further deterioration, which may change their prioritisation over time. This process will be further explained at the next session on 7 June and I would strongly encourage all members to attend this session as this is an important issue. Active Travel is something that we are firmly prioritising – residents getting out of their cars to be able to walk and cycle for their commute and leisure is very important and something that officers and I want to support.'

9. By Councillor Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

'In Tile Kiln, Chelmsford, the layout means there are a large number of service roads which residents have to use to access their properties. These are cul-de-sacs and in constant use, therefore, the condition of these roads is appalling and are reported on a very regular basis.

Is there an alternative arrangement for the repair of heavily used service roads, compared to normal roads? Can the Cabinet Member explain why these service roads are in such a state of disrepair and not fixed when repairs are very urgently needed?'

Reply

'Thank you for your question. In order that officers from Essex Highways can properly assess the issues that you are describing I would be grateful if you could write to me detailing the areas in question in order that we can investigate this and provide a response.'

10. By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training

‘Given the twin demands of financial pressures and the ever increasing numbers of children with complex needs requiring Education Health Care Plans, what assurances can the Cabinet Member give that these children will receive the additional help they need to fulfil their full potential?’

Reply

‘There has been no reduction in top up funding for children and young people with SEND and no reduction in the funding for schools or settings. Essex County Council has worked hard to balance the demands of an increasing cohort of children and young people with SEND against a finite financial resource. Wherever possible difficult decisions regarding the pressures on the High Needs Block were taken early and in consultation with schools, settings and, through our engagement on the vision for SEND in Essex, parents and families. We have increased specialist provision through a SEND and alternative provision capital programme and attracted significant additional funding via the free schools’ programme which will see four new special schools open in Essex in the next 18 months. In addition, we have supported the development of provision in mainstream schools for children and young people with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. Essex restructured its SEND teams to move towards a model of offering whole school support with the intention that we meet need at an earlier point in the journey through education and to reduce the need for a statutory plan. Our careful management of the High Needs Block means that Essex is in a stronger position than many other local authorities. Our focus continues to be on improving outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.’

11. By Councillor Mackrory of the Leader

‘Will the Leader give an assurance that future announcements regarding important governance arrangements, such as the appointment of the new cabinet, will be conveyed to Members as a courtesy prior to the press release?’

Reply

‘Thank you for your question. I apologise for not notifying you of our intentions in advance of them being released to the public. I absolutely agree that Members need to be informed of these kinds of changes as quickly as possible. I prioritised certainty for our residents and - as things were moving very quickly - realistically it would have only been possible to give you a few hours’ prior notice. That being said, you are right to say that informing you in advance would have been the courteous thing to have done, and I will make sure we give you that courtesy in future.’

12. By Councillor King of the Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance

‘Can the Cabinet Member acknowledge the huge challenges and pressures on young people in these times of crisis and the damaging erosion of youth services over many years. Can the Cabinet Member assure members that they will continue to gain fresh investment and new thinking for the service and also commit to provide a fair share of the future revenue costs support of the proposed 'town deal' Colchester Youth Zone. This Youth Zone will bring significant third-party funding and health, wellbeing, ASB reduction and societal benefits to Colchester. As demonstrated by other Youth Zones, they can transform the life chances of our young people.’

Reply

‘I am incredibly proud of Essex County Council’s Youth Service, which were recognised nationally this year when our targeted Youth Work was highly commended at the National Children and Young People Awards in March.

- In 2019/20 there were 54,957 youth service participants, a 7% increase over the previous year.
- 16,481 youth work sessions were delivered for young people in 2019/20. An 8% increase over the previous year
- 90,240 hours of volunteering were undertaken by participants in 2019/20, an increase of 8% over the previous year.

Despite the challenging circumstances that the COVID pandemic has brought, our Youth Services in Essex have continued to develop and grow, attracting a whole range of external funding to match Essex County Council investments in youth work. We have conducted almost 40,000 one to one welfare checks with young people and delivered over 2,500 online/remote youth sessions with nearly 7000 participants. We started the welfare check ins on the very first day of national lockdown and had trained staff to run zoom sessions with young people in less than 10 days.

Detached Youth Workers have increased the amount they have been working with young people in community settings throughout the pandemic and have supported a huge number of young people with advice guidance, signposting to other services and helping them cope with grief as well as supporting victims of youth violence. The Team have worked through every holiday period and only closed completely for the Christmas and New Year bank holidays.

Young people aged 10-15 from across Essex have also recently been taking part in the EmpowHER project, delivered by Essex Youth Service in partnership with UKYouth and the British Red Cross, which helps young women and girls lead change in their communities, increase their self-esteem and build wellbeing by creating inclusive and meaningful social action opportunities. At the National EmpowHER celebration event on 5 May, we won the National Team award for their projects. Two young people also won individual awards – a courage award and a per support award.

Youth Services operate within a community Capacity Building (CCB) Model and has a Traded Services arm that generates income to deliver Targeted Work. The CCB teams work with Youth Strategy Groups, young people, and community leaders to identify local needs, commission services and activities that meet local priorities. In the last financial year, the YSG commissioned 80 projects to the value of £300,000 that are directly responding to the social and emotional impact of the pandemic on young people.

Young People are indeed facing some significant challenges as we emerge from the devastating impact of the pandemic. Youth Service staff are working directly in Social Care and Leaving and After Care teams, Youth Offending and Economic Growth Services where youth work solutions are enriching the wider offer across the system.

Young People are growing up in a digital world, which is why youth work in Essex has also developed an online offer, including a virtual Youth Centre model that is co designed with Young People.

The significant investment in a Youth Zone will not meet the needs of young people who do not live in the immediate areas around them. Some of the most vulnerable young people who are in need of support wouldn't attend such a Centre, which is why we are focussing our investments and efforts on reaching them. We will of course work with any developed Youth Zone, however our investment is focused on developing the local provision our young people have told us they want. This includes effectively utilising online and detached youth work, working directly in community settings to ensure a local offer is available across Essex.

I am very happy to offer a meeting with you to discuss this in more detail.'

13. By Councillor King of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

'I welcome recent work with the now Leader of the Council, to develop cycle and pedestrian routes across the centre of Colchester, but recognising the very poor condition of most existing and policy (Ltn 1/20) non-compliant cycle routes, can the Cabinet Member commit to condition reviews and a long term upgrade programme to create a true active travel alternative and to develop and implement such, in the same collaborative spirit.'

Reply

'Thank you for your question. We will be reviewing all Essex Highways Schemes to make sure that they fulfil the best practice design and guidance issued by DfT so that all our schemes now and in the future are in line with best practice using LTN120 and a scoring tool to undertake this work. It is our ambition to ensure that all new schemes consider safer, healthier and greener travel options even where the schemes are not primarily aimed at active travel to ensure that the need for adherence to best practice guidance is acknowledged. With regards to the condition of existing cycle and pedestrian routes this is something that we will need to look at across the county as part of our ambitions around sustainable travel.'

14. By Councillor Cory of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

‘Having worked previously with Councillor Bentley, in the role of Infrastructure and Highways, he agreed (in one of our Colchester 5-a-side strategic highways meetings) that a positive, enabling strategy towards 20mph zones across Colchester had his support. Can I ask the new Cabinet Member that he takes this forward in a practical sense and commit to a policy supporting the creation of 20mph zones across all appropriate estate roads across communities like Wivenhoe and Greenstead?’

Would the Cabinet Member be willing to carry out a pilot scheme across my Division of Wivenhoe St. Andrew, granting permission for 20mph zones, where there exists a sufficient majority of public support. Would he agree to introducing policy with a presumption in favour of 20mph zones going ahead on local/estate roads being accepted?’

Reply

‘Thank you for your question. Officers are in the process of starting a review of ECC's Speed Management policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose and reflects the ambitions relating to sustainable travel (and safer, greener, healthier) in Essex with the review to be completed this year. With regards to estate roads on all new developments the presumption is that these will be 20mph by design. I am happy to pick up the discussions around a pilot scheme as part of the ongoing dialogue between ECC and Colchester Borough Council.’

15. By Councillor Cory of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

‘Would the Cabinet Member agree to review the Highways communications process in relation to roadworks and other disruptive highway works, which cause diversions for the public, but in particular for buses and bus companies. Recent examples in Wivenhoe, one part of my Division, showed that the bus companies had limited up-to-date information on the rolling road closure in Rectory Road, and were unable to give more than 24 hours’ notice of a change of route affecting children and families accessing our nearest secondary school. The Essex Highways dynamic roadwork map is a positive step, but this does not give enough detail and pro-active communication is needed with bus companies and county members in order to update the public accurately. I would be happy to work with the Cabinet Member on this. I welcome an explanation of the communication strategy used by Essex Highways to inform bus and other public transport companies, as well as the public and County Members.’

Reply

'Essex operates a permit scheme through which organisations such as utilities wishing to work in the highways need to request permission to undertake work in the carriageway. Permits must be requested in advance of works, unless works are an emergency. If the work promoter requires a road closure, it is their responsibility to liaise with bus operators in advance of the permit being issued, to ensure that operators are aware of the closure and that a suitable alternative diversion has been agreed (in some cases, diversions are not agreed by operators and alternatives such as shuttle buses/taxis are provided by the works promoter). When a road closure is required, this is provided via a temporary traffic regulation order (processed by the streetworks team). The streetworks team informs members, parishes, emergency services and bus operators of these closures via e-mail. Closure information is also made available through one.network. In the case of emergency works, legislation sets out that a work promoter has to inform ECC of the work within 24 hours – in such cases, we are therefore not able to provide information to the public or to operators in advance, but works promoters are requested to do this locally if at all possible.'

16. By Councillor McGurran of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

'Whilst I realise the state of roads and pavements in some parts of Essex are in a shocking state clearly the picture across the county is not uniform. Can the Cabinet Member explain why the 3/4 Estate in Vange (also known as the Vange Hill Estate) has been so woefully neglected. I would also like to invite him to visit this estate so he can see the issues himself, I would be happy to escort him.'

Reply

'In response to your question, I would highlight that the capital maintenance annual programme across Essex for both carriageways and footways is developed using the latest held asset condition data in line with an agreed strategy which is available on the Essex Highways website. If you have a complaint about an individual road, please use the online report it tool which is the quickest way to report this and monitor progress. I am more than happy to come out for a visit to the area and if you email me, I will ask my officers to arrange this.'

17. By Councillor McGurran of the Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance

'Sadly, the new Conservative Administration at Basildon Council has made it clear they will not be supporting the very advanced plans for a state-of-the-art Youth Zone in Basildon Town Centre. They made their opposition to this facility, that would have transformed young people's lives for the better clear repeatedly during the election campaign although they were far less clear on what it was they objected about it – particularly considering the fact the capital costs were already in the budget and the charity Onside were well on the way to raising the business sponsorship.'

In light of this disappointing announcement, what will Essex County Council do to improve badly needed youth services in Basildon. Will the Cabinet Member responsible open a dialogue with their counterparts at Basildon to see if they can reconsider their position on the Youth Zone. I have heard from a young woman from Barking and Dagenham, who was a care leaver speak movingly about how she had received a place at Cambridge University, which she said would never have happened without the Youth Zone in her borough – does the Cabinet Member think the young people of Basildon don't deserve the same opportunities?'

Reply

'Youth Workers and Targeted Youth Advisors are delivering innovative youth work programmes across the county including:

- Youth Work in Hospitals
- Male and Female mentoring programmes,
- Confidence and self-esteem building
- Youth voice and social action projects
- Mental Health projects
- Employability and Skills

In Basildon, not only do we already have three Youth centres situated in Wickford, Basildon Town Centre and Vange, but Essex has a growing network of community volunteers and organisations who are working together like never before to meet the needs of young people. This network operates across schools, playgrounds, skate parks, open spaces, street corners, youth centres, promenades and hospitals. Taking youth provision into community spaces where young people meet across Basildon and wider Essex is the future of youth work; this is what we believe in and continue to develop and grow.

Despite the challenging circumstances that the COVID pandemic has brought, our Youth Services in Essex have continued to develop and grow, attracting a whole range of external funding to match Essex County Council investments in youth work. We have conducted almost 40,000 one to one welfare checks with young people and delivered over 2,500 online/remote youth sessions with nearly 7000 participants. We have also significantly increased our programme of detached youth work to meet the needs of young people in community settings.

We are also passionate about youth service interventions that help encourage young people to access higher education. We have taken many hundreds of young people to Essex university for weeklong summer residentials that are jam packed with workshops and learning, providing an influential experience that helps raise aspirations and gives young people a taste of university life.

Below is a list of just some of our employability and skills events and initiatives we have run in Basildon specifically:

- Organised a Get Sorted Event to get NEETs into Employment
- Registered NEET Young People so that families can claim Extension to Child Benefit
- Produce regular vacancy/opportunity bulletins aimed at young people and the organisations that support them

- One to one CV sessions
- One to One support with job search/ personal marketing/ letter writing
- Introductions/ referrals to training providers and other support services
- High Quality Careers Guidance with referrals as appropriate
- Relationship building with schools to help prevent NEET at source

Inspiring young people to achieve more is of paramount importance. One of our elected members of the Young Essex Assembly for Basildon was selected as the chair of the UK Youth Select Committee for knife crime. In this role she chaired sessions in parliament and even represented young people at Downing Street, where she met former PM Theresa May and cabinet members to discuss this pressing issue of knife crime. The select committee she led, launched the report in February 2020 with detailed recommendations to the government. You can find the report [here](#).

The significant investment in a Youth Zone will not meet the needs of young people who do not live in the immediate areas around them. Some of the most vulnerable young people who are in need of support wouldn't attend such a Centre, which is why we are focussing our investments and efforts on reaching them. We will of course work with any developed Youth Zone, however our investment is focused on developing the local provision our young people have told us they want. This includes effectively utilising online and detached youth work, working directly in community settings to ensure a local offer is available across Essex. I am very happy to offer a meeting with you to discuss this in more detail.'

18. Oral Questions of the Leader, Cabinet Member, a chairman of a committee or the representative of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

A recording of the questions and answers given is available on the ECC website via [the audio recording of the meeting](#).

The questions asked were:

Question asked by	Question to	Subject
Cllr Goldman	Leader	IT for Members
Cllr Pond	Leader	Reopening of railway lines
Cllr McQuiggan	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Plans to thank volunteers who assisted with the response to the Pandemic
Cllr Gadd	Leader	Carbon neutral development in South Woodham Ferrers
Cllr Gadd	Cabinet Member for Highway Maintenance and Sustainable Transport	Cycling infrastructure in Uttlesford
Cllr Durham	Deputy Leader	Support for volunteering
Cllr Robinson	Deputy Leader	Violence against women

Cllr Henderson	Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training	Funding settlement for schools
Cllr Aspinell	Leader	Locality Boards and briefings for local members

19. Closure of Meeting

The Chairman, Councillor Johnson, closed the meeting by thanking members for their patience and perseverance in adhering to the requirements of social distancing. It had been his first meeting as Chairman. And it had been held in difficult circumstances.

He reminded all members to maintain social distancing as they left the premises.

A recording of the Chairman's closing remarks and of the entire meeting is available on the ECC website via [the audio recording of the meeting.](#)

The meeting closed at 13:17

Chairman

Motions

Members have given notice that they intend to move the following motions in accordance with paragraph 16.8.2 of the Constitution:

The Courts have made it clear that the Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it is considering these motions, even if they are motions without legal effect. There is not a general requirement for an equality impact assessment but regard should be had to the equality duty when drafting and considering motions.

The equality duty requires Council to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes it unlawful to discriminate etc on the grounds of a protected characteristic.
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

1. **Creation of a free Essex-wide parking permit scheme for carers on duty**

Moved by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor Hoy

'Council calls upon the Cabinet to create an Essex-wide on-street parking permit scheme for the exclusive use for carers, healthcare assistants and associated volunteers who visit patients/residents living in controlled parking zones and similar to provide caring services, so as to create a single permit system for the whole county, to be issued gratis. Council asks the cabinet member to negotiate, if possible, similar reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring authorities, so as to facilitate provision of care in border areas.'

2. **Changing the culture of Sexual Harassment towards girls and women**

Moved by Councillor Cory and seconded by Councillor Goldman

'This Council recognises the saddening state of affairs outlined by the Ofsted report on 10th June 2021 stating: "culture change needed to tackle 'normalised' sexual harassment in schools and colleges". Ofsted's inspectors visited 32 state and private schools and colleges and spoke to more than 900 children and young people about the prevalence of sexual harassment in their lives and the lives of their peers. The review found

that sexual harassment, including online sexual abuse, has become 'normalised' for children and young people.

Around 9 in 10 of the girls spoken to said that sexist name calling and being sent unwanted explicit pictures or videos happened 'a lot' or 'sometimes'. Inspectors were also told that boys talk about whose 'nudes' they have and share them among themselves like a 'collection game', typically on platforms like WhatsApp or Snapchat.

The review recommends that school and college leaders act on the assumption that sexual harassment is affecting their pupils and take a whole-school approach to addressing these issues, creating a culture where sexual harassment is not tolerated.

Furthermore, Ofsted explain that it was clear that effective joint working between Local Safeguarding Partnerships (LSPs) and all schools and colleges was not happening consistently. The report makes recommendations for schools, colleges, local and central government to implement.

This Council therefore calls upon Cabinet, with the support of all councillors, to:

1. Publicly acknowledge and respond to the content and recommendations in the Ofsted report on Sexual Harassment in schools and colleges.
2. Create a working group of Councillors and experts to conduct further research into the Essex experience and understand the wider causes and determinants of this culture of sexual harassment.
3. Take a lead across educational establishments in Essex to improve engagement between multi-agency safeguarding partners, ensuring effective joint working occurs between Local Safeguarding Partnerships.
4. Share resources, training and guidance for school and college leaders, ensuring that relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) is provided and is of a consistently high standard across every school and college in Essex.
5. Share developing government guidance about sexual harassment and online abuse to help change attitudes, including advice for parents and carers.
6. Communicate support for women and girls across Essex, primarily by removing the blame upon women and acknowledging the need to change the education, culture and attitudes of boys and men towards women.

Link to the Ofsted Report on Sexual Harassment in Schools and Colleges, including recommendations: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-culture-change-needed-to-tackle-normalised-sexual-harassment-in-schools-and-colleges>

3. Levelling up in Essex

Moved by Councillor Guglielmi and Seconded by Councillor Mackenzie

'The Government and Essex County Council have already done a huge amount to protect Essex residents, businesses and jobs during this tragic pandemic.

This Council therefore welcomes the Government's commitment to levelling up, to ensure that no community is left behind, particularly as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Council also:

- Acknowledges the work already being progressed with our partners, via the Essex Partnership Board, to develop plans across the County and to reflect the needs of various cohorts.
- Notes that there are complex matters in Essex, related to levelling up and that our focus needs to be on; the root causes, a drive to raise aspiration and a self - expectation for people to fulfil their potential and ambition, thereby removing the constraints of being reliant on the state.

This Council therefore calls on the Government, to work with us and support our initiatives to promote and drive forward "Levelling Up" in Essex.'

Report title: Essex County Council Organisation Strategy	
Report to: Council	
Report author: Councillor Kevin Bentley, Leader of the Council	
Date: 13 July 2021	For: Discussion
Enquiries to: Gavin Jones, Chief Executive - email gavin.jones@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To ask Council to consider the draft of our proposed Organisation Strategy and to agree that it can be the subject of engagement with key partners before full Council is asked to consider adoption in October.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council agree the draft Organisation Strategy as the basis for further engagement with key partners across the county and agree that following that period of engagement a recommended final draft will be brought back for adoption at Full Council in October.

3. Summary

- 3.1 In general the Council publishes a new Organisation Strategy after the County Council election. The strategy sets out the priorities of the newly elected administration for their four-year term of office. The purpose of the strategy is to:
 - Set out clear strategic priorities that the organisation will collectively focus on
 - Set out in high level terms what we will do to deliver those priorities
 - Explain how we will work as an organisation to deliver effectively and efficiently
- 3.2 The Organisation Strategy is a key part of the overall strategic planning framework for the Council and forms part of the policy framework. It represents our contribution to delivering the long-term Essex Vision which we and other public sector partners have adopted. Within the Council, the Organisation Strategy guides business planning and the development of the Medium-Term Resources Strategy (MTRS) and it shapes the annual budget and Organisation Plan. The Cabinet cannot take decisions which are contrary to the Organisation Strategy.
- 3.3 We are proposing to call our new organisation strategy: *Everyone's Essex*. The context for the new strategy is inevitably shaped by the pandemic and the wide-ranging impacts it has had on the economy, health and wellbeing,

education and transport. But the strategy isn't just about the pandemic; it is also about preparing Essex for the future, addressing the big issues of our time including climate action, economic transition, excellence in education and skills and levelling up opportunities for all our residents.

3.4 In line with this context, the strategy embodies the themes that the new administration has set out of:

- **Renewal** – helping our residents, our communities and our businesses to recover and rebuild following the pandemic
- **Equality** – ensuring that growth and renewal benefits all and that everyone in the county has the opportunity to succeed in life
- **Ambition** – ensuring that as a Council we are always reaching for the stars to secure the best outcomes and the best value for money that we possibly can for our residents and businesses

3.5 The new strategy is anchored around four new strategic priorities:

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high-quality environment
- Health, wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

3.6 Each priority has five commitments (so a total of 20 in total), which are the things that we commit to doing to achieve these priorities over the next four years. These commitments deliberately do not describe everything that the Council does. They are focused on those areas of action that are needed to drive strategic change. This reflects the spirit of the strategy, which is to take action now on the big strategic issues facing us so that Essex and its people can look forward to a bright future.

3.7 The strategy also includes sections on:

- **Levelling Up** – because levelling up is a key objective that cuts across all of our strategic priorities and requires collective action across the Council and across partners.
- **How We Will Deliver** – because strategies cannot succeed if they only describe the ends, they also have to be clear about the means. Our strategy therefore sets out how we will work and makes a clear commitment to working in a joined up, collaborative, open-minded and evidence-based way. These ways of working are not “nice to haves”; they are essential if we are to deliver on a set of issues that by their nature are complex and involve all parts of the public sector, businesses, the voluntary and community sector and communities themselves.
- **Service excellence** – because delivering high quality and value for money services is core to our mission as a Council and we never forget that residents pay for, use and in many cases rely on our services to meet essential needs.

- 3.8 Overall, the strategy represents some continuity with what has gone before, but also significant change. There is much more emphasis in this strategy on climate action, on modernising our infrastructure, on levelling up, on educational excellence and on transforming care to support independent living. There is also more emphasis on partnership working, building on the excellent partnership work that has taken place during the pandemic to keep services running and to protect our most vulnerable residents. We will deepen our work with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors and including with our suppliers. We will also strengthen collaboration with other groups, like the arts and heritage sector, that haven't previously been a focus for the Council but have an important role to play as well.
- 3.9 The final strategy, when it is adopted, will also include performance measures and delivery plans, but these are not included in the draft strategy now because they will be subject to further work over the summer. New equalities objectives for the Council will be published in the coming months as part of our Levelling Up work and will be subject to formal consultation as required. The equalities objectives in the current Organisation Strategy will remain in force until the new ones are adopted.
- 3.10 Over the summer, we will be carrying out further engagement (not a formal consultation) on the draft strategy with Councillors, our staff and our partners. The engagement is not intended to result in a fundamentally re-write of the strategy but to:
- Check that we have framed and communicated the strategy in the right way so that it is clear what we plan to do and we are using language that resonates with people.
 - Check that we haven't left anything out of the strategy that is essential for the Council to deliver to achieve our shared goal of building a successful future for Essex.
 - Explore how we can best work together with others in a collaborative way to deliver on our shared priorities.
- 3.11 The final strategy will then be brought back to Full Council for adoption in October on the recommendation of the Leader or the Cabinet.

The Plan for Essex

Section 1: Foreword: Kevin Bentley

I have lived and worked in Essex all my life and it's a privilege and an honour to lead this great County Council, but most of all it's a tremendous responsibility.

My aim is for Essex to be the best local authority in the country – not by the standards of others, but by the standards of the people, the businesses, and the communities it is our duty to support and serve.

We have come through the most extraordinary eighteen months. We have been tested to the limits, but time and again our public services, businesses, voluntary organisations and our communities have risen to the challenge - we have seen just what we are capable of achieving if collectively we work together to support one another. I am determined that in Essex we harness that spirit of collective endeavour to build an even better future. The task is huge – but we shouldn't be daunted by its scale. We are Essex, and we will build back better.

We will renew our economy, because prosperity is the best pathway to a good life. And we will support our businesses as they seek to recover the ground lost by the hard stop placed on them by the pandemic and create the jobs that underpin our well-being. We will seek equality so that opportunity is more fairly distributed across Essex – we want all our residents to be able to maximise their potential. We will be as ambitious for the people of Essex as the people of Essex are for themselves and their families. Because there is no excellence without ambition. There is no landing on the moon, without first reaching for the stars.

Alongside these themes - Renewal, Equality, Ambition - that run through everything we do, we are focused on four areas where outcomes really matter for the quality of life of our residents – they are: the economy; the environment; children and families; and promoting health, care and well-being for all the parts of our population who need our support. And in focusing on these areas, we are mindful that alongside addressing today's challenges, we also need to begin to tackle tomorrow's.

To do that we are setting out twenty commitments that we believe, taken together, will make Essex a stronger county, not just for ourselves but also for our children and their children. Today we make our first down payment on that future – a future we will build together, a future in which everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Our 20 Commitments

Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy

1. Good jobs - we will work hard to address the impacts of the Covid pandemic on unemployment by supporting business recovery and building a stronger economy for the future, enabling people to build the skills they need to be part of it, and working alongside Essex businesses to help reduce barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups.
2. Levelling Up the Economy - we will work to level up the economy by addressing the drivers of socio-economic inequality (including income, education, employment, health and housing), based on the foundation of good jobs and a higher skilled and healthier workforce.
3. Infrastructure - we will deliver and maintain high quality infrastructure to improve opportunities for people living in Essex as well as supporting a growing economy and the delivery of new homes and communities by investing in the region of £1bn by the end of this Council.
4. Future growth and investment - we will help grow existing businesses and the economic sectors of the future in Essex, including the arts, and secure high levels of new investment by working with partners to promote the County, by creating the conditions for growth and by maximising the impact of public sector spend within the county.
5. Green growth - we will develop Essex as a centre for innovation, supporting new technologies and business models to enable our economy to transition to net zero and secure green jobs for the future by ensuring we have the right local skills and drawing in investment opportunities.

High Quality Environment

6. Net zero - we will work across the Council and the County to hit our net zero targets, by ensuring that the Council significantly reduces its carbon footprint whilst also supporting an acceleration in the progress towards sustainable housing and energy, and active and alternative forms of travel across the county.
7. Transport and built environment - we will deliver a step change in sustainable travel across the county, by growing passenger transport and active travel, and will ensure we support the move towards net zero, climate resilient developments, including our new garden communities, by delivering sustainable and healthy neighbourhoods for the future.
8. Minimise waste - we will minimise the impact on the environment by supporting residents and businesses to reduce waste and increase the amounts recycled, and by working with others to deliver a more circular economy whereby we better protect our natural resources through the efficient and ongoing reuse of materials.
9. Levelling Up the Environment - we will help all our communities to enjoy a high-quality environment by making them more resilient against flooding, heat stress and water shortages, by enhancing our county's green infrastructure and by reducing air pollution.
10. Green communities - we will work with communities and businesses, providing advice and support to enable and empower local action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience.

Health, Well-being and Independence for all Ages

11. Levelling Up Health – we will seek to reduce health inequalities by bringing together partners and communities to address the socio-economic drivers that underpin poor health outcomes, such as poor housing, poverty, economic insecurity and low skills.
12. Healthy Lifestyles - we will aim to increase the proportion of people able to live healthy lifestyles by embedding a community-first approach, by helping people to overcome social isolation, mental ill health and substance misuse and by helping people to live fit and active lifestyles.
13. Promoting independence – we will help individuals to live independently by assisting access to suitable accommodation, supporting access to employment and meaningful activities, enabling quality independent lives at home through reablement, care technology, strong domiciliary support and investment in housing, and we will shape the care market accordingly.
14. Place-based working - we will deliver better care that meets the needs of residents by joining up care and support with local partners in a place, including with district councils, health partners and the local voluntary and community sector.
15. Carers - we will help those carers whose caring duties are impacting most on their well-being by achieving a step change in the advice, guidance and support we provide to support well-being and independence and by targeting it at those who need it most.

A Good Place for Children and Families to Grow

16. Education outcomes - we will achieve educational excellence and high standards for all children and young people as we recover from the pandemic, by working in partnership with early years providers, schools, colleges and universities, by building greater coherence across the system and by engaging businesses, communities and the arts sector in supporting education outcomes.
17. Levelling Up Outcomes for Families - we will work to address inequalities affecting children and families by focusing on recovery from the pandemic, tackling family poverty, mental health support, emotional wellbeing and healthy, active and productive lifestyles, making sure that we engage hard to reach groups.
18. Family Resilience and Stability - we will work to strengthen family resilience and stability, as part of thriving communities, by embedding an approach that tackles the drivers of family instability and provides support to low income, vulnerable and working families.
19. Safety - we will continue to improve the safety of Essex residents, including children and young people, by sustaining our nationally recognised approach to early intervention, safeguarding and neglect, by addressing domestic abuse, child criminal and sexual exploitation and peer on peer abuse and by delivering on the work of the Safety Advisory Group.
20. Outcomes for vulnerable children - we will work to level up outcomes for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including Children in Care, Care Leavers, Children with SEND and children from BAME communities by working with children, young people and partners across the system.

Service Excellence

As a County Council, we commission or provide a wide range of services. Many of these are universal services which are provided to all members of the public. These include libraries, public health, local roads, public transport, broadband, education services, country parks, strategic planning and recycling centres. Other services are targeted at specific user groups, often our most vulnerable residents. These include children's social care, youth offending services, adult domiciliary and residential social care and drug and alcohol recovery services.

Excellent, value for money services therefore lie at the heart of our role as a council. The response of all public services and the voluntary sector to the pandemic has highlighted the central importance of effective service provision in helping people stay safe and well. As taxpayers, you need to know that we are keeping down the costs of running services; and as users of services, you want to know that services meet your needs and enhance your quality of life.

Essex County Council has a strong record for delivering excellent, value for money services. Our children's services and youth offending services are rated outstanding and are amongst the most efficient in the country. Other examples of great service delivery include the Connect programme, which connects people leaving hospital with independent living support; the Active Essex Sport England programme, which will help over 400,000 people in Essex to live healthier, more active lives; and our country parks, seven of which have been awarded Green Flag status for being well managed and meeting the needs of the communities they serve.

Overall, as a result of continuing to improve our services, we have been able to deliver substantial savings in recent years whilst still maintaining high levels of service delivery on both universal and targeted services. But the journey towards excellence in service delivery is never finished and in this Council period we will continue to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of our services by:

- Addressing the causes that drive demand – by focusing on levelling up outcomes and building healthier lives across Essex, we will over time reduce the demand that falls on higher cost, reactive services, whilst still maintaining these services for those who continue to need them.
- Investing in early intervention – we will continue to invest in early intervention services, where the evidence shows that these help people to achieve better outcomes and avoid more intensive service interventions down the line.
- Sustaining excellence – we will sustain and embed those core ingredients that have been shown to drive excellence in service delivery: quality of leadership and culture, an openness to learning and improvement, high levels of accountability, an engaged and motivated workforce, and the effective blending of operational expertise, data and user insight.
- Collaborating with partners – organisational boundaries can sometimes get in the way of providing seamless, cost-effective services. We will work with public

service and voluntary sector partners to join up services where it makes sense to do so and to share data, learning and expertise.

- Empowering communities – services are better if they are developed in partnership with communities to suit their own needs and strengths. We will seek to devolve power down to a local level where possible, we will partner with the voluntary sector and community groups and we will use social media to empower community action.

Equalities and Levelling Up

Essex has a proud track record of addressing inequality across the county but we know that there is always more to be done.

Consistent with the Government's focus on levelling up, we are making addressing inequalities and achieving levelling up a key pillar of our new strategy. There are financial and economic reasons why we should care about levelling up, but there is also a very strong moral argument that a person's potential should not be defined at birth by who their parents are or where they live. We believe that individuals should define their own destiny, and we think the Council should play a role in helping people do that.

Embedded in our strategy and reflected in our twenty commitments is a renewed commitment to addressing inequalities and levelling up life chances for our residents. And there are some defining features that will underpin our approach. These are:

- It is levelling up – we are not interested in making everyone equal if that is achieved at the expense of making some people or places worse off.
- It is both place based and cohort focused – this recognises that inequalities affect both people and places and we need to address both.
- It is long-term – we don't believe that there are quick fixes here and we believe the Council will have to demonstrate its commitment over the long term.
- It is multi-dimensional – as expressed in our Plan for Essex, we believe the actions to address levelling up will need to take place right across the Council and the wider system.
- It is cross-cutting – levelling up will not be achieved issue by issue, but by joining up our work at a place and/or people level.
- It is structural – we want to address root causes, not symptoms.
- It embraces our statutory equalities responsibilities – which remain the legal bedrock in tackling inequalities.

Levelling Up has a strong economic component. You cannot level up society without levelling up the economy – by giving people the opportunity to access good jobs and a decent income. But Levelling Up is not only about the economy. It demands that we address all the issues that shape a person's life chances. That is why Levelling

Up is embedded in our strategy across all our new strategic priorities and why it will be taken forward by the Council in all its work.

Addressing inequalities and tackling levelling up are certainly not new agendas for the County Council, to some extent they are at the core of our work, but we are determined through this strategy and this approach to create a new dynamism and ambition in the Council's work in this area.

How we will Deliver

This is a high-level strategy. It sets out what we are focused on and the approaches we will take. It doesn't set out in detail how we will achieve these outcomes.

The task of delivery, in the main, requires whole organisation effort and co-ordination. We are strengthening our organisation-wide co-ordination mechanisms to enhance collaboration and delivery on our four strategic aims, including on levelling up and on climate action. But the principle of working in this way goes across all of the outcomes we are seeking.

And we also recognise that we need to think imaginatively about how to achieve our outcomes, that is why we are placing a heavier emphasis on the arts, not only because we believe that a thriving cultural sector is part of a strong economy, but also because we believe the arts can help us achieve outcomes in many areas, from employment to social care. And successful delivery is not just about what we do as an organisation, it is also about how we enable others to do things for themselves. We see working with communities to enable them to create the thriving places and networks that nurture well-being as a key part of our role.

So when we talk about delivery, it is not just about the practicalities of plans and processes, but also about how we work together as an organisation and as a system with our partners across Essex and with our communities. And we recognise that there are some tough decisions ahead, we will need to prioritise the things that give us the best chance of improving people's lives.

As we implement this new strategy, we will therefore be guided by a number of operating principles for how we will work internally, with partners and with communities:

- 1) We are exploratory not defensive – we have big ambitions which will require us to think differently about the way we work. To tackle these big issues in new ways, we must be agile, able to work at pace and have the flexibility to adapt to changes. This will be underpinned by strong accountability at all levels.
- 2) We are open-minded – we don't have all the answers when it comes to tackling complex, open-ended, 'wicked' issues or we would have solved them already. To address them we need to be innovative and capable of finding creative solutions to achieving better outcomes within our budget. We must remain reflective and be open to continuous learning and development. And that means we must build time into our joint working to have the capacity to do the new thinking that is called for.
- 3) We are insight and evidence led – we have access to rich insight from data, from research and from the expertise of our staff. Using this insight effectively will enable us to understand people's lives better, to target resources effectively and to choose approaches that are most likely to deliver successful outcomes.

- 4) We work in a whole organisation/whole system way with partners - tackling our wicked issues and delivering on our ambitions will only happen when we work collectively as a whole organisation and whole system to mobilise our collective skills, experience and resources, along with those of our partners. We must strive to ensure that every part of the organisation can contribute to the achievement of our outcomes and we must build effective relationships with our partners to energise the system.
- 5) We manage our resources effectively – that means both financial resources and our people. We want to operate efficiently so that we have the headroom to invest in the priorities set out in this strategy and through our People Plan we are working hard with our employees to ensure that we have the capability to meet the demands ahead. And we are very mindful that we are only able to be ambitious in this strategy because of the strong financial foundations we have laid over many years.
- 6) We are influential. Some of the levers and the funds to achieve levelling up will lie at the national level or with our partners. This means that we need to be influencing government policies across the range of relevant issues and in ensuring that Essex gets its fair share of investment. It also means continuing to press the case for more devolved powers for Essex, so that we can control the levers we need, to effect change for our residents.
- 7) We empower communities, families and individuals. Improving life chances for communities, families and individuals cannot be done *to* them it needs to be done *with* them. It is about giving people the environment, support and opportunities in which they can flourish. This means we need to make the most of our assets in our approach to levelling up, supporting community infrastructure, and helping communities, families and individuals to take advantage of their strengths. We need to support high aspiration and expectation and challenge any part of our system that suggests ‘good enough’ is good enough.

Our Plan sets out twenty commitments to improve the lives of the people of Essex. Our intention, working with partners, businesses and our communities, is to renew the parts of our county that have suffered through the pandemic to get them back on their feet; to ensure everyone has a chance to succeed by being rigorous in our commitment to equality; and to reach for the stars – no one will ever accuse us of a lack of ambition on behalf of this county.

Most of all, it is our intention to work tirelessly over the next four years in service of the people of Essex – they have put their trust in us and we will not let them down.

Annual Report of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee 2020/2021

Report by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee Chairman, Councillor Anthony Hedley

Enquiries to Paul Turner, Director, Legal and Assurance on 03330 134591

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee has delegated authority to oversee internal and external audit work and lead on member standards work.
- 1.2 In March 2020 the Committee, working with an external facilitator undertook a review of its own effectiveness. One of the proposals which emerged from the review was that it would be helpful to produce an annual report to council, highlighting the work of the Committee during the previous municipal year.
- 1.3 This is the second such report. It should be noted that in addition, a national report known as the Redmond Review has also recommended that an annual report is submitted to a meeting of the Full Council by the external auditor.

2. Recommendation

That the Annual Report of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee for 2020/21 be received.

Audit, Governance and Standards Committee Annual Report 2020/21

Foreward by the Chairman of the Committee



I present to you this annual report which provides an overview of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee's activity and achievements during the financial year 2020/21. In line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Practical Guidance for Audit Committees (2018 edition), it serves to demonstrate how the Committee has discharged its responsibilities.

I was appointed Chairman of the Audit Governance and Standards Committee by the Council on 14 July 2020. Prior to this I was the Vice Chairman and due to the untimely death of the previous Chairman I chaired all meetings that took place during the period referenced in this report.

This report highlights the important work of the Committee in providing an independent overview of the Council's governance arrangements. This role includes detailed consideration of the work of external audit, internal audit and counter fraud, plus robust scrutiny and challenge of the Council's financial performance and, through our Standards role, the approach the Council takes in upholding standards and investigating any complaints made about Members.

During 2020/21 the Committee met six times having had to hold an additional meeting at the end of November 2020 to approve the Council's financial statements. Among the highlights, were the appointment of our first Independent Member; receiving unmodified opinions from our external auditor on the 2019/20 financial accounts and use of resources opinions of the Council and the Essex Pension Fund; a satisfactory conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in its use of resources; and a positive conclusion on the Council's internal control, governance and risk management arrangements from our Internal Auditors.

I would like to express my thanks to those officers and Members who, throughout this most difficult and challenging of years, have supported the work and achievements of the Committee.

*Councillor Anthony Hedley,
Chairman of the Audit, Governance and Governance Committee*

May 2021

Introduction

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee undertakes the role of audit committee as well as having responsibility for standards issues at Essex County Council.

In January 2020 the Committee undertook its first Effectiveness Review, in line with recognised best practice. As part of that process the Committee committed to provide an annual report to Full Council outlining how it has discharged its responsibilities during the preceding financial year and to provide assurance to the Council that it is fulfilling its key objectives. This is the second such report.

Membership

During the 2020/21 financial year the Committee comprised of ten elected Members. Membership was made up of seven Conservative Members, one Labour, one Liberal Democrat and one independent. Committee members were as follows:

- Councillor Hedley (Conservative), Chairman
- Councillor Platt (Conservative), Vice Chairman
- Councillor Butland (Conservative), Committee Member
- Councillor Davies (Labour), Committee Member
- Councillor Channer (Conservative), Committee Member
- Councillor Jackson (Conservative), Committee Member
- Councillor Mitchell, (Conservative), Committee Member
- Councillor Moore (Conservative), Committee Member
- Councillor Smith (Non-aligned Group), Committee Member
- Councillor Turrell (Liberal Democrats), Committee Member
- Atta Ul Haque Independent Committee Member, appointed in November 2020

Terms of Reference and Purpose

The terms of reference for the Committee are included in the Council's Constitution and extracted in full at Appendix 2.

The Committee is a key component of the authority's governance framework. It provides independent assurance, to Members and the public, on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework, internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and governance processes. By overseeing both internal and external audit it makes an important contribution to ensuring that effective assurance arrangements are in place.

The Committee monitors internal and external audit activity, reviews and comments on the effectiveness of the Council's regulatory framework and reviews and approves the Council's annual statements of accounts.

Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to "make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs". The Council's Section 151 Officer is key to discharging these requirements but to be truly effective,

she requires an effective audit, governance and standards committee to provide support and challenge, as well as an adequate and effective internal audit.

The Committee brings many benefits:

- ✓ Demonstrates how good governance supports the authority in achieving its corporate objectives
- ✓ Reinforces the importance and independence of internal and external audit and supports an effective relationship between the two
- ✓ Provides additional assurance through the process of independent review and challenge
- ✓ Increases emphasis and awareness of internal control, governance and risk management
- ✓ Promotes anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements
- ✓ Promotes, develops and upholds high standards and ethics for Members

The Work of the Committee

The Committee has a Work Plan designed to cover its responsibilities, appropriately timed, over the financial year. Agendas for the meetings are published on the Council's website no later than 5 working days before each meeting. Due to restrictions in place related to the Covid-19 pandemic all six Committee meetings during 2020/21 took place on-line via Zoom and were open to the public to virtually attend or view via you tube.

All the Committee agenda papers, minutes and audio recordings are available on the Council's website: [Link](#)

During the course of the year, the Committee has undertaken work covering the full range of its responsibilities. A full list of reports considered is at appendix 2 with key activities outlined below.

Financial Statements and Accounts

The Committee has responsibility for reviewing, on behalf of the Council, the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts. They have specific responsibility to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are any concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.

The Committee's Activity in 2020/21:

- Considering a report from the Section 151 Officer and the Chief Accountant on the process for compiling the Council's and the Essex Pension Fund's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, prior to the Committee's approval of the financial statements at the meeting in November 2020.

- Considering and approving the Annual Governance Statement (a statutory document that explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively). The statement (and action plan to address any significant governance issues identified) is produced following a comprehensive review of the Council's governance arrangements, including an annual self-assessment by each Executive Director.

External Audit

The Committee is responsible for receiving external audit plans, reports about the effectiveness of the Council's financial and operational arrangements and for considering the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. They are further responsible for reviewing, commenting on and monitoring these and providing advice to the Cabinet and Council where the Committee believes appropriate.

The Committee's Activity in 2020/21:

- Considering the audit plans presented by the external auditors for their audit of the Council and Essex Pension Fund for the 2019/20 financial year.
- Reviewing and scrutinising the Audit Completion Reports for the Council and Essex Pension Fund and the Annual Audit Letter that confirmed an unmodified opinion on the Group and the Council's Financial Statements and on the Essex Pension Fund's.
- Considered the use of resources conclusion (a positive opinion on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness).
- Providing effective challenge to the external auditors as appropriate and gained assurance from the reports and updates provided during the year.

Internal Audit and Counter Fraud

The Committee is responsible for receiving reports from the Council's Internal Auditors on the outcome of audit reviews and investigations and the implementation of recommendations, including the annual report and Opinion of the Chief Audit Executive.

The Committee's Activity in 2020/21:

- Reviewing and commenting on the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Plan for 2020/21 prior to endorsing the Plan for delivery.
- Considering and agreeing changes to the plan due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Monitoring the delivery of the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Plan via quarterly update including outcomes of individual audits.
- Monitoring implementation of major and critical internal audit recommendations.
- Considering the annual report from the Head of Assurance, in her role as Chief Audit Executive giving a 'Satisfactory Assurance' annual audit opinion for 2019/20 (reported at the meeting in July 2020).

- Monitoring counter fraud activity and the progress / outcomes of investigations.
- Agreeing the updated Internal Audit Charter.

Governance and Risk Management

The Committee is responsible for considering the Council's arrangements for corporate governance and risk management and advise on any action necessary to ensure compliance with best practice.

Committee Activity 2020/21

- Approving the revised Risk Management Strategy in order to promote effective risk management as a key component of good corporate governance. The Committee ensured that the strategy was fit for purpose and in line with current best practice.
- Reviewing activity under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 to ensure that members have oversight of how the Council is exercising its statutory powers to carry out some surveillance activity for law enforcement purposes. At present the Council does not use these powers, but the Code of Practice requires members to have oversight of this area.
- Reviewing the register of gifts and hospitality.

Committee Effectiveness

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) states that it is best practice for the Committee to regularly review its performance and effectiveness.

Accordingly, the committee undertook its first comprehensive effectiveness review in March 2020 producing an Action Plan of agreed actions that were formally adopted by the committee for implementation over the year 2020/21. These included the recruitment of an independent member to the committee and the introduction of a pre-meeting and member briefing sessions on matters of interest and value to the Committee. The full action plan with a progress update can be found at appendix 3.

Recruitment of Independent Member

The process for recruiting an independent member was agreed by Committee in March 2020 and the new independent member was formally appointed to the Committee in November 2020 after an open advertisement was placed and several potential fully qualified candidates were interviewed by the Chairman and two supporting committee members. The independent member has a background in accountancy and has received induction training. The appointment of an independent member to all Local Authority Audit Committees was recommended by the Redmond Review although we are proud to note that ECC had already understood the value of appointing an independent member and had begun the recruitment process prior to Redmond reaching his conclusion.

Professional Development

Continued professional development is key to the effective operation of the Committee. Being effective means having well informed Members able to confirm to the Council that the right processes are in place to give confidence that the authority's financial stewardship and overall governance arrangements can be relied upon. Briefings enable members of the Committee to be kept up to date on the latest developments in the areas of governance, risk and internal control as well as other activities of the Council. During 2020/21 members attended briefing sessions on the following matters:

- The Council's Financial Statements
- The Strategic Risk Register and the ECC process for risk management

In addition, members kept up to date via CIPFA newsletters and ad hoc updates from officers on matters of interest.

Audit, Governance Standards Committee - Terms of Reference

Membership: Ten Members

No member of the Cabinet may be appointed to the Committee or any of its Sub-Committees

Purpose

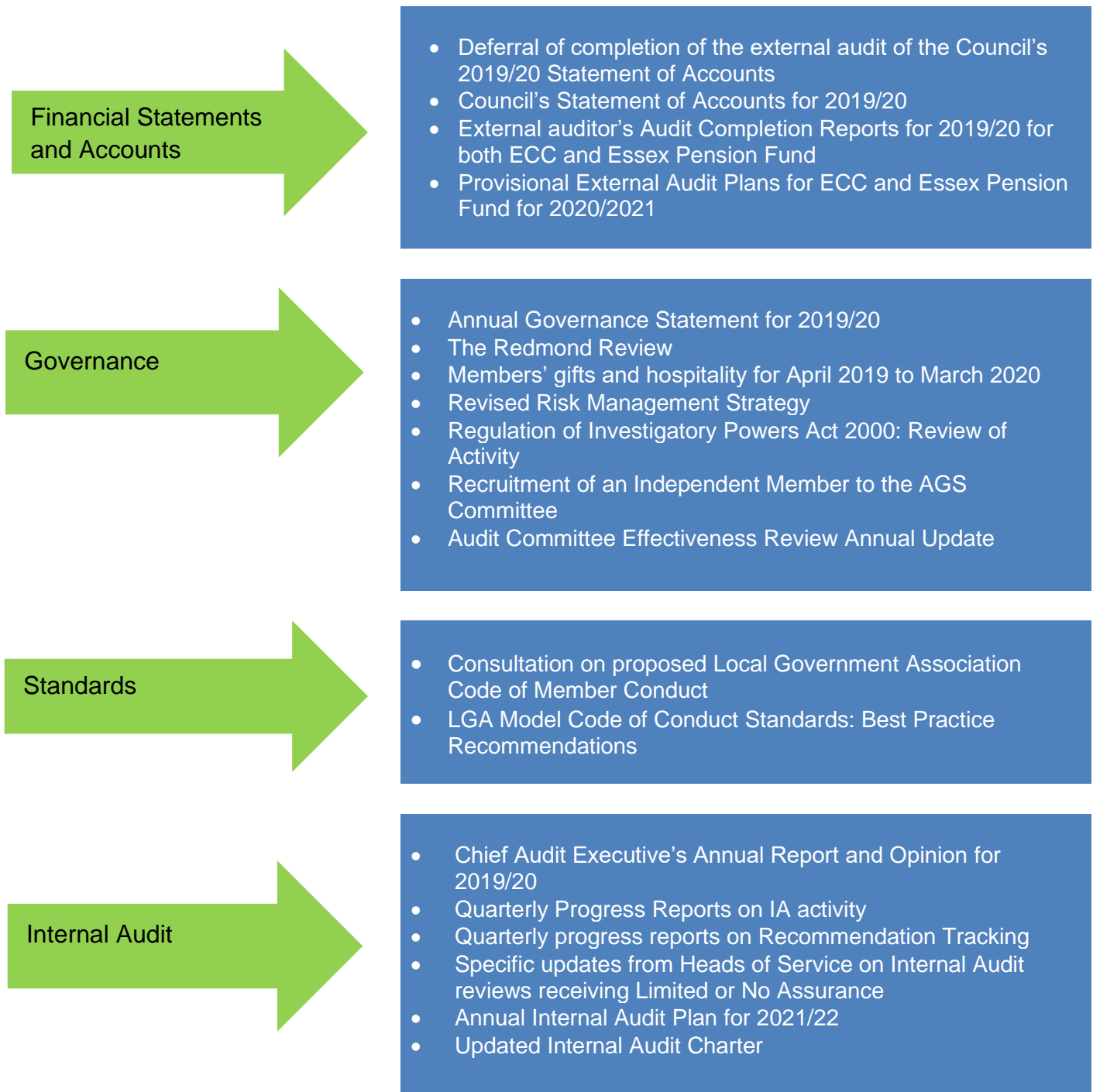
1. To review the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.
2. To receive and approve the Council's Annual Governance Statement ensuring that it reflects the Council's governance arrangements.
3. To receive and approve the Final Accounts, Memorandum and the Report to those charged with Governance from the External Auditors.
4. To consider the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter from the External Auditors and to provide such advice and comments on the Letter to the Cabinet and Council as the Committee believes appropriate.
5. To receive the internal and external audit plans and comment on these plans, including the extent to which they provide value for money.
6. To ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit is actively promoted.
7. To receive reports from the Council's Internal Auditor on the outcome of audit reviews and investigations and the implementation of recommendations, including the annual report of the Head of Internal Audit.
8. To receive any reports from the External Auditor about the effectiveness of the Council's financial and operational arrangements and monitor Management's response to the issues raised by External Audit.
9. To monitor the effectiveness of the Council's Financial Regulations, and Procurement Procedure Rules and recommend changes to Council.
10. To approve and monitor the effectiveness of strategies for anti-fraud and corruption, whistle blowing and any legislation relating to the regulation of investigatory powers.
11. To consider the Council's arrangements for corporate governance and risk management, and advise on any action necessary to ensure compliance with best practice.

12. To advise the Council on the local Code of Conduct for members and to promote, develop and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the Council.
13. To keep the Code of Member Conduct under review and recommend changes to the Code or the Constitution to support high standards of Conduct.
14. To grant dispensations under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 and under the Code of Member Conduct to councillors and co-opted members.
15. To approve processes for considering complaints that any Councillor or Co-opted Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.
16. To create one or more sub-committees as required to receive and consider allegations of misconduct of elected members, to take further oral and written evidence, adjudicate and make recommendations to the Leader of the Council and others.
17. To make arrangements for the appointment of Independent Persons under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.
18. To make arrangements for training of Members relating to standards issues.

Standards Sub-Committee – Terms of Reference

Membership: Between 3 and 5 members of the Council appointed by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee and the Leaders of relevant political groups in accordance with the political balance rules.

1. To exercise any of the Committee's powers with respect to decisions about individual complaints about breaches of the Code of Member Conduct.





Counter Fraud

- Annual Counter Fraud Plan for 2020/21
- Quarterly progress reports on counter fraud activity
- Updated Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy
- Prosecution and Sanctions Policy

Effectiveness Review - Annual Progress Update**Action plan from the Audit Governance and Standards Committee.**

No.	Action	Progress Update	Status
1	Introduce a pre-meeting session immediately prior to the start of the AG&S Committee to take the form of a briefing session and a pre-meeting	Meetings now start at 10.30, with a pre-meet and briefing session at 9.30am Members have received briefings on matters such as Financial Statements and Risk Management.	Complete
2	Review the work programme for the committee and plan when reports are due to be presented to avoid 'heavy' agendas. Consider increasing the frequency of AG&S committees to spread the workload and reduce the size of the agenda packs.	Committee review the work plan at every meeting and additional meetings are added where necessary.	Complete
3	Ask officers to try to reduce the size of the agenda packs if possible – consider receiving executive summary reports instead of more detailed reports	Contributing Officers now work to reduce the length of documents and covering reports contain summaries of the main issues.	Complete
4	Undertake an annual skills and knowledge self-assessment to determine where skills and knowledge need to be enhanced on an annual basis	Due to the impending election it was agreed that this would add more value if carried out after the election to account for the training needs of any new committee members.	In Progress
5	Look to co-opt at least one independent member to the AG&S committee to provide expertise and steer the	Independent member now appointed.	Complete

No.	Action	Progress Update	Status
	members to ask the challenging questions		
6	Produce a standalone annual report on the work of the AG&S committee for full council	The first such report was presented to full council in December 2020.	Complete
7	Increase the AG&S committee's visibility with officers and members by include a presence on the Essex CC intranet.	Page now live on intranet. https://intranet.essex.gov.uk/Pages/Audit_governance_and_standards_committee.aspx	Complete
8	AGS committee are considering requiring Directors or Heads of Service to attend the committee to do a joint presentation for all internal audit reports that have a limited or no assurance opinion. They want to get the service's view on the root cause of the issues identified in the audit, what action they are taking to remedy the situation, and how can the AGS committee help them	This now happens on a regular basis. Committee have received presentations from Tech Services, Finance and ASC in recent meetings.	Complete
9	AGS are considering using working groups (similar to those used at Basildon) to do in-depth look at issues outside of the committee, and report back to the committee on what they found	Committee received a report on this in September 2020 and are moving forward with an issue of interest.	Complete
10	The Committee have visibility of full strategic risk register at least once a year	Committee reviewed the Strategic Risk Register in September alongside a briefing session on the ECC approach to Risk Management This will be repeated annually.	Complete

No.	Action	Progress Update	Status
11	The Committee to undertake an annual review of its effectiveness and to consider how best to do it.	Committee completed a full review of its effectiveness with support and guidance from CIPFA in March 2020. A review of progress and consideration of effectiveness will be undertaken annually.	Complete
12	Changes to the audit and counterfraud plan to be referred to committee in future for approval rather than for information as at present.		Complete
	Training and Knowledge Enhancements		
	AGS committee identified areas where they were keen to have more training and briefing sessions. Topics requested initially by members detailed below.		
13	Briefing on corporate risk register and risk maturity to be provided.		Complete
14	Training session on understanding the financial statements, what they should be looking for, and what sort of questions they should be asking, prior to receiving the financial statements in June.		Complete
15	Briefing session on CIPFA/ALARM risk management benchmarking club	Not actioned as no relevant benchmarking undertaken in 2020	On hold - pending activity to report
16	Briefing on contract risks.	This was covered in Strategic Risk Session.	Complete

No.	Action	Progress Update	Status
17	Briefing on about Investment Risks faced by ECC.	Session to take place March 2021	Deferred due to election

Annual Report of the Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board, covering the period from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021

Report by the Director for Essex Pension Fund

Enquiries to Jody Evans on 03330 138489

1. Purpose of the Report

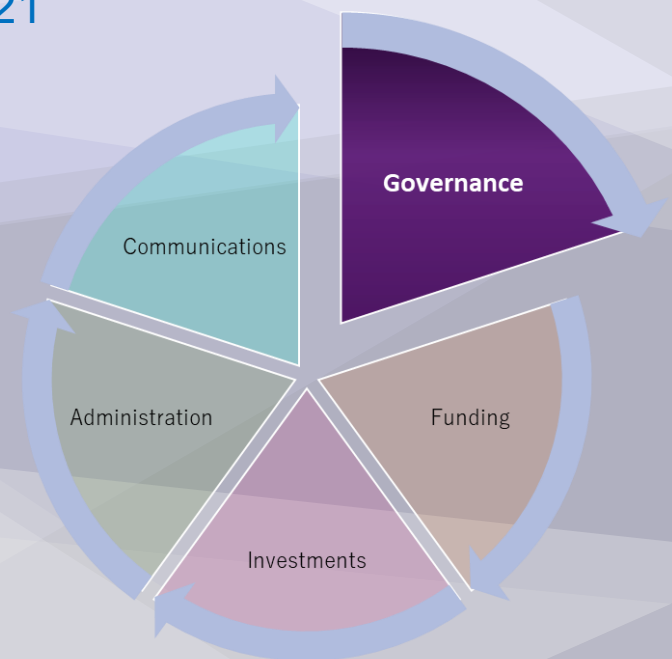
To present the Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board's annual report to Essex County Council.

2. Recommendations

To note the attached report.

Essex Pension Fund Annual Report 2020/21

July 2021



Essex Pension Fund

Annual Report 2020/21

1. Introduction

This is the twelfth Annual Report of the Essex Pension Fund Board(s), covering the period from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021.

2. Roles and Functions

Essex County Council's (ECC) functions as the Administering Authority are delegated to the Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board (PSB), the Essex Pension Fund Investment Steering Committee (ISC) and its Officers.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the PSB, ISC and Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board (PAB) are reviewed periodically as part of the Governance Policy and Compliance Statement and were last reviewed by the PSB at their meeting in March 2021. The TORs can be found within the [ECC Constitution](#).

Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board

The Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board (PSB) was established by Essex County Council in May 2008 to ensure that the Pension Scheme complied with the best practice principles for governance as required by the amended Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations 1997.

The PSB met three times during the period covered by this report: on 23 September 2020, 16 December 2020 and 17 March 2021. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and no legislation being in place at the time to allow for meetings to take place virtually the meeting scheduled for 17 June 2020 was cancelled.

Membership

During the period covered by this report the PSB had eleven Members. They represented ECC, the other local authorities in Essex (including Unitary Councils), Scheme Members and Other Employing Bodies (i.e. those which are not already specifically represented on the PSB).

The membership of the PSB as at 31 March 2021 was as follows:

Essex County Council (7)

Councillor Susan Barker	Chairman
Councillor Mark Platt	Vice Chairman
Councillor Alan Goggin	
Councillor Anthony Hedley	
Councillor Malcolm Maddocks	
Councillor Lee Scordis	
Councillor Clive Souter	

Essex Pension Fund Annual Report 2020/21

District/City/Borough Councils in Essex (1)

Councillor Colin Riley

Castle Point Borough Council

Unitary Councils in Essex (1)

Councillor Matt Dent

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Scheme Members (nominated by UNISON) (1)

Mrs Sandra Child

Other Employing Bodies (1)

Mrs Rachel Hadley

Chelmer Housing Partnership

Attendance

Attendance at PSB meetings during 2020/21 was 94% against a target of 80%.

Investment Steering Committee

The Essex Pension Fund Investment Steering Committee (ISC) is a sub-Committee of the PSB and its Membership is drawn from the PSB made up of 7 ECC voting Members, 1 Employer representative (non-voting member) and 1 Scheme Member representative (non-voting member).

The ISC reviews the Essex Pension Fund's ("the Fund") management of investments including, but not limited to, the approval of the Investment Strategy Statement.

Attendance

Attendance at ISC meetings during 2020/21 was 94% against a target of 80%.

Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board

The Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board (PAB) has been established as the Local Pensions Board for Essex in accordance with section 5 of the Public Service Pension Act 2013 and Part 3 of the LGPS Regulations 2013.

The remit of the PAB includes assisting the Administering Authority as Scheme Manager:

- to secure compliance with the LGPS regulations and any other legislation relating to governance and administration of the LGPS;
- to secure compliance with requirements imposed in relation to the LGPS by The Pensions Regulator (TPR).

Essex Pension Fund

Annual Report 2020/21

Membership

During the period covered by this report the PAB had 9 Members. They represented Employer and Scheme Member Representatives and an Independent Chairman.

The membership of the PAB as at 31 March 2021 was as follows:

Independent Chairman (1)

Nicola Mark	Independent
-------------	-------------

Scheme Member Representatives (4)

Andrew Coburn	Pensioner, Ex County Council, UNISON (Vice Chairman)
Debs Hurst	Active Member, Chelmsford College
Stuart Roberts	Active Member, Shenfield High Academy
James Sheehy (until 22 February 2021)	Active Member, Witham Town Council
Vacant (from 23 February 2021)	-

Employer Representatives (4)

James Durrant	Essex Fire Authority
Councillor Shane Hebb	Thurrock Borough Council
Councillor Simon Walsh	Essex County Council
Councillor Terry Cutmore (until 02 April 2020)	Rochford District Council
Councillor Martin Bracken (from 11 June 2020)	Chelmsford City Council

Attendance

Attendance at PAB meetings during 2020/21 was 81% against a target of 80%.

3. Dimensions of the Fund

In March 2020 there was a decline in the value of the Fund's assets falling to £6.6bn resulting from the stock market's reaction to the Covid-19 crisis, over the last year the Fund's value has reached an all-time high and based on the draft accounts, as at 31 March 2021 the value of the Fund's assets was £8.7bn.

The total value of pensions paid during 2020/21 was £220m, together with other benefits totalling £38m. The average payment made each year is c£4.8k.

The total number of beneficiaries are as follows:

Essex Pension Fund

Annual Report 2020/21

	2020	2021
Contributors	57,498	54,568
Deferred Members	69,857	68,914
Pensioners	44,682	46,210
Total	172,037	169,692

The PSB exercises on behalf of the Council the management of the Pension Fund whose membership comes from over 700 separate Employing Bodies, including:

- Essex County Council;
- Scheduled Bodies, which are Local Authorities/Academies and similar bodies who are automatically entitled to be members of the Fund; and
- Admitted Bodies, which are other organisations that participate in the Fund under an admission agreement between the Fund and the relevant organisation. Admitted Bodies include voluntary, charitable and similar bodies or private contractors undertaking a local authority function following outsourcing to the private sector.

4. Work of the PSB and the ISC

The following key issues were considered by the PSB/ISC between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021:

Governance

At the start of 2020/21, the Fund was faced with an unprecedented change in legislation that would allow the PSB, ISC and PAB meetings to be held on a virtual platform enabling the Fund's key decisions to continue to be made by PSB and ISC Members. The Fund adapted to this change seamlessly allowing Part I Public meetings to be carried out via Zoom in line with ECC Democratic Services guidance and Part II via Microsoft Teams.

During the year key Fund Policy documents were reviewed including the Knowledge and Skills Strategy setting out a full programme of training for the PSB and ISC, in order to allow its Members to acquire the detailed knowledge necessary to exercise their responsibilities effectively. Other policies reviewed by the PSB included: Recording and Reporting Breaches of the law; Risk Strategy; Business Continuity Policy; and the Governance Policy and Compliance Statement. The PSB also concluded the review of the Fund's Strategic Objectives, Risks and Scorecard Measures with the final element being the agreement of the new Communication Scorecard Measures at their March 2021 meeting.

Essex Pension Fund

Annual Report 2020/21

Funding

In April 2020, the 2019 Valuation rates set by the Funds Actuary commenced. The pandemic affected some Employers' cashflows and the Fund worked with these Employers to set a manageable approach to enable the continuation of contributions in line with the regulations.

Further work was undertaken by the PSB regarding the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement with the inclusion of an Employer Ill Health Policy and more recently the development of Employer Flexibilities Policies. These policies will help Employers in regard to unforeseen costs by way of an in-house insurance policy for Ill Health and the management of exits without requiring full exit costs to be met in one payment. It should be noted that these policies do not impact on the Employers' decision when awarding an Ill Health pension.

Despite the market volatility experienced, the Funding level suffered little impact as demonstrated in the table below. The latest Interim Valuation (as at 31 March 2020) presented to the PSB's December 2020 meeting highlighted that the new approach to hold back 5% of the assets in an asset shock reserve at the last Valuation was a key factor in maintaining the Funding level by using just 20% of this reserve.

Valuation Date	Assets	Liabilities	Surplus/ (Deficit)	Funding Level
31-Mar-19	6,711,392	6,971,143	-205,751	97%
31-Mar-20	6,900,714	7,173,612	-272,898	96.2%
31-Mar-20 Invoking 20% of asset shock reserve				97.20%

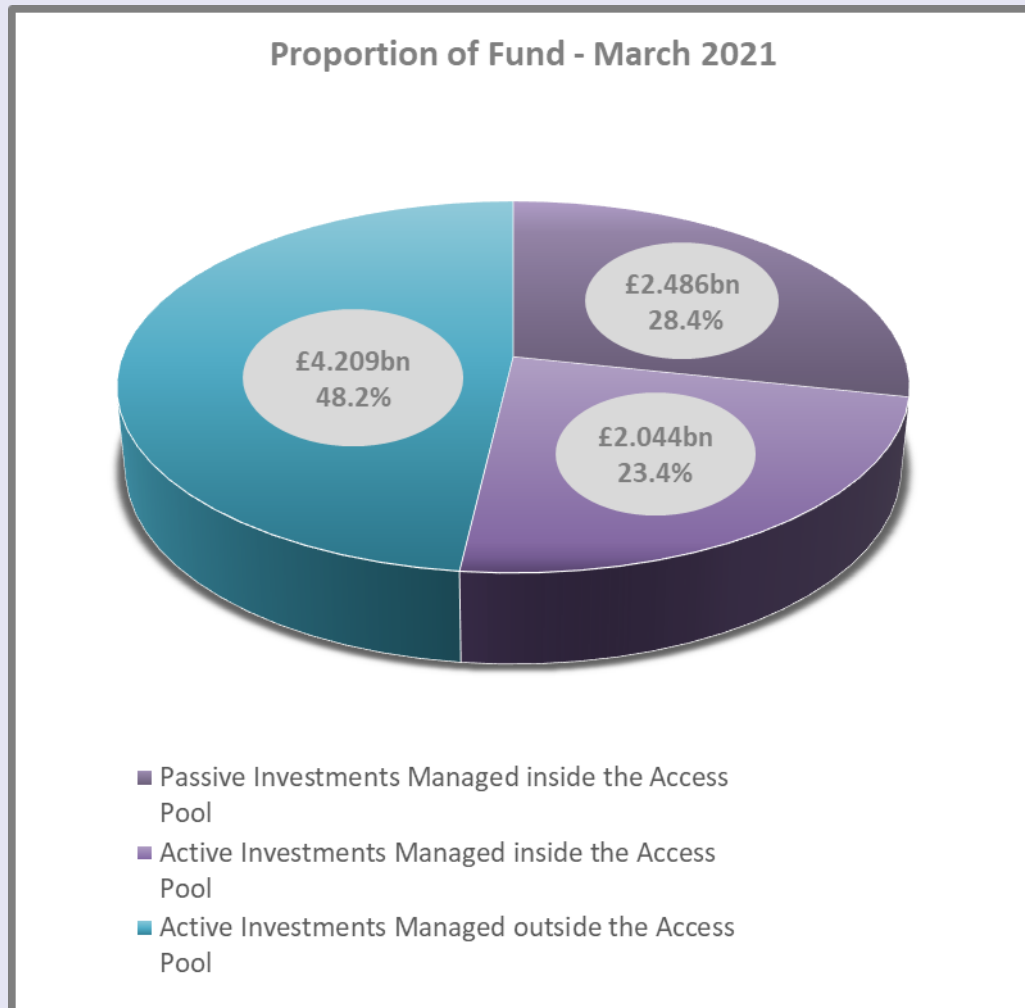
Asset Pooling

Alongside the ten other Funds within the ACCESS Pool, Essex continues to progress the pooling of its investment management arrangements.

Despite challenges that this year has brought, a further seven sub funds were launched by ACCESS's Pool Operator, Link Asset Solutions taking the number to twenty-two.

Essex Pension Fund

Annual Report 2020/21



Investment Strategy and Responsible Investment

The ISC continued to make significant progress in its migration away from equities to alternative assets. In order to reach its target strategic allocation of 45% the ISC agreed to further increase the Fund's strategic allocation to infrastructure and timber of an additional 4% and 2% taking the total allocation to 10% and 4% respectively.

This decision has seen the Fund's investments in sustainable timber and renewable energy increase from 5.1% as at 31 March 2020 to 6.1% as at 31 March 2021. It is expected as commitment is drawn down over the next few years the Fund's exposure will continue to rise. Direct investment in fossil fuels has also been steadily decreasing; as at 31 March 2021 it was 0.05% compared to 0.22% as at 30 September 2015.

The ISC continued to dedicate substantial time and commitment to the subject of Responsible Investment (RI). Following a full stakeholder consultation during summer 2020 the revised Investment Strategy Statement was subsequently published.

Page 67 of 87

Essex Pension Fund

Annual Report 2020/21

The Fund is committed to working collaboratively with others. To this end, the Fund continues to be a member of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum, a voluntary shareholder engagement group for local government pension funds and continues its work with the ACCESS Pool and its local authorities as part of its commitment in this regard.

The ISC have reviewed its arrangements with both its Institutional Investment Consultant and Independent Investment Adviser and look forward to continuing its partnership with Hymans Robertson and Mark Stevens over the coming year.

Administration

The Team overseeing the administration of scheme benefits and systems development have continued to provide support and guidance to members throughout the pandemic alongside preparing for the impact of several large-scale legislative changes. The PSB recognise the significant impact this will have on staff resources over the medium term and are supportive of the Fund appropriately resourcing to ensure that it is able to continue to fulfil its statutory duties.

The Fund continues to progress its digital aspiration with the continued roll out of its web-based online portal tool with the implementation of a new look Employer Online, enabling employers to review and update staff member details. Initial take up has been encouraging with a third of employers currently utilising the system with more joining every month. Despite the challenges this year has brought this has not stopped the Fund being able to deliver the full range of services to over 172,000 Fund members and paying its 44,000 pensioners.

Communications

Digital communications continue to be progressed. A review of all the Fund's communications and use of media has been undertaken to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose and is able to adapt to our future stakeholder's needs. With this the development of webinar training and the introduction of virtual pension surgeries has enabled the customer facing areas of the Pensions Team to continue to deliver the right service to the right people at the right time.

In addition, the PSB delegated a review of the Fund's Annual Surveys to the PAB which saw the formation of a Task and Finish Group. The PAB reported the work of the Group to the PSB at their March 2021 meeting concluding that the Group's consensus was that the Fund should move to a more targeted approach with surveys being shorter and sent using various methods. This recommendation was subsequently accepted by the PSB.

Other areas considered were:

Essex Pension Fund

Annual Report 2020/21

Funding

- Actuarial Interim Review;
- Employer Updates;
- Development of new policies to assist Employers;
- Retail Index Price (RPI) Reform; and
- Fund Actuary Contractual Arrangements.

Investments

- Reports on the work of the ISC;
- Work reported through the ISC includes:
 - Treasury Management Strategy;
 - Investment Strategy Statement and Responsible Investment;
- Procurements:
 - Independent Investment Adviser;
 - Global Custody;
 - Institutional Investment Consultant; and
 - Direct Lending;
- Capital Markets Outlook;
- Covid-19 Impacts on the Market Economies and the Fund;
- Financial Reporting Council (FRC) UK Stewardship Code 2020;
- Strategy Implementation Tracker;
- Structural Reform of the LGPS – Pooling Quarterly Update of ACCESS Joint Committee (AJC);
- Baillie Gifford Equity Portfolio Rebalancing;
- Asset Liability Study;
- Traffic Light Ratings Report; and
- Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Objectives.

Governance

- External Audit Programme of Work;
- Reports from Internal Audit regarding the control environment of the Fund and Administration;
- Governance Review and Effectiveness Survey;
- Annual Accounts;
- PSB Member Representatives;
- PAB Review of the Fund's Business Continuity Arrangements;
- Fund Policies:
 - Recording and Reporting Breaches of the law;
 - Risk Strategy;
 - Business Continuity Policy;
 - Governance Policy and Compliance Statement; and
 - Knowledge and Skills Strategy;
- PAB Representatives Recruitment; and
- Pension Fund Activity Updates:
 - Business Plan
 - Risk Register; and
 - Scorecard.

Administration and Communications

- LGPS Regulatory Reform, including:
 - McCloud;
 - Goodwin;
 - Unpausing of Cost Cap; and
 - 95K Cap;
- PAB Review of the Fund's Annual Surveys;
- Government Consultations, including:
 - Restricting Exit Payments in the Public Sector;
 - Implementation of Regulations (95K Cap); and
 - McCloud.

5. Member Training

There is a firm commitment to training and development, with a view to ensuring that Members are able to fulfil their roles effectively. In addition, the PAB are required by the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 to have an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding in order to carry out their role.

Details of Members' attendance at the Fund's Board(s) meetings and training events (internal and external) are monitored throughout the year.

Member training is delivered in a multitude of ways that Fund Officers adapt to suit each Member's preference. In addition, all Boards/Committee Members were invited to attend a Training Day during November 2020 and a specific Responsible Investment Workshop was held with all ISC Members during February 2021.

A Training Needs Analysis is in the process of being carried out with each Member of the Boards/Committee.

Essex Pension Fund

Annual Report 2020/21

Cllr Susan Barker

Chairman of the PSB and of the ISC

Vice Chairman of ACCESS Joint Committee

Essex County Council

The Leader's Report of Cabinet Issues

This report is to receive the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 8 June and 22 June 2021 and attached to the report as appendices 1 and 2.

Recommendation

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 8 June and 22 June 2021.

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet meeting that took place in the Chamber of County Hall on Tuesday 8 June 2021

Present:

Councillor	Cabinet Member Responsibility
Councillor K Bentley	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor L McKinley	Deputy Leader and Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance
Councillor T Ball	Education Excellence, Skills and Training
Councillor M Buckley	Waste Reduction and Recycling
Councillor G Butland	Devolution, Art, Heritage and Culture
Councillor B Egan	Children's Services and Early Years
Councillor L Scott	Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport
Councillor L Wagland	Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning
Councillor C Whitbread	Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs

Councillors Pond, Henderson, King, Durham, Platt, Schwier and Hoy were also present.

1. **Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest.**

The report of Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and the following were noted:

1. The new membership of the Cabinet was noted and introductions were made.
2. Apologies were received from Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care and Councillor Mackrory, Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 20 April 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **Questions from the public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

4. **Allocation of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF): 2021/22 Spending Programme (FP/071/0521)**

The Cabinet considered a report advising that the Council had received additional Contain Outbreak Management Funding from the Department of Health and Social Care to help further contain and respond to the Covid-19 pandemic in Essex. The report asked Cabinet to agree how that one-off funding would be spent.

The Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance, and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs responded to questions from Councillors Henderson, King and Pond regarding:

- The provision of support to organisations that may find the bidding process difficult;
- The need to fund community transport, particularly considering increased NHS pressures;
- The establishment of the Central Law Group, working with Chelmsford Citizen's Advice Bureau, to provide assistance particularly in relation to employment issues;
- The need for regular updates and suitable assurance methods to ensure the funding was being used where it could give the most value;
- The scope of measures to support the Armed Forces;
- The dispersal of funds to areas with high levels of tourism and visitor numbers and how these areas had been identified;
- The need to ensure that urban areas were not disadvantaged when considering the dispersal of funds to support community buildings;
- The importance of the business adaptation grant scheme.

A written answer would also be provided to Councillor King by the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care in relation to how the measures set out at 3.4.11 in the report to support adults with learning difficulties would be administered.

Resolved:

1. That £13.3m of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) will be used to fund the following public health coronavirus response activities in Essex:
 - 1.1. To increase the maximum Business Adaptation Grant that businesses can apply for from £1,500 to £5,000 and allocate £5m to be made available to District, Borough and City Councils for this purpose, to be paid in stages to each authority to enable them to meet demand in their area.
 - 1.2. That £2.5m will be used to fund measures to reduce the risk of spreading the virus in places in Essex open to the public with high levels of tourism and visitor numbers. £925,000 of this will be used to fund measures in Essex County Council's Country Parks, Essex Outdoors Centres and Cressing Temple Barns. £1.575m will be allocated to a grant scheme which will be open to applications

from District, Borough and City Councils.

- 1.3. To allocate £1.08m to be divided equally between the twelve District, City and Borough Councils in Essex to fund an additional 12 months of direct support to local communities via the community hubs they have established.
 - 1.4. To grant £680,000 to Citizen Advice Bureaux in Essex to meet continued increased demand due to Covid-19.
 - 1.5 To allocate £550,000 to the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) to deliver, on the Council's behalf, a grant scheme for grassroots clubs to assist with Covid-19 remobilisation costs.
 - 1.6 To agree that £508,000 will be used by the Council's Early Years team to provide a one-off payment to early years settings in the County to assist with PPE costs. A payment of £200 will go to childminders and out-of-school providers, and £500 to pre-schools and day nurseries.
 - 1.7. To allocate £25,000 to the Chelmsford Citizens Advice Bureau to host an Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer.
 - 1.8. To agree that £500,000 will be used by ECC to make bottles of hand sanitiser and face coverings freely available to young people and adults with low income.
 - 1.9. To agree that £50,000 will be used to deliver a targeted Covid-19 communications campaign for gypsy and traveller communities.
 - 1.10 To agree that £100,000 will be used to fund Essex Coronavirus Action (ECA), a digital community campaign model supporting Covid safety compliance, for an additional 12 months.
 - 1.11 To agree that £200,000 will be used to purchase devices for adults with learning disabilities, autism, carers and older people, and £100,000 will be used to facilitate implementation and the upskilling of isolated residents to help them become digitally connected.
 - 1.12 To agree that £500,000 will be used to fund Covid-19 communications and campaigns.
 - 1.13 To allocate £1.5m to the Rural Community Council of Essex to administer a grants scheme to support community buildings, such as village halls, community centres, and faith buildings with the costs of being Covid compliant.
2. To agree that £500,000 will be used to fund Covid-19 communications and campaigns.

3. To allocate £1.5m to the Rural Community Council of Essex to administer a grants scheme to support community buildings, such as village halls, community centres, and faith buildings with the costs of being Covid compliant.

3.1. to agree the criteria for and approve applications for funding pursuant to paragraph 2.1 above; and

3.2. to approve the terms of agreements under which funding is paid.

4. To agree that the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Director, Wellbeing Public Health and Communities and the Executive Director, Place and Public Health is authorised between now and the end of November 2021 to reallocate the funding referred to in paragraph 1. between different heads of funding set out in paragraph 1. to respond to demand and priority need.

5. **Report of decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members (FP/045/04/21)**

The report was noted.

6. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Cabinet would take place on the morning of Tuesday 22 June 2021, with the venue and time to be confirmed.

(Post meeting note – due to incorrect advice being provided to the Chairman, the date of the next meeting was advised as being 29 July 2021. 22 June 2021 is the correct date).

7. **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

8. **Urgent Exempt Business**

There was no urgent exempt business.

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

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet meeting that took place in the Chamber of County Hall on Tuesday 22 June 2021

Present:

Councillor	Cabinet Member Responsibility
Councillor K Bentley	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor T Ball	Education Excellence, Skills and Training
Councillor M Buckley	Waste Reduction and Recycling
Councillor G Butland	Devolution, Art, Heritage and Culture
Councillor B Egan	Children's Services and Early Years
Councillor L Scott	Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport
Councillor L Wagland	Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning
Councillor C Whitbread	Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs
Councillor J Spence	Health and Adult Social Care

Councillors Pond, Henderson, King, Durham, Platt, Schwier, Barker and Aspinell were also present.

1. **Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest.**

The report of Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and the following were noted:

1. There had been no changes of membership since the last report.
Councillor Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs attended the meeting via video link and did not vote on any item within the agenda.
2. Apologies were received from Councillor McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance, and Councillor Mackrory, Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **Questions from the public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

4. **2020/21 Provisional Outturn Report (FP/697/05/20)**

The Cabinet considered a report presenting and providing commentary on the provisional outturn position for financial year 2020/21 prior to formal closure of

the accounts. The report also explained the key movements since the third quarter financial overview report (presented to Cabinet on 19 January 2021) to the year-end position.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs and the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care responded to questions from Councillors Henderson, King and Pond in relation to the following points:

- Why existing reserves had been renamed to the Ambition Fund and Renewal Fund reserves, and why the funds held therein were restricted or earmarked;
- Options for reallocating the revenue underspend of £7.619m;
- The underspend on schools;
- The need for an analysis of spend against adult social care, and the level of confidence that the current resilient position would continue.

Written answers would also be provided to Councillor Henderson in respect of the following:

- Whether a greater level of capital funding should be provided to support Fleet purchases;
- The intentions for the unspent project funding against the Carbon Reduction Reserve;
- Why underspends against residential and nursing care were being moved to the General Balance as opposed to being retained by Health and Adult Social Care;
- The ability to move funds from the COVID emergency grant to the Renewal Fund;
- Why it was no longer considered financially viable to operate the volunteering and project work scheme for young people previously delivered by the National Citizenship Service;
- Redundancy costs related to the new Occupational Health Contract;

And to Councillor King in respect of the following:

- The need for ongoing monitoring and analysis of the impacts of and on capital spending.

Resolved:

To approve the following in relation to the 2020/21 outturn position:

1. Rename the Service Improvement Reserve to the Ambition Fund Reserve;
2. Rename the COVID-19 Recovery Reserve to the Renewal Fund Reserve;
3. That the net under spend £11.482m is appropriated to the General Balance to support future years' budget planning;

4. General Balance returns of £15.714m in relation to Adult Social Care COVID funding that is no longer required or has been recovered from Health (£15.385m), Slough libraries (£300,000) and Excess Deaths COVID funding no longer required (£29,000);
5. Withdrawal of £31.542m from the General Balance to earmarked reserves in respect of reassignment of COVID grant funding;
6. That under spends are allocated between portfolios as set out within the 'Transfers of under / over spends between Portfolios' column of Appendix A;
7. That the following amounts are appropriated to / from restricted and other revenue reserves;

Restricted Funds

- Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Reserves

- Building Schools for the Future - **£354,000** contribution (Appendix D 6iii)
- Clacton Secondary Schools - **£479,000** contribution (Appendix D 6iii)
- Debden School - **£835,000** contribution (Appendix D 6iii)
- A130 Road - **£219,000** contribution (Appendix D 3iii)

- **Waste Reserve - £4.574m** contribution mainly relating to PFI credits received during the year (Appendix D 7iii & 17ii)

- **Grants Equalisation Reserve - £501,000** contribution in relation to Public Health grant to be utilised in 2021/22 relating to under spends following the maximisation of grant funding (Appendix D 9v)

- **Schools - £8.958m** net contribution to the Schools' reserve, following under spend against schools' budgets in 2020/21 (Appendix D 5i)

- Partnership Reserves

- Essex Safeguarding Childrens Board Partnership Reserve - **£50,000** withdrawal (Appendix D 1iii)
- Adults Safeguarding Board Partnership Reserve - **£17,000** contribution (Appendix D 9v)
- Public Sector Reform Partnership Reserve - **£47,000** contribution (Appendix D 1iii)
- Youth Offending Teams Partnership Reserve - **£343,000** contribution (Appendix D 1iii)
- Public Law Partnership Reserve - **£19,000** contribution (Appendix D 12iii)

Capital funding

- **Capital funding - £2.841m** net contribution to transfer capital financing resources to revenue in respect of:

- Replenish the reserve to retain funding to support the capital programme - **£8.450m** contribution
- Essex Housing - **£7.746m** withdrawal for the technical adjustment relating to projects transferring to Essex Housing LLP. The Council will transfer the housing development sites to the LLP during 2021/22 at a price that reflects the market value of the sites and includes the pre-construction costs being treated as abortive by the Council. This is in line with the Cabinet decisions taken in December 2020
- To support Fleet purchase in 2021/22 - **£1.276m** contribution
- Highways expenditure which is capital in nature - **£500,000** contribution
- Capital works relating to the in-house Adults Residential Service - **£200,000** contribution
- Capital expenditure on networking and communications infrastructure - **£82,000** contribution
- Compensation claims for highways as a result of works carried out for Colchester Integrated Transport Package scheme - **£79,000** contribution

Other reserves

- **Carry Forwards - £8.471m** contribution, in respect of revenue budget underspends that it is proposed are carried forward for use in 2021/22. The proposals for utilising this Reserve in 2021/22 are set out in **Appendix C** of this report
- **Adults Digital Programme - £877,000** contribution to continue with projects within the programme for use in 2021/22 (Appendix D 9v)
- **Adults Transformation - £3.5m** contribution to support the Adult Social Care medium term budget (Appendix D 9v)
- **Carbon Reduction Reserve - £192,000** contribution due to unspent project funding which is now required for use in 2021/22 (Appendix D 7iii)
- **Children's Transformation Reserve - £1.314m** contribution to replenish the reserve to support transformation capacity to deliver the Children's Transformation Programme (Appendix D 1iii)
- **Collection Fund Investment Risk Reserve - £42,000** contribution to support funding in 2021/22 (Appendix D 16ii)
- **Community Initiatives Reserve - £275,000** withdrawal to support expenditure incurred on community projects during 2x 20/21 (Appendix D 2iii)
- **COVID Equalisation Reserve - £12.638m** net contribution – withdrawals to and contributions from multiple portfolios to fund COVID pressures and return COVID funding where actual expenditure was lower than previously forecast, plus a contribution to transfer all remaining COVID emergency grant required for future commitments to this reserve; this will be applied

- to expected COVID related costs from 2021/22 (Appendix D 1iii, 2iii, 3iii, 6iii, 7iii, 9v, 14iii & Appendix M)
- **Emergency Reserve - £10.169m** contribution due to actual expenditure being lower than previously forecast relating to the pandemic and to replenish ECC funds originally used for COVID pressures and losses with emergency grant (Appendix D 3iii, 6iii & Appendix M)
 - **Health and Safety Reserve - £681,000** contribution relating to unspent funds for planned projects now slipped to 2021/22 and also a contribution from the General Balance to replenish ECC funds originally used for COVID pressures and losses with emergency grant (Appendix D 6iii, 10iii & Appendix M)
 - **Insurance Reserve - £1.238m** contribution in respect of recovery of income relating to Highways claims, to meet ECC budget pressures in 2021/22 as planned in February budget setting (Appendix D 13iii)
 - **Quadrennial elections reserve - £668,000** withdrawal towards preparation work incurred for the May 2021 elections (Appendix D 10iii)
 - **Renewal Fund Reserve - £21.518m** net contribution – a contribution of COVID emergency grant from the General Balance to support the creation of a £25m Renewal Fund within the reserve and to replenish ECC funds originally used for COVID pressures and losses. Partially offset by withdrawals for COVID pressures and losses (Appendix D 4iii, 6iii, 11iii, 12iii & Appendix M)
 - **Ambition Fund Reserve - £6.069m** net contribution due mainly to replenishment of the reserve using part of the funds received from UBB in respect of the costs order relating to a litigation between the authority and UBB Waste (Essex Ltd) and the ECL Dividend (Appendix D 1iii, 6iii, 8iii, 9v, 10iii, 14iii & 16ii)
 - **Technology Solutions Reserve - £1.187m** contribution due to unspent funds for corporate systems reprofiled into 2021/22 (Appendix D 12iii)
 - **Tendring PPP Reserve - £303,000** withdrawal of the remaining funds now the contract has been terminated (Appendix D 6iii)
 - **Transformation Reserve - £2.445m**, net contribution due to unspent funds relating to slipped or paused projects to use in 2021/22 and also a contribution from the General Balance to replenish ECC funds originally used for COVID pressures and losses which can be funded from government emergency grant (Appendix 1iii, 2iii, 3iii, 4iii, 12iii, 15iii & Appendix M)
8. The financing of capital payments in 2020/21 is approved on the basis set out within Appendix G to this report.
 9. Capital payment budgets, and associated capital financing, of **£18.032m** are reprofiled into subsequent financial years, in respect of slippage in schemes (as shown in the 'Slippage' column of Appendix H).
 10. Capital payment budgets, and associated capital financing, of **£4.347m** are brought forward in respect of schemes that have progressed ahead of schedule (as shown in the 'Advanced works' column of Appendix H).

11. Portfolios' 2020/21 capital payments budgets are reduced by **£16.016m** (as shown in the 'Reductions' column of Appendix H), with increases of **£11.845m** to other schemes (as shown in the 'Additions' column of Appendix H), to reflect achieved activity in 2020/21.

To approve the following in relation to the 2021/22 budget:

12. Agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Director for Finance and Technology (S151 officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs to release **£8.471m** from the Carry Forwards Reserve in 2021/22 for the purposes detailed in Appendix C of this report, as well as those previously approved in the Half Year report (FP/694/05/20) and Third Quarter report (FP/695/05/20).

5. Procurement of the Essex Community Wellbeing Service (FP/054/04/21)

The Cabinet received a report seeking agreement to procure a community wellbeing service to deliver a cohesive and innovative model of wellbeing for residents which approached the issues impacting wellbeing holistically and focussed on unmet need, a single point of access, equality and a digital offer.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care responded to questions from Councillors King and Henderson in relation to

- Whether triage would be delivered by qualified social workers;
- The degree to which personal contact would be replaced by digital methods;
- How engagement with the voluntary sector would be managed and how this meshed with service provision;
- The mechanisms to monitor delivery including customer feedback and contractual obligations;
- The level of efficiencies expected to be achieved;
- The degree to which the efforts of volunteers would be used to deliver services.

Resolved:

1. To procure a provider to deliver an integrated, countywide Essex Community Wellbeing Service for a period of five years, with the option to extend for a further two years.
2. To undertake a competitive procurement exercise using a two-stage tender process, with bids to be evaluated on 60% quality of which 10% will be allocated to social value, and 40% price with agreement of the detailed evaluation criteria being subject to the approval of the Director, Wellbeing, Public Health and Communities.
3. That the Cabinet Member, Adult Social Care and Health, is authorised to award the contract to the successful bidder following completion of the procurement process.

6. Bus Back Better: Proposed Enhanced Bus Partnership for Essex (FP/063/05/21)

The Cabinet received a report asking for agreement that ECC formally issue a statement of intention to set up enhanced quality bus partnerships.

The Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport responded to questions from Councillors Barber (via video link), Pond, King and Henderson in relation to:

- The importance of the proposal in delivering a service to rural areas;
- Whether the approach could be seen as a stepping stone to eventually adopting a franchise model;
- The future of the Bus Strategy Board;
- How engagement with the districts would be delivered;
- How any future failure of the enhanced bus partnerships would be managed.

A written answer would also be provided to Councillor Pond in relation to how differing approaches may be delivered in different parts of the county according to need.

Resolved:

1. That the Council will progress the development of an Enhanced Partnership Plan for the whole of the administrative county of Essex with the intention of delivering an Enhanced Partnership Plan and one or more Enhanced Partnership Schemes as soon as possible, and if possible, by April 2022.
 2. To note that the Cabinet Member will take decisions relating to:
 - the final number of schemes,
 - the draft issued to give operators the chance to object
 - the consideration of objections from operators; and
 - the final consultation draft.
 3. To note that as there are likely to be additional resources required in order to issue a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by 31 October 2021, a further decision relating to the resource requirements may be required once the detailed requirements have been developed.
 4. To note that the Cabinet will take the final decision on adopting the Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme(s) and on the adoption of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- 7. Expansion of New Rickstones Academy, Witham and Southview SEN School with residential provision (FP/033/03/21)**

The Cabinet received a report requesting endorsement of the expansion of New Rickstones Academy in Witham in order to meet the need for secondary school places in the locality and the endorsement of the expansion of sixth form places and residential provision at Southview SEN School.

The Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training and Councillor Schwier, as Climate Change Czar, responded to a question from Councillor King in relation to the carbon reduction methods that may be deployed, beyond the photovoltaic cells referenced in the report.

Resolved:

1. To support the expansion of New Rickstones Academy by increasing capacity from 6 forms of entry to 8 forms of entry with effect from September 2022.
 2. To support the expansion of Southview SEN School by adding 24 sixth form places and residential provision for ten children.
 3. To the procurement of the associated building works for New Rickstones Academy and Southview SEN School through a two-stage design and build mini competition using the Essex Construction Framework 2.
 4. That the Head of Infrastructure Delivery is authorised to award the contract to the successful bidder, when he is content that the following conditions have been met:
 - a. A satisfactory planning permission has been granted; and
 - b. The construction costs are within the agreed budget and represent value for money.
 5. To approve the capital budget for construction and associated project fees, as per the profile stated in the confidential financial appendix, including a re-profiling of budget in relation to Southview School of £80,000 from 2021/22 to 2022/23.
8. **Adoption of the Essex County Council Walking Strategy (FP/073/05/21)**

The Cabinet received a report asking that the Essex County Council (ECC) Walking Strategy 2021 which outlined the actions the Council would take to achieve its strategic priorities around active and more sustainable travel be adopted.

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

- The clarity of the language used in the Strategy and how this could be improved;

- The need to be realistic about the timescales required to achieve the priorities set out in the Strategy and the necessary financial investment;
- The priority given to school streets;
- The need to encourage the levels of activity and exercise seen during the first lockdown in March 2020;
- The helpfulness to walkers of the old ‘fingerpost’ signage as opposed to their replacements;
- The links between the Strategy and the promotion of tourism, and the importance of the public rights of way network;
- Whether the “Highways Panels” should be renamed to better reflect that walking fell within their remits;
- The low priority given to making a currently flooded right of way accessible;
- The need to encourage walkers to feel safe, particularly in relation to speed limits and lighting, and the need for clear way finding signs.

Resolved:

To adopt the proposed ECC Waking Strategy in the form appended to the agenda report.

9. **Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members (FP/081/05/21)**

The report was noted.

10. **Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Cabinet would take place on the morning 29 July 2021, with the venue and time to be confirmed.

11. **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

12. **Confidential Appendix: Procurement of the Essex Community Wellbeing Service (FP/054/04/21) (Public and press excluded)**

The confidential appendix to report FP/054/04/21, to which minute 5., above, refers was agreed.

13. **Confidential Appendix: Expansion of New Rickstones Academy, Witham and Southview SEN School with residential provision (FP/033/03/21) (Public and press excluded)**

The confidential appendix to report FP/033/03/21, to which minute 7., above, refers was agreed.

14. **Urgent exempt business (Public and press excluded)**

There was no urgent exempt business.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11.31am.

Council Issues

1. Amendments to the Constitution

- 1.1 Following the decision of Margaret Lee, Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services to leave the council management arrangements have been put in place by the Chief Executive for an initial period of six months. As a result, the constitution needs to be changed to reflect the new management arrangements.
- 1.2 The changes needed are set out in the recommendations, but they distribute delegations
- 1.3 The changes have been approved by the Senior Management Employment Committee for an initial period of six months. Should any further changes be required a further report will be brought back to Council.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 That 'Executive Director, Finance and Technology' be replaced with 'Executive Director, Corporate Services' wherever it appears in the constitution.
- 2.2 That 'Director, Organisational Development and People' be replaced with 'Executive Director, People and Transformation' anywhere it appears.
- 2.3 That paragraph 15.3.2 of the constitution (delegations to the Executive Director, Corporate and Customer Services be deleted) and the remainder of paragraph 15.3 be renumbered accordingly.
- 2.4 That new items be added to the delegations for the Executive Director, Corporate Services:
 - (ix) To be the Proper Officer under Section 115 of the Local Government Act 1972.
 - (x) To be responsible for:
 - a. Democracy Team
 - b. Emergency Planning and Resilience
 - c. Health and Safety
 - d. Legal Services
 - e. Information Governance
 - (xi) To be responsible for the Council's Democratic, Governance and Assurance framework, including democratic support, scrutiny, performance, audit, risk, health and safety, business

continuity and insurance and its powers to prevent and detect fraud.

- (xii) To act as a Deputy in respect of the management of the finance and property of an individual lacking capacity in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- (xiii) To authorise the making and issue of any formal documents and to authenticate documents on behalf of the Council.

2.5 To add the following to the delegations of the Executive Director, Place and Public Health (15.3.4):

- (xiv) To exercise the Council's functions relating to
 - (a) Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages
 - (b) the Coroner Service

2.6 To add the following to the delegations to the Chief Executive

- (viii) To exercise the Council's functions relating to publication of material and relations with the press.