
Essex County Council Meeting 9 October 2018

Answers to Written Questions

Agenda Item 10

1. By Councillor Henderson of the Leader of the Council

'I am sure that every member of this Council is angry and disgusted at the knowledge that modern slavery exists and is a growing issue within society. To this end, will the Leader of the Council arrange for Essex County Council to sign up to the Co-operative Party's Charter on Modern Slavery which confirms that signatories will:

- Train its corporate procurement team to understand modern slavery through the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply's (CIPS) online course on Ethical Procurement and Supply.
- Require its contractors to comply fully with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, wherever it applies, with contract termination as a potential sanction for non-compliance.
- Challenge any abnormally low-cost tenders to ensure they do not rely upon the potential contractor practising modern slavery.
- Highlight to its suppliers that contracted workers are free to join a trade union and are not to be treated unfairly for belonging to one.
- Publicise its whistle-blowing system for staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.
- Require its tendered contractors to adopt a whistle-blowing policy which enables their staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.
- Review its contractual spending regularly to identify any potential issues with modern slavery.
- Highlight for its suppliers any risks identified concerning modern slavery and refer them to the relevant agencies to be addressed.
- Refer for investigation via the National Crime Agency's national referral mechanism any of its contractors identified as a cause for concern regarding modern slavery.
- Report publicly on the implementation of this policy annually.'

	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘The Council is already committed to eradicating modern slavery in our supply chain as set out in our <u>Modern Slavery Statement</u>.</p> <p>The procurement services team have been provided with online training with regard to Modern Slavery covering risk factors and required action. In addition, teams have received group training from our Modern Slavery champion. This training forms part of our standard induction for new starters within the team.</p> <p>The team annually review our supply base and ensure that where required suppliers have committed to their own Modern Slavery Statement as well as ensuring compliance across their Supply Chain. We are also developing our standard supplier compliance audits to include a Modern Slavery compliance assessment.</p> <p>New suppliers are asked to provide evidence of their compliance to the Modern Slavery Act. The ECC standard Contractual terms have been updated to include requirements for all suppliers to comply with the Act.’</p>
2.	<p>By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills</p> <p>‘Councillor Goggin and I have been liaising with the First Bus company over the provision of bus services on a Sunday and evening services on the number 62. Unfortunately, there is going to be a gap between the Heddinghams Bus company relinquishing their service and the First Bus company starting. Could the portfolio holder investigate what can be done to provide some transport to my constituents during this gap in service as many people will find themselves devoid of transport.’</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘We appreciate the concerns raised and are aware of this gap in service which has existed over the last few weeks. ECC did approach local operators about ways of bridging the gap but unfortunately, we were unable to achieve a successful outcome.</p> <p>First will be operating service 62 with effect from 21 October 2018.’</p>

3.	<p>By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills</p> <p>'I am alarmed that there has been a review of bus stops in Colchester which appears to have been conducted without the involvement of local County Councillors. I am grateful to officers agreeing to meet me over this issue however please can the portfolio holder ensure that local members are included in discussions that affect their constituents such as these changes, as we will face the complaints from the community.'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'Essex County Council agreed to work with operators and Colchester Borough Council to look specifically at reallocating stops in Colchester Town Centre, following significant safety issues raised by passengers and bus operators. The purpose of the scheme is to improved passenger and pedestrian safety whilst enabling passengers to access the town's facilities. The scheme should also improve bus reliability and congestion issues in Colchester Town Centre.</p> <p>These are commercial bus services and ECC's role in the process has been only that of broker to ensure safe and fair allocation of services and stops between operators in the best manner for residents and passengers.</p> <p>There has been extensive engagement with stakeholders which included local County and District Councillors and MPs. We have worked through many of the concerns raised during this period and met with individuals to talk them through the scheme, ensuring understanding of what is being proposed.</p> <p>On Friday 5 October 2018 the public messaging on this scheme went live, including leaflets and information on our website. These changes are scheduled to begin on 21 October 2018.</p> <p>I can assure you that members will be further engaged during the bedding in period.'</p>
4.	<p>By Councillor Reid of the Leader of the Council</p> <p>'In view of all the publicity in the media regarding several County Councils who are struggling with funding and finding themselves in financial crisis – one common thread is that the financial problems are ramped up by the needs of the population spread over a large area.</p> <p>Whilst we all understand the consequences of a funding crisis the people who suffer mostly are those at the lower end of the scale. Children's and Adult Services, Libraries, Highways maintenance and economic and Community Infrastructure are the services which most likely would be affected.</p>

	<p>We recognise the difficulties of continued funding and we all realise that one of the biggest contributions to the crisis is that funding from government has continually been reduced creating the situation that some County Councils are finding themselves in today.</p> <p>Should we at Essex County Council ask the question going forward, how are we going to cope with delivering the best service to our residents in Essex if there are continuous funding cuts in the future. Can the people in Essex be confident that we will always put their interests first?’</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘Over the past eight years, we’ve frozen council tax on five consecutive occasions, we’ve kept £161 million where people needed it most – in their own pockets to spend on what mattered to them. We continually seek new ways of delivering services at better value and lower cost. Increasingly we are using subsidiarity to ensure that services are delivered as locally as possible. Wrapped around all of this is our voice at the heart of Government pushing for a longer term finance settlement. So yes, the people of Essex can be confident that we will put their interests first.’</p>
5.	<p>By Councillor Reid of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care</p> <p>‘The Advisory Group on Contraception released a survey based on a FOI report showing that half of local authorities have cut or plan to cut contraceptive services this year.</p> <p>Specialist clinics are reducing their hours or shutting down meaning women have to go back to their already overstretched GP surgeries. This is fine if they just need a repeat prescription but not so good for those women whose lives and needs are more complicated than that. There is an emerging problem for many women getting hold of long acting reversible contraceptives (LARCS) such as the coil and contraceptive implants.</p> <p>These cuts are responding to financial pressure - not ideological reasons.</p> <p>Those most likely to end up with an unplanned pregnancy if they can’t easily get hold of contraception are the young, the chaotic and women in exploitative relationships. An unplanned baby in a family already at the end of its tether is a potential recipe for disaster.</p> <p>What is the current position of service in Essex?</p> <p>Are there any planned cuts or reductions in the service in the future?’</p>

	<p>Reply</p> <p>'In Essex we commission a consortium of providers in a countywide integrated sexual health service. The contract for this runs from 2016-2023 and there are currently no plans to reduce funding. Through the contract we are moving away from acute hospital delivery and towards digital solutions and bespoke centres within localities.</p> <p>We support long acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) training for GPs and practice nurses and we incentivise GPs to develop capacity in this area. Those seeking contraception are routinely informed of LARCs as the best method.</p> <p>Other developments of note:</p> <p>The eC Card App gives young people access to free condoms without the need to visit a clinic or interact with professionals. The app (which is the first of its kind in the UK) directs young people to the nearest of 80 collection points across the county.</p> <p>Online testing means the Essex population now has access to discreet Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) testing online 24/7. This has been presented at national conferences and was shortlisted for the LGC award for innovation.'</p>
6.	<p>By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities</p> <p>'Would the Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities consider writing to Royal Mail to request the issuing of a first and second class definitive stamp for the historic kingdom of Essex, as in keeping with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales? The image upon the stamp should be the trio of seaxes. This request would help strengthen the link between the peoples of Essex right across the County, Unitary and Metropolitan boundaries of historic Essex.'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'Essex, of course, has a rich and vibrant history that is worth celebrating. It is the sight of many famous landmarks and places of interest, from Martello Towers to Audley End House to Colchester Castle - to name just a few. I would like to take this opportunity to praise the work of Visit Essex, who encourage both local residents and visitors from outside the county's borders to actively engage up close and personal with our deep cultural heritage.</p> <p>I would like to draw Members' attention to the new First World War Special Commemorative Stamp Collection just released by the Royal Mail. Comprising of just six stamps, I am proud to say that one of them features the image of Private William Cecil Tickle, who joined the 9th battalion Essex Regiment in 1914. He died</p>

	<p>fighting bravely in the Battle of the Somme and, having no known grave, is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial in France.</p> <p>Periodically, the Royal Mail invite submissions from members of the public to submit ideas for future stamp designs. I would encourage the Member to utilise this approach when this next occurs.'</p>
7.	<p>By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities</p> <p>'Can the Cabinet Member please update concerned residents with regards to the most recent activities of Essex Trading Standards in relation to the many complaints from consumers using the Westgate car park of Basildon?'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'Following the receipt of a large number of complaints since 12 September 2018 regarding the signage, alternative payment methods and timing windows relating to parking charges at the Westgate car park, Trading Standards launched an initial investigation. Their findings were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The signage displayed at the car park does indicate what charges apply, including details of the fact that all registrations are recorded on entry and a charge will apply after the first 10 minutes. The signage also states that the duration of stay is calculated by automated number plate recognition cameras from the point of entry to the point of exit.• If the ticket machines are not working customers must make a payment by telephone. This is standard practice around many car parks within Essex and customers do have the choice to exit before 10 minutes have expired if they are unable to pay or do not wish to pay via card payment.• Trading Standards identified from the signage in the car park that the operator is Smart Parking Limited, which are a British Parking Association approved operator. This means that they have to comply with the British Parking Association code of practice and the Security Industries Authority, who regulate that code.• Trading Standards are currently in the process of referring the concerns raised and their observations to the BPA to advise that, whilst the signs do state the terms and conditions of parking, numerous complaints have been raised and therefore they may wish to look into the clarity of the information displayed. We understand that the BPA have already started to look into the matter. <p>It is important to note that whilst Trading Standards did investigate the issue in this instance, the consumers who complained required civil advice, as their concerns were based on a confusion around terms and conditions. 'The Citizens Advice</p>

	<p>Consumer Helpline' is responsible for providing this advice and receives Government funding to enable it to do so. As well as providing advice, all complaints received are automatically sent to the Trading Standards team and uploaded on to their database. The team requested that complainants report their concerns via this route to ensure they received appropriate civil advice and that their concerns were logged.</p> <p>A formal written response has been issued to the consumer who appears to be representing the Facebook group set up to discuss this issue, so that it can be posted and shared appropriately. Trading Standards would be very pleased to share their official written response on this issue with any Members who request one.'</p>
8.	<p>By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial and Traded Services</p> <p>'What impact do we believe a 'No Deal Brexit' will have on our finances if this occurs?'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'We are constantly considering the impact but as information is still emerging, a definitive position cannot be advised. Once the terms of leaving the EU are known, we will be able to assess it. However, through Kevin Bentley, we are making more general representation regarding the need for access of workers in the care markets etc.'</p>
9.	<p>By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Customer and Corporate</p> <p>'At the meeting of Council on 15 May Councillor Henderson brought to the attention of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Communities and Customer the issue of community groups being charged a fee for using the community hub in Essex libraries. Can I ask for the cost of administering this compared to the income raised from this scheme?'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'The Library Space hire charging policy was agreed in June 2017. Charities and community organisations are charged a rate which is 50% lower than the charge to commercial organisations.'</p>

	<p>The majority of other Local Authorities also have this type of charging policy in place and its introduction has enabled an additional source of funding to off-set costs for the Library service, which is part of creating a sustainable library service that can continue to enable community events.</p> <p>There are no additional costs to the service for administering the collection of Libraries Space Hire charges.</p> <p>We are currently forecasting to collect over £120k of charges for space hire for 2018/19.'</p>
10.	<p>By Councillor Davies of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development</p> <p>'Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on Essex County Council's involvement with Basildon Council's Local Plan and whether there are any conversations with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on this matter?'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'Since the new administration took control of Basildon in May 2018, good progress has been made on the Local Plan, so no conversations have been required with MHCLG.</p> <p>ECC officers have actively engaged with Basildon Council in the preparation of their Local Plan and supporting technical evidence, in accordance with the Duty to Co-operate. This reflects ECCs role as Highways Authority, Education Authority (including Early Years and Childcare), Minerals and Waste Authority, Lead Local Flood Authority, lead adviser on Public Health, responsibilities for Adult Social Care and interests in economic growth and development.'</p>
11.	<p>By Councillor Davies of the Leader of the Council</p> <p>'Could the Leader explain how the local and regional Brexit Boards in the East of England have informed government policy?'</p>

	<p>Reply</p> <p>'The Boards are just one method of engaging in the LGA's efforts to influence government policy. As well as being the LGA's Brexit Lead Cllr Bentley recently chaired the East of England sounding board.</p> <p>Since the referendum, ECC has worked closely with the LGA, providing local evidence and helping to shape local government's response to Brexit, notably raising the challenge faced by trading standards at UK ports and the potential for flexibilities in local government procurement and state aid rules to develop robust local supply chains.</p> <p>ECC's report "<i>Taking back control: Essex's local solution to post Brexit economic growth</i>" has been championed by the LGA in its successful lobbying for the UK government to underwrite projects that secure EU funding before the exit date, as well as in helping to frame the principles of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which will replace ESIF funds post 2020.'</p>
12.	<p>By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</p> <p>'Does the Cabinet Member now regret not supporting the Liberal Democrat Group's amendment to motion 4 at the October 2017 Council, for the Army and Navy Interchange to be included in the infrastructure package made to government?'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'May I thank the member for Springfield for the question.</p> <p>The Motion tabled and carried at Full Council in October 2017 was intended to specifically highlight the need for investment in inter-urban routes rather than the issues of our urban centres and was in part deliberately worded for its intended audience at the Department for Transport and in particular Highways England. It referenced schemes where we have a shared interest, either Trunk roads or where there is an aspiration for a road to once again form part of this strategic network. The Army & Navy simply doesn't fit within this classification or narrative.</p> <p>Helping people move within our town centres is a priority for this administration as demonstrated through our commitment to a range of schemes including the improvements to Basildon Town Centre, Ipswich Road in Colchester and the Chelmsford City Growth Package. Improving the Army and Navy junction does remain of central importance to the administration, which is why I have recently established a task force to oversee its long-term improvement.'</p>

13.	<p>By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</p> <p>‘Can the Cabinet Member give an interim report on the initial findings of the independent report into the Army & Navy flyover’s structures? If a written answer is not yet possible a verbal report at Council will suffice until one is.’</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘May I thank the member for Springfield for the question.</p> <p>Since the decision to close the Army and Navy flyover was made in September a number of actions have been taken to resolve the safety concerns. Repairs are continuing along with investigation and testing of the structure. An Independent Principal Inspection was commissioned and has just completed with a final report being prepared over the next couple of weeks. I am committed to keeping people updated on all aspects of our work on the flyover and I look forward to providing further details as soon as I am able to do so.’</p>
14.	<p>By Councillor Turrell of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</p> <p>‘Can the Cabinet Member please advise what the arrangements for providing LED Street lights on the remaining section of the A133 (Cymbeline way) in Colchester is please. The reason for this question is that there has been a number of serious accidents on the unlighted section of this road in recent times which highlights the need for the lights.’</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘May I thank the member for Mile End and Highwoods for the question.</p> <p>ECC does not currently have plans to install additional lighting on this route. With reference to accidents, you will appreciate that much of the County’s road network is unlit and people therefore are obliged to use the highway in accordance with the conditions. I have asked officers to review the accidents on this road over the past three years. There were 18 collisions during this period with five happening during the hours of darkness. A shared off-road path is provided along the length of the road offering a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists.’</p>
15.	<p>By Councillor Baker of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</p> <p>‘Can the Cabinet Member provide members with an update on the partnership between Essex County Council and Jiangsu province.</p> <p>The University of Essex has various links with Chinese institutions of higher education. Can the County Council encourage exchanges between the educational institutions in the county and China in order to promote mutual benefits?’</p>

Reply

'May I thank the member for Parsons Heath and East Gates for the question.

The Council's 30-year partnership with Jiangsu provides Essex with a valuable channel into the world's highest-growth economy. This is being actively used by increasing numbers of Essex businesses, universities, colleges, schools, and museums.

The relationship with Jiangsu gives the Council privileged access to opportunities. These have been used to:

- Help 150 Essex schools twin with 150 Jiangsu schools.
- Bring business tourists to Essex.
- Help Essex businesses export.
- Create exchanges between Jiangsu museums and Colchester Museum.

Both Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Essex have ongoing commercial partnerships with Jiangsu counterparts which bring them student income as well as research and development collaborations and in-China consultancy sales. However, there is considerable scope to further increase exchanges between Essex universities and counterparts in China. The main things that Essex can trade with China is knowledge, best practice and advanced research. The following projects are under way to help achieve this:

- ECC has a partnership arrangement with the Jiangsu Department of Science and Technology. 12 Jiangsu hi-tech businesses will visit Anglia Ruskin University on 23rd November to meet ARU's 'Innovation 50' businesses and to plan ongoing innovation exchanges between ARU and Jiangsu
- Developing mechanisms to encourage knowledge and talent exchanges between our universities and counterparts in Jiangsu.
- ECC has developed strong partnerships with the Jiangsu Department of Health and Family Planning. This has led to collaborations between Changzhou City Hospital and Colchester Hospital.
- Jiangsu doctors are currently studying at Basildon University Hospital in a programme organised by ECC's International Trade Team.'

16. By Councillor Robinson of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

'The Government's migration Advisory Committee forecasts "tremendous pressure" on social services provision as a result of restrictions on freedom of movement of EEA workers after Brexit.

Can the Cabinet Member advise if the council has a plan in place to deal with this pressure and what the plan is?

Does he agree that, in the light of this evidence, the Government's aim of reducing annual net migration to "tens of thousands" is extremely unrealistic?'

	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘It is not appropriate to think of this issue in terms of plans; you cannot easily plan for such a high level of uncertainty. Our approach is to be proactive, to actively engage with providers so that we can consider together how to recruit more British people into the profession. This is an ongoing issue which is heightened, rather than intensified, by Brexit.</p> <p>As to your second question, the Council is not responsible for migration policy and it is not for the County Council to comment on government migration policy.’</p>
17.	<p>By Councillor Baker of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</p> <p>‘Can the Cabinet Member please advise what he plans to do in order to stop the traffic chaos which often occurs on the Ipswich Road in Colchester due to roadworks?’</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘May I thank the member for Parsons Heath and East Gates for the question.</p> <p>Essex County Council operates a permit scheme across the county through which we seek to coordinate all works and keep the road and lane closures occasioned by third party and ECC works to a minimum, as well as monitoring the safety of the works and ensuring that our asset is protected. Through this scheme, ECC can impose fines for example, for works that overrun. To view information regarding all works across Essex please visit www.roadworks.org.</p> <p>You will be aware that ECC is currently delivering the A133 Ipswich road roundabout scheme with the aim to alleviate congestion, improve access for all forms of transport while supporting growth and economic prosperity of the town.</p> <p>While efforts will be made to keep traffic congestion to a minimum throughout these improvements, it is recognised that works will be undertaken in traffic sensitive areas and there is likely to be disruption to normal traffic flows. Motorists are advised to allow extra time travelling through the area.</p> <p>Our contractors are very proactive and are making improvements where they can. As the project evolves we will review the traffic management however it is expected that the single lane running will be in operation throughout the scheme duration.</p> <p>I’d like to thank people for their patience and co-operation while we undertake these improvements.’</p>

<p>18.</p>	<p>By Councillor Aspinell of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills</p> <p>‘Can the Cabinet Member advise whether when renegotiating bus contracts in future, will ECC require bus companies to use Euro 6 low carbon buses?’</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘The County Council supports the introduction of Euro VI compliant engines on public transport vehicles as part of its drive to reduce emissions, improve air quality and get better health outcomes across the county.</p> <p>This said, at present only a minority of buses in Essex currently meet Euro VI standards and while all new buses will do so, it will take some time for the whole fleet to become compliant. While in principle it would be possible for the county to specify the use of Euro VI compliant vehicles in its contracts, in practice, this would risk excluding the majority of currently operational buses from being used on its contracts.’</p>
<p>19.</p>	<p>By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care</p> <p>‘It is estimated that there are 5.7 million unpaid carers in England. Can the Cabinet Member confirm how many unpaid carers are there in Essex and how many of these carers in Essex have received a carers assessment in the past year that would help identify their own support needs? Can the Cabinet Member also advise what specific support is the County Council giving to unpaid carers in Essex?’</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>‘I acknowledge the pivotal role citizens play in providing care and support to their loved ones. We know around 146,000 citizens are providing unpaid care in Essex; the value of which is estimated at £2.5 billion.</p> <p>Carers aren’t just pivotal to social care; the role they play is crucial to the sustainability of the NHS, and is central to prevention, reducing demand on a range of services. Carers play an imperative role in aiding effective discharge from hospital and enabling people to recover and maintain active lives within their communities.</p> <p>In 2017-18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 12,500 carers were supported in Essex · 1,953 new carers assessments were completed · 1,305 reviews for existing carers were completed <p>So far in 2018 -19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 884 new carers assessments have been completed · 626 carer reviews have been completed <p>We commission a support service for carers provided by Carers First, giving</p>

	<p>personalised support to carers through surgeries and social groups as well as providing support whilst they, or the person they are caring for, is in hospital.</p> <p>As well as providing assessments, reviews and support for carers, where appropriate we will also offer personal budgets (direct payments). We produce plans for approximately 3000 of our most vulnerable carers, supporting them to plan for emergencies now and in the future. Extensive information and guidance is also available through Carers First and the Living Well Website.</p> <p>We also facilitate the community and voluntary sector to offer a range of activities to support carers to be socially active, reducing isolation and loneliness. Finally, we fund the Alzheimer's Society to deliver Community Dementia Support Services, including a Navigator model that works with families, supporting people to adapt to living with dementia.</p> <p>Looking to the future, we are leading work with partners from across the health and social care system to better understand the impact of the current carers offer and work collaboratively to develop and deliver an ambition that better enables, empowers and supports carers to achieve positive outcomes.'</p>
20.	<p>By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p> <p>'Can the Cabinet Member advise what specific steps is Essex County Council taking to put pressure on the Government to release the £1.7 billion promised for child and adolescent mental services?'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'In 2015, the government pledged an extra £1.4 billion over five years to transform Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and last year a further £300m over 3 years. The government are putting a great emphasis on children's mental health and we are seeing this funding through the CAMHS local transformation plan monies (LTP) that are released to the CCG's by the government. We have been working hard to ensure that a) they have been released and b) they have been invested in timely fashion to support young people in Essex, via the EWMHs Collaborative Commissioning forum. We have been heavily influential in terms of the investment of these funds.</p> <p>In my capacity as member of the LGA I work on behalf of all councils across the country and I can confirm that there is work going on in this area too.</p> <p>Currently we are working with the NHS Long Term Plan leads for "mental health" and "healthy childhood and maternal health" to raise our concerns and influence the development of their plans in order to increase funding and standards for Children Young People's Mental Health (CYPMH) post 2021 and ensure the full funding is released.</p>

	<p>We responded to the Government's green paper on transforming CYPMH provision which also highlighted our concerns back in March 2018</p> <p>We also responded to the National Audit Office's VFM project in children's mental health in June 2018 further highlighting our concerns.</p> <p>The LGA are also speaking to NHS programme leads about how we can help to strengthen local accountability and oversight for the spend and reforms.'</p>
<p>21.</p>	<p>By Councillor Abbott of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</p> <p>'Despite many years of requests to ECC, there is still no commitment to prevent the nuisance and danger posed by large HGVs along the narrow sections of Oak Road Rivenhall End. A proposed extension to the 7.5T weight limit designed to stop HGVs running down the footways on the section that leads to the A12 has been put on hold. HGVs also continue to get stuck on the section of Oak Road either side of the railway bridge and this can cause dangerous queuing back on to the A12. HGVs sometimes hit the bridge or stop underneath it with inches to spare and the police are increasingly being called out to incidents. Recently trains had to be slowed over the bridge until an inspection could be carried out following a strike which caused serious damage to an HGV.</p> <p>Does the Cabinet Member recognise that HGV strikes to a bridge carrying the main London-Norwich railway line are a very serious matter and that measures to prevent such strikes are now essential?</p> <p>As well as the current LHP scheme request for clearer conventional signage, will he support urgent investigation of a reactive warning system that alerts drivers (some of whom simply ignore the weight and height limit signs) to stop well before they reach the bridge?'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'May I thank the member for Witham Northern for the question.</p> <p>A decision was taken in July 2017 by the then Highways portfolio holder to defer a decision on a proposed one-way environmental 7.5 tonne weight limit that would have restricted access for HGVs to Oak Road. Due to the current junction arrangements on the A12, banning HGVs on Oak Road could lead to some significant diversions and implications for other communities and the initial proposal was met by objections from local residents and businesses who use this road particularly for agricultural purposes. However, the decision to not proceed at this stage was based mainly on the fact that Highways England's proposed A12 improvement scheme indicate that the Rivenhall junction is highly likely to be affected and that it is best to wait until further details are announced to see how this might improve the situation for all road users and local communities in the long term.</p>

	<p>I do recognise the importance of the railway bridge at Rivenhall End. It is a structure owned by Network Rail and they have not approached ECC with any concerns or requests for improvements at this location. It is something that will be discussed with them next time a meeting is held between Essex Highways and Network Rail. Essex Police have not reported concerns over highway issues in relation to bridge strikes either.</p> <p>The railway bridge is already subject to a height restriction and signage is in place on the approach, including signs on the A12 shortly before the Oak Road junction. I understand that the Braintree Local Highways Panel is undertaking reviews into whether additional signage can be installed in the vicinity in order to provide further advance warning to HGV drivers before they reach the bridge. All proposals for additional signing at this location will be dealt with as a local matter, and will be decided by the Braintree Local Highways Panel.'</p>
22.	<p>By Councillor Abbott of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</p> <p>'It has been revealed that prior to the public consultation on the A120 route options in early 2017, quite detailed junction plans had been drawn up for all five routes in 2016, including the large interchanges at the Braintree and A12 ends of the proposed new road as well as individual crossings and junctions for local lanes, PRoW and the proposed waste site at Rivenhall Airfield.</p> <p>The consultation on the 5 routes was based on simplistic route lines across the countryside, with no such junction details shown.</p> <p>Why was the full route option information available at the time withheld from both the public consultations and the various forum meetings designed to engage with community representatives?</p> <p>Is the Cabinet Member concerned that, notwithstanding the minimum legal requirements for this stage of consultation, that the consultation process could be challenged and potentially found to be flawed?'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'May I thank the member for Witham Northern for the question.</p> <p>The announcement of option D as ECC's preferred route for an improved A120 between Braintree and the A12 in June 2018 was the culmination of an evidence led process involving detailed technical assessment and public consultation. The project required close working with Highways England and was carried out in strict adherence to Highways England's Project Control Framework methodology, the</p>

	<p>process used for developing this kind of road scheme</p> <p>Extensive consultation was carried out with close to 3,000 residents, businesses and road users responding. In line with the Project Control Framework requirements the consultation concentrated solely upon route choice with indicative junction locations shown on both the plans and fly through videos.</p> <p>Indicative junction layouts were produced purely to ensure that sufficient knowledge about feasibility was available to assist with costing the options. These layouts were and remain illustrative in nature and were not consulted upon. This is because Project Control Framework requirements dictate that junction designs are a separate part of the development process undertaken once a route option has been selected. When Highways England make a decision on a route option full consultation on the design of junction layouts will be undertaken.'</p>
23.	<p>By Councillor Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills</p> <p>'Can the Cabinet Member advise what this council does to support young women in Essex schools regarding Period Poverty. The issue of period poverty is an important one for young women around the country and indeed in this county, the need to provide sanitary protection for those most vulnerable is a basic human right which this council ought to support.</p> <p>Thousands of girls in this country are missing school because they cannot afford sanitary products which is not acceptable and detracts their education.</p> <p>In a Plan International UK survey of 1,000 girls, 49% said that they had missed an entire day of school because of their period. Critically, of those, 59% had lied about why, claiming that something else had caused their absence. This shows that action is needed to support the young women to continue to attend school with the appropriate sanitary products in place.'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>'This is obviously a big issue and it is unconceivable that in 2018 period poverty affects so many children right across the country.</p> <p>It should be recognised that schools are accountable for their budgets and spending decisions so whilst the council may wish to raise this matter as a high priority ultimately it would be a decision of schools to use their budget in this way.</p> <p>I can confirm that the Children's Partnership Board have had discussions about child poverty more widely, reviewing progress against the indicators of child poverty in our strategy. We are also currently in the process of updating our Child Poverty Strategy and will have discussions about how we can make best impact across these areas.'</p>