

ECC Annual Report 2016/2017

Governance and Finance

The new Municipal year begun with a Cabinet re-shuffle following Cllr Roger Hirst's successful election as the new Police and Crime Commissioner for the County.

The main changes being:

Cllr Simon Walsh, taking on the Environment and Waste portfolio.

Deputy Leader Cllr Kevin Bentley took on responsibility for public sector reform and strategic partnerships.

Cllr John Spence, Finance, was given additional responsibility for Planning and Housing, a new IT and digital transformation Cabinet position was also set up which saw young Cllr Stephen Cuning entering the Leadership team.

Cabinet Members

Name	Portfolio
Cllr David Finch	Leader
Cllr Kevin Bentley	Deputy Leader, Infrastructure and Economic Growth
Cllr John Spence	Finance, Housing and Planning
Cllr Eddie Johnson	Highways and Transport
Cllr Anne Brown	Corporate, Communities and Customers
Cllr Dick Madden	Adults and Children
Cllr Ray Gooding	Education and Lifelong Learning
Cllr Graham Butland	Health
Cllr Simon Walsh	Environment and Waste

Cllr Stephen Cuning IT and Digital Transformation

ECC will see an overall reduction of 84% in Government support over the next four years.

Set out as part of the 'Four Year Settlement' provided by Government, the Council will see its support grant reduce from £118 million in 2016/17 to £18 million in 2019/20.

This 84% reduction comes on top of a 49% reduction already made over the last three years.

Over the period of the settlement, it is expected that inflationary pressure on services will increase by 12%, while changes to demographics and increases in population will mean an additional £352 million of pressures by 2020.

Essex is a growing and ageing county, and the Council needs to come up with different ways of doing things; there is already an excellent record in making savings, with more than £520million already been taken out of its budget, therefore it will not be easy to meet this challenge head on.

Realistically in the years to come, the Council is going to look and feel very different - services will need to be provided in different ways, there will be more collaboration with partners, commercial and trading opportunities will be maximised and some areas will be delivering services for themselves rather than relying on the council.

In Essex more than £1million a day is currently spent on Adult Social Care. This figure is increasing, and at the same time we are seeing a rapid increase in the older population. Over 85s currently make up over 51% of users in Adult Social Care. Over the next 10 years this will grow by 50% - and in 20 years' time, the money we are spending on adult social care today would only cover care for the over 85s.

In the 2017/18 budget to Full Council on Tuesday 14th February, the Leader highlighted how, despite a reduction in government funding, the council will be spending:

- £524m on adult social care
- £127m on children and families
- £668m on education and lifelong learning
- £233m on highways, infrastructure and public transport
- £92m on health

His speech set out the ambition to more than double the local economy to £60 billion by 2025, which will be achieved by raising skills and qualifications by investing in schools and further education; improving transport infrastructure to help people travel across the county more easily; supporting local businesses to grow through investment in innovation centres; and investing in new and affordable housing.

The council has also taken the decision to implement the Government's Social Care Levy, increasing council tax by 3%. This will raise an extra £17m to support vulnerable residents, in recognition that this is the biggest area of pressure for the local authority, with the older population set to grow by 21%.

In the quest of delivering services in a different and more economical way ECC organised "The Smart Essex Digital Summit" at the BT Tower in London on 27th February 2017.

The event brought together senior leaders from visionary organisations including BT, Google, Dell, Eurovia, Huawei, Microsoft and Anglia Ruskin University as well as representatives from public sector organisations.#

During the summit, different themes were explored including how technology can impact on people's lives and streamline public services. Companies at the forefront of digital transformation also showcased some of the great work already under way in the UK and abroad where digital is changing lives, work and the environment around us.

The aim was to redefine how a digital strategy can support public services in today's challenging financial times and drive economic growth to meet the needs and aspirations of a changing and growing population, which will be launched later this summer.

Highways

The 2016 summer verge cutting took place in May when a gang of up to eight tractors worked on the Essex road network; around 6,100 miles of verge were cut during the summer programme and engineers also treated weeds by spraying them in some more urban areas to limit the damage they can cause by growing through the surfaces.

Highways staff will trim the county's roadside verges twice. The first cut is to a minimum width of three feet; the second will be up to 18 feet wide in particular spots,

to ensure that the areas close to road signs, street lights and other obstructions are cut with strimmers.

The cutting programme includes verges next to roads and pavements, as well as vegetation on central reservations and anywhere growth affects sightlines at junctions.

A new hospital stop for Colchester Park and Ride was launched in November 2016 for staff, patients and visitors to Colchester General Hospital, by buying a daily, weekly or monthly ticket them to and from the hospital from 7am to approximately 7pm, starting at £3 daily and discounted fares for under 16s. Concessionary pass holders qualify for free travel after 9am.

The stop will be situated on the Northern Approach Road, off J28 of the A12 just a short walk from the main entrance.

Detailed ticket and timetable information is available online at www.essex.gov.uk/parkandride

A consultation on dualling the A120 between Colchester and Braintree was launched in mid-January 2017, giving a choice of nine possible options for a new stretch of road; these had been distilled from numerous alternatives.

Upgrades to this road are long overdue and results of the consultation will be announced later this year.

The number of potholes on local roads dropped by a fifth following major investment;

Pothole numbers on these local roads throughout Essex dropped from 4,954 to 3,961. Crews fixed more than 3,200 potholes, with fewer potholes developing thanks to a record-breaking road surfacing programme over the summer.

The improvements came as the Government awarded ECC an extra £1,869,000 for Essex as part of the national Pothole Action Fund for the financial year 2017/18.

To report a highways issue, please visit www.essex.gov.uk/highways

The Council is progressing well in its programme of replacing all streetlight to LED, with 10,000 energy-saving LED streetlights now been installed across the county.

These are the first phase of a £9.2 million programme to replace 19,000 conventional lights with LEDs on main roads and junctions in Essex.

Converting these all-night streetlights to LEDs will save Essex taxpayers an estimated £600,000 each year as LEDs use less electricity and last longer.

.Another benefits will be fewer failures and longer lasting lamps, thus drastically cutting maintenance costs

Braintree, Colchester and Tendring will be next as part of the programme.

A new facility has been set up on the Council's website to find out if your road is set to be resurfaced this year.

The full roads resurfacing programme from April 2017 to March 2018 is now available to check on the highways information map at www.essex.gov.uk/surfacing. More precise dates will also available on www.roadworks.org

The map allows residents to see every road scheduled for an upgrade superimposed on a map. A colour code then shows what type of road surfacing will be used.

This is all part of a move to make highways information more easily available online, partly because of the many calls from the public asking when their road is due to be resurfaced, and partly to be more informative.

Despite a cold snap creating more potholes over the Christmas and New Year period, the number of potholes on local routes is down from June last year (2016).

The number of potholes on local routes dropped from 4,954 in June last year to 4,733 at the end of March 2017.

You can now tell us about a highways issue quicker and easier thanks to our newly improved website at www.essex.gov.uk/highways

Communities

Essex County Council has retained its 'excellent' rating for embedding equality and inclusion into its work, which was announced at a meeting of the authority's Full Council on Tuesday 10th May 2016.

Inspectors from the Local Government Association (LGA) which looked at every aspect of the Council, assessed how the organisation works with local communities and partners embedding equality and inclusion.

Essex is one of only two county councils in England to be reaccredited as Excellent – Leicestershire County Council is the second.

Essex is a diverse county with many different communities and faiths; the culture of equality and inclusion has always been the ethos within the Council and the inspectors not only spent time with officers but also went into out into the communities and were clearly impressed with some of the work that is happening across the county; they made particular reference to the partnership work done to tackle domestic abuse, the work undertaken to support the community in adopting, and the introduction of work experience opportunities for young people with autism

The Council once again run the very popular Community Initiatives Fund (CIF) with the usual deadline for expressions of interest at the end of August 2016.

Applications are welcome from community groups, sports clubs, parish councils and charitable organisations within Essex (excluding Southend and Thurrock).

Successful projects from previous years include new play equipment, village hall refurbishment, community gardens and allotments, nature reserves and village signs. The fund helped over 160 community groups last year, and awarded around £100k per districts and boroughs.

The Community Initiatives Fund is a great example of how Essex County Council is encouraging and supporting communities, and for more information and details on how to apply for funding www.essex.gov.uk/cif

On Thursday 2nd June 2016 Colchester Library and was launched as the most up to date model of Community Hubs in Essex, offering residents a very wide range of vital community services under one roof, such as most registration services, Council Tax and benefits advice, library services, housing support, clinics promoting health and wellbeing, Colchester Community Voluntary Services and a brand new sensory corner all under one roof.

Community hubs, such as this one, will be the future way in which ECC will bring together services to make them more accessible, whilst saving money for the taxpayer.

Essex County Council's £27.7 million Independent Living programme received Ministerial recognition in December.

The Council's innovative approach towards housing and care for older people was hailed as an example for other local authorities to follow.

Around 2,000 Essex residents will benefit from ECC's £27.7 million investment in the programme to meet demand for housing options that can support and enable older people to live independently.

The new Independent Living homes will be created around the county between now and 2021.

The investment will enable eligible older people in the county - who would otherwise be housed in residential care, or receive domiciliary care in a home of their own that may no longer meets their needs - to live independently.

ECC is working with all district councils to identify suitable land for development to meet local demand for Independent Living housing.

The first new Independent Living scheme, Rosebank Park in Harwich, features 70 one and two bedroom flats and will open in January 2017.

The second initial scheme, Beaumont House in Walton-on-the-Naze, features 60 one and two bedroom flats and will open in spring 2017.

A third scheme, in Saffron Walden, will feature 73 one and bedroom flats and will open in early 2018.

To be eligible for Independent Living housing, an individual must be aged 55 or over, require six or more hours of care each week and have a connection to the area where the scheme is located.

The Police Crime Commissioner Consultation launched a consultation for Joint Governance with Essex Fire Service

The new Policing and Crime Act 2017, which received Royal assent in January offers the opportunity to transform local fire and rescue governance, enabling police and crime commissioners to become the fire and rescue authority where a strong local case is made. The Government has also created a statutory duty to collaborate.

This new duty requires emergency services to keep collaboration opportunities under review and to take on collaboration opportunities where it would be in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness to do so.

Essex is the first County in the UK where a Police Crime Commissioner has produced a business case to shared governance between the Police and the Fire Service. The consultation, which started on Thursday 16th February, will run until Wednesday 10th May.

The financial benefits on a ten year span will be just over £30million, which are calculated through

1. Sharing of estates better joined up service delivery.
 2. Shared business services such as HR, IT, and Finance management.
 3. Joint procurement.
 4. More effective service response and improved Public Safety.
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The Essex Energy Switch has continued its success; this year nearly 6,000 Essex residents registered for the scheme and will be benefitting by a substantial; reduction on their energy bills.

After successful switches over previous years, residents and businesses in Essex have already saved over £2million on their gas and electricity bills, which averages out to well over £200 on a normal household bill.

To find out more and to receive your offer, visit: essex.gov.uk/energyswitch

Trading Standards

Rogue or doorstep traders, scammers and faulty used car sales are three of the biggest issues combatted by Trading Standards in Essex, who once again are fighting conmen, tricksters, and anyone with defrauding intentions.

They have released a series of animated videos to help to avoid the most common tricks con-artists use, Essex Trading Standards has.

Animations

Rogue traders: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sZom540ipY>

Scams: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLipNSm0tP4>

Used cars: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZJokCCFU9Q>

These animations are a very useful way to raise awareness of the dangers of rogue or doorstep trading, scams and buying a used car. Some traders operate purely to con residents out of their money; they receive more complaints about used cars than anything else, so hopefully the animation will stop people being taken for a ride when purchasing a vehicle.

If you need any work carried out on your home it is recommended you use a trader on the Buy with Confidence Scheme. A Buy with Confidence trader has been audited

and approved by Trading Standards and you can find the nearest three to your postcode by calling 03454 040506 or visiting buywithconfidence.gov.uk

Every year thousands of Essex residents are targeted by scam through **emails**, **phone calls** and **letters with fake prize draws**, **lotteries**, **offers** and **competitions**, **rogue tree surgeons** who cold-call on doors.

For further information visit essex.gov.uk/Pages/Be-sure-at-the-door.aspx

If anyone is concerned that someone is being targeted please call Trading Standards on 03454 040506

As ever everyone is urged to use a "Buy with Confidence" trader, as everyone on this scheme has been audited and approved by Trading Standards.

For more information about Buy with Confidence call 03454 040506 or visit buywithconfidence.gov.uk

Education

Application period open for primary school places for children starting reception from September 2017 once again opened online [at www.essex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions) between 14th November 2016 and 15th January 2017, with late applications, submitted after the deadline on 15 January, to be considered once all on-time applications have been determined.

Parents, as usual were encouraged to use all four of their preferences and use the website to search for the school information and check admissions criteria.

Attendance at schools in Essex is at its highest since records began; statistics for the autumn and spring terms in 2015/16 were once again improved by showing the percentage of sessions missed in state-funded primary schools in Essex was **3.7%** – above both the national and East of England averages, which were **3.9%**

The figure means Essex enjoys its best ever ranking of **29th** out of **151** local authorities.

At secondary level, the percentage of sessions missed in Essex was **4.8%** compared with **5%** nationally and **4.9%** for the East of England, meaning the county remains ranked **54th**.

The Council launched a new programme to encourage former teachers back into the classroom; according to the latest Department for Education statistics, about 14,000 former teachers return to the profession in England every year.

The intensive course is suitable for both primary and secondary-trained teachers and is free to participants, which aims to get them ready for a post starting in September and will include three full days of professional development, covering curriculum changes and classroom management, as well as support with job applications and interview preparation.

A record number of children who are due to start secondary school for the first time in September have been offered their parents' top preference of school.

More than 15,000 parents in Essex discovered on 1st March the outcome of their secondary school applications. Although the county continues to grow, the council's investment in creating new school places means an all-time high of 87.58 per cent of pupils have been offered their parents' first preference of school – a 1.6 per cent increase on last year.

A further 6.78 per cent have been offered their second preference, meaning 94.36 per cent have been offered either their first or second preference.

More than 200 new special school places will be created in Essex after the Government approved plans for two free schools and encouraged a formal bid for a third.

Under the proposals, Market Field Learning Community, based in Elmstead Market, will open and run Chatten Free School – a new 75-place special free school for children aged 3 to 19 who have autism with severe or the most complex learning needs.

A location for the school has yet to be finalised but it is likely to be in mid Essex, and the academy trust hopes it will be open by September 2018.

The council, which hopes the school would create about 70 places for children with social, emotional and mental health needs, will now invite bids from academy trusts interested in running it.

Any final decision on the proposal would be subject to agreement between the Secretary of State and the trust.

The announcements are a huge boost for the county and come as Essex County Council continues with its own record investment in special schools.

About £85million, including £42million from the Essex Schools Forum and up to £43million of capital funding from the council, has been allocated towards creating more special school places in the county over the next three to five years.

A record **89.37** per cent of children due to start Reception in September have been offered their parents' first preference – up from **87.40** per cent last year discovered the outcome of their primary school places applications on Tuesday 18th April 2017. A further 6.23 per cent have been offered their second preference, meaning an all-time high of 95.60 per cent have been offered one of their top two preferences – compared with 94.08 per cent in 2016.

Having already spent millions of pounds creating more than 5,500 new school places during the last two academic years, a further 2,200 more are due to be available from September.

The council has also allocated £230million for creating about 13,000 more mainstream school places in Essex by September 2019.

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This year's figures in full:

- 89.37% of parents have been offered their 1st preference
- 6.23% of parents have been offered their 2nd preference
- 1.80% of parents have been offered their 3rd preference
- 0.79% of parents have been offered their 4th preference

Waste

The Council decided this year to tackle the growing problem of waste from Essex businesses which gets illegally left at recycling centres, leaving taxpayers with a disposal bill running to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

'Man with a van' operators offering cheap rubbish clearance, property developers and independent building and home improvement trades have swamped many sites. Local facilities have seen the amount of DIY and construction waste alone leap by over 50% in the last two years.

The current plan to improve recycling centres meant that from the 31st October 2016 about half of the county's sites no longer allowed vans or multi-axle trailers in and will no longer offer any disposal facilities for DIY and construction waste.

The remaining sites still offer access to residents who only have access to a commercial vehicle, but will place strict limits on how much DIY waste can be disposed of. Vans and pick-ups will be under greater scrutiny though, and those identified as bringing in waste from any kind of business activity have been refused entry and owners may be liable to prosecution.

The taxpayer could not continue to pick up the bill for businesses which don't dispose of their waste properly. These operational changes have stopped people unlawfully disposing of business and trade waste, whilst still provide the facility for residents to dispose of their legitimate DIY waste when carrying out ad-hoc work at home themselves.

For more information, please contact Carla Johnson – Carla.johnson@essex.gov.uk
tel: 03330 131891.

A review of this new Policy will be carried out in June 2017.