

# District Council Report 2018

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## **'AMBITIOUS' TENDRING 'PUNCHING ABOVE ITS WEIGHT' REVEALS COUNCIL LEADER IN ANNUAL SPEECH**

A recent independent review says Tendring District Council (TDC) is “ambitious” and “punching above its weight”, the Council’s leader revealed tonight. TDC Leader Neil Stock used his annual State of Tendring speech at the full council meeting to share the results of a recent Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review.

Earlier in the month an LGA team, made up of a chief executive, senior directors and a senior councillor from other authorities, carried out a four-day visit to TDC to give a stock take on how it is doing. It is not a formal inspection, but a useful way of sharing best practice and running ideas by peers in local government. In its feedback, the LGA Peer Review team described TDC as “ambitious”, “punching above its weight in Essex”, and said: “You are actually better than the story you are telling. TDC is having a significant and positive impact right across its District.”

The report also backed TDC’s priorities, robust finances and approach to tackling key issues. Areas for improvement included better communication with staff, bringing the four areas of transformation together, and more project management. During his State of Tendring speech, Cllr Stock said it was reassuring to hear TDC was doing the right things and doing them well.

“The report is extremely clear that Tendring is a council working hard, delivering well for its residents, and delivering strong community leadership. Overall the team felt Members and Officers work well together, that our priorities are clear and that we are tackling the key issues. We have robust finances, a sound approach to growth and our transformation agenda is addressing the right issues. They made sound recommendations which we readily accept, and I am confident they will strengthen and enhance our approach. However, in the face of such positivity we should not forget that Tendring does have challenges and areas of significant deprivation, not least in health. We continue to tackle these issues, which form a key part of our priorities for the year ahead.”

## **OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP A120 AS DUAL CARRIAGEWAY FROM HORSLEY CROSS TO HARWICH**

The Government is looking at a major upgrade of the A120 in Tendring between 2020-25 it was revealed at a full Council meeting. Responding to a question about the state of the route from Horsley Cross to Harwich, Tendring District Council (TDC) Leader Neil Stock said he could confirm after discussions with the local MP and Highways England that an already planned £800,000 scheme to carry out vital repairs had begun this week. This includes three crews working to patch the carriageway and give an immediate fix to some of the worse potholes along the road.

Cllr Stock also revealed that Highways England was looking to carry out a major upgrade of the road – costing tens of millions of pounds – in the Government’s Road Improvement Strategy 2 (RIS2) from 2020-2025. This is because the concrete base of the A120, laid some 50 years ago, is reaching the end of its life. But the Leader said this should be seen as an opportunity to potentially aim for something even better for the key route.

“It is an opportunity to develop a proper A120 development strategy, which is integrated with the plans for economic development along the A120 corridor,” he said. “This would involve a full traffic study, to establish future traffic growth, and to ensure the new road is of sufficient capacity. If we want to consider an entirely different line of route, or dualling in the longer term, now is the time to develop these proposals. Much of this section of the A120 is laid on concrete slabs, which are simply reaching the end of their life. The substructure is failing. Some of them have moved, the joints between the slabs are more and more evident, particularly down the middle of the carriageway, and some gullies are collapsing. This work is regarded as imperative and will need to be addressed in the next forward programme as part of RIS2.”

Also at the meeting a motion was passed empowering the Leader to continue discussions with Essex County Council with a view to devolving highways powers – and funding – to TDC. Cllr Stock said any such potential agreement would undergo full TDC scrutiny before going ahead.

### **COUNCIL TO CONSIDER EXTENDING CASH OFFER TO BUSINESSES IN SUPPORT OF JOBS GROWTH**

A proposal has been put forward to extend a business grants scheme supporting small businesses to create and protect jobs in Tendring. Tendring District Council (TDC) is looking to continue running its SME Growth Fund until March 2020, offering a total of £250,000 in grants of up to £150,000 to firms within the area.

Under proposals being put forward, and backed by TDC Cabinet Member for Investment and Growth Zoe Fairley, the scheme would also be widened out so that more businesses are eligible. First launched in 2015, with cash support from Essex County Council, the fund was initially geared towards specific sectors including the maritime and offshore industries. To date businesses have been supported with awards totalling £138,250 – which in turn have created 19.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, protected 3.5 FTE more jobs, and leveraged £262,694 in private sector funding, such as bank finance.

Many other firms applied to the fund but were ineligible as they did not meet the sector criteria. But under the revisions to the fund being put forward, the scheme would be open to all businesses except retailers, provided they meet the other aims of the initiative. The fund would, under the proposals, also be split into minor and major grants, with a more streamlined process for minor applications (£3-15,000), making it easier for small firms and start-ups to apply.

To qualify, businesses would need to demonstrate how the cash will create or protect jobs and help the company to grow, and the funding must be matched by other investment. It is hoped the scheme will pay out around 20 grants, create 40 FTE jobs, and leverage at least a matching £250,000 of private investment.

Cllr Fairley said she would be recommending the SME Growth Fund revisions at a Cabinet meeting on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April. “Despite the significant reduction in funding to Tendring District Council from central Government, forcing us to really consider how and where we spend our money, we are committed to supporting local businesses and job growth. By supporting businesses to grow and creating jobs, the whole local economy benefits and the general prosperity of our District will increase. That is why we are committed to helping companies in Tendring with initiatives such as the Blue Ribbon business awards, the Jobs and Careers Fair, and this business Growth Fund.”

Other leftover money from the initial SME Growth Fund would be held by the Council and used for future economic growth projects.

### **TAXI FARE INCREASES PROPOSED FOR TENDRING**

Councillors have backed calls made by taxi drivers in Tendring to raise cab fares in the District. The Tendring District Taxi Association (TDTA) made a formal request to Tendring District Council (TDC) to increase the prices and distance rates its members charge. Cab fares have remained unchanged in the District since July 2012, and since then RPI inflation has risen by 13.7%, the TDTA said.

Its suggested changes also aim to remove the need for drivers to no longer need to carry 5p and 10p coins. Members of TDC's Licensing Committee backed in principle the new tariffs suggested by the TDTA. A 14-day consultation period will now be held to allow the public to comment on the proposals. If there are no objecting comments then the Council's licensing manager, in conjunction with the committee chairman, will sign the changes into effect to begin 28 days later – giving taxi drivers time to adapt their meters. If objections are made then the proposals will go back to the committee, next scheduled to meet in July.

Under the proposals, one mile will rise by 20p to £4.60 (up 4.5%), two miles will rise by 45p to £6.40 (up 4.5%) and three miles will go up 50p to £8.20 (6.5% increase). Each subsequent 200 yards (183 metres) will cost 20p instead of 19p, while a waiting time of 60 seconds will cost 20p instead of 18p. The suggested tariffs keep taxi prices lower than those in Colchester.

Mark Cossens, chairman of the Licensing Committee, said the in principle decision to raise fares was the right one. "Taxi drivers are a key part of the transport network in Tendring, not just supporting the tourism industry and night-time economy but also playing a crucial role in helping residents – particularly the elderly and infirm – to live independently, such as by taking them to the shops, health appointments or to social events. While I am generally reluctant to support putting up prices which will impact upon our residents, in this case I am satisfied it is necessary to enable our taxi drivers to continue their work. With no increase in fares for six years now is the right time to adjust prices to prevent taxi drivers going out of business and the potential loss of their services to our residents."

### **CROWD PULLING RAF TYPHOON UNVEILED FOR CLACTON AIRSHOW**

The organisers behind Clacton Airshow have announced their latest addition to sign up for this year's exciting event. The RAF Typhoon Display Team will be taking to the skies above the town on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

This year's team, from 29 Squadron based at RAF Coningsby, will comprise of a specialist from every aircraft trade along with support and management teams to assist both the pilot and the trades, all of whom work closely together to bring the dazzling spectacle that is the Typhoon Display.

As well as 2018 being 100 years since the end of World War 1, it also marks the Centenary year of the Royal Air Force. Also appearing this year is the Bremont Great War Display Team on both days. The team was formed in 1988 and was originally called the Wombats. It was an ad hoc collection of aircraft which included five SE5as; two Fokker Dr1s and a Fokker D7.

Many of them were flown by their builders and appeared that year at the Biggin Hill Airshow. Over the years the aircraft and pilots have changed frequently and there are now five different types with nine in total.

Mick Skeels (Snr), Tendring District Council's Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism said that it was great to be able to confirm the flight of the RAF Typhoon at Clacton. "The RAF Typhoon is an incredible display and one that never fails to leave the crowds in awe of its capabilities. I'm delighted that we have been able to secure the team's participation on the first day of the event, which is now in its 27<sup>th</sup> year, and with the Bremont Great War Display Team it's shaping up to be another fantastic year for the Clacton Airshow."

Further details of other flights, activities and attractions will be unveiled over the coming weeks. Anyone wanting information about sponsorship opportunities, hospitality, or trade space at Clacton Airshow 2018 should contact 01255 686683 or 01255 686654. Clacton Airshow can also be contacted via twitter @ClactonAirshow and via its website [www.clactonairshow.com](http://www.clactonairshow.com)

### **EFFORTS TO CREATE 999 MEMORIAL GARDEN IN ESSEX BACKED**

A 999 memorial garden for Essex has been backed in principle during a meeting of Tendring District Council (TDC). Lynda McWilliams, TDC Cabinet Member for Health and Education including partnerships, lent her support to the scheme after a question at last Full Council.

An ambulance technician is currently gauging support across the county for such a garden, which would commemorate all those from the blue light services who die in service. Cllr McWilliams told members she could see no reason why TDC could not support such a scheme in principle. "Our emergency services' workers do a fantastic job, day in day out, and I cannot commend them highly enough for that. Tragically some lose their life while on active service, whether that is on or off duty – as we sadly know in Clacton all too well as we remember the dedication of Pc Ian Dibell. It is fitting that all of those are remembered, and a garden seems a lovely way of doing so."