

ECC Annual 2018 Report

I would like to first of all thank Dave Ashley, Lawford PC Chairman for reading my annual report, as I am away on District duties elsewhere.

I have tried to capture the more relevant highlights of the County Council work, being very mindful that I could have written a great deal more, but I do hope you will find it informational and useful.

Education

The council spent about £74million creating 2,535 new permanent mainstream places across the county for the 2017/18 academic year and plans to create thousands more in the years to come.

With regards to performance, 94% of Essex schools judged good or outstanding - three points higher than the national average

A new strategy published by the County Council revealed that more than 22,000 new school places will be needed across Essex over the next decade, and up to 22 new mainstream schools will be needed over the next ten years in Essex, while a number of existing schools will also need to be expanded.

This Strategy also points out that the Essex population is set to rise by more than 230,000 people over the next 20 years.

Among the new schools in the pipeline over the next decade, the identified need for primary schools will be in 10 out of the 12 District/Boroughs in Essex: Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Tendring and Uttlesford. There are also plans for new secondary schools to be built in Colchester and Harlow.

In the Coming year, ECC will invest £87m into mainstream schools and £17m into special schools bringing an additional 2,750 places.

To find out more about the school places likely to be needed in your area and some of the potential solutions, please visit

https://www.essex.gov.uk/Education-Schools/Schools/Delivering-Education-Essex/School-Organisation-Planning/Documents/Meeting_demand_for_school_places.pdf

Below is a District by District list of School places needed in the next 10 years

- 1,235 new places in Basildon (1,085 primary and 150 secondary)
- 1,608 places in Braintree (1,008 primary and 600 secondary)
- 1,264 places in Brentwood (679 primary and 585 secondary)
- 257 places in Castle Point (217 primary and 40 secondary)
- 2,814 places in Chelmsford (1,589 primary and 1,225 secondary)
- 4,942 places in Colchester (2,457 primary and 2,485 secondary)
- 872 places in Epping Forest (217 primary and 655 secondary)
- 1,843 places in Harlow (693 primary and 1,150 secondary)
- 779 places in Maldon (504 primary and 275 secondary)
- 1,020 places in Rochford (595 primary and 425 secondary)
- 2,921 places in Tendring (1,526 primary and 1,395 secondary)
- 2,561 places in Uttlesford (1,631 primary and 930secondary)

It's worth noting that Colchester and Tendring are the two highest areas with regards to need for School places.

Highways

It is worth noting that ECC Highways has responsibility for over £20billion of combined Roads networks, footpaths, bridges, signage, gullies, traffic light systems, and any other highways furniture in the public realms. It is also worth noting that two main Trunk routes roads, namely the A12 and A120, are the responsibility of Highways England.

During the regular maintenance programme, over 400 miles of roads were resurfaced – nearly 4 times around the M25 – and filled in 5,000 potholes.

It is also worth pointing out the huge discrepancy in monetary terms of Highways Finances. The deterioration of our Roads has been estimated at £14.5million each year, with only £8million available for Capital spend.

The Council was very recently successful in its bid for funding for a range of road and transport infrastructure improvements that will unlock key sites for housing and employment growth, including two of the proposed North Essex Garden Communities.

The three shortlisted bids, which were supported by district and borough councils, which include Tendring, MPs, SELEP and the University of Essex, were:

- £250 million for Beaulieu and Chelmsford North East bypass, which includes plans for a new railway station and an initial phase of the long awaited bypass
- £65 million to build a new road linking the A120 and A133 and undertake preparatory work for a Rapid Transit system linking the university, garden community and central Colchester
- £100 million to ensure the proposed A12 improvements can accommodate and allow access to the proposed Garden Communities settlement at Marks Tey, subject to further public consultation.

£3million was set aside in this year Budget for the repair of secondary roads, and footways.

I have to report in this section of my report, that my efforts to tackle the Railway Underpass continue.

Most of you will have seen TV and Press reports that I have finally managed to get this massive problem to Ministerial level, when both MP's from our and the neighbouring Constituency of Babergh, namely Bernard Jenkin and James Cartlidge, met with Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to make him aware of the problem.

A meeting was successfully held at Brantham Village Hall with Elected Members and Officers from both, Suffolk and Essex CC's, Babergh and Tendring DC's, representatives of Department of Transport, Greater Anglia, Network Rail, Manningtree Rail Users Association, and the Haven Gateway Partnership.

After a very comprehensive discussion, it was agreed that the Traffic Light Scheme and other minor Highways improvements, such as Signage, improved white lining and some consideration to pedestrian safety, would be delivered as soon as possible.

I suggested that key Officers and Representative from all Stakeholders present should meet and identify a sustainable long term solution, which would possibly include a two way Underpass, a new Bridge, a flyover, or whatever other solution deemed suitable, and of course and more importantly identify sources of funding.

The current position is that as soon as safety monitoring on both approach roads to the Bridge is completed, a traffic light system will be installed. This will give equal opportunities to both, Suffolk and Essex bound traffic, to pass under the Underpass, as opposed to the current arrangement of always giving way to Essex bound traffic.

I will endeavour to update the Parish Council as soon as I have further news.

To finish, it would be good and proper to highlight the fact that even if, there was a system to pool together **all contributions** from **all** approved developments in our area, and that of neighbouring Babergh, the combined total would have not even gone anywhere near the kind of funding required for a long term solution.

Finance

With the Revenue Support Grant from Central Government disappearing in 2020, the Council has already delivered £350m of savings in the last 4 years by driving out inefficiency, innovating, generating income and reducing costs. And will continue to do so.

This track record has enabled the Council not only to maintain services in new and improved ways at lower cost, but also to invest for the future so that Essex is a better place in which to live and work.

In addition next year the Council will:

- Deliver £59m of further savings
- Develop a more commercial approach to enable further investment in services
- Optimise the use of buildings, through changing and modernising working practices

While at the same time the need for saving has never eased, of course, demand for many services has continued to grow.

Because of this increasing demand for services, the increases in inflation, and National Living Wage payments, mean that the Council has increased Council Tax for only the third time in the last eight years.

Just like ordinary families, the Council is not immune to pressures like inflation. But our the record of doing the right thing and not increasing tax has ensured to keep £161 million in the pockets of Essex taxpayers to spend how they wish.

This year it has risen by 2% through the Government's social care precept, which will be ring-fenced to adult social care, and 2.99% to support the delivery of vital services such as highways, public transport, libraries and recycling centres; a combined total of 4.99%.

It represents a £1.12 per week rise for the average Band D property.

Planning

ECC together with Tendring DC, Colchester BC, Braintree DC have set up a partnership, North Essex Garden Communities (NEGC) which is the only one of its kind in the whole country; its aim it is to deliver three Garden Villages across the three local Authorities areas, with a total of 47.000 new homes, over a 50 years period.

The site which is of more relevance to us is West Tendring, close to the Colchester border, and on the doorsteps of the University of Essex, which will see the delivery of 9000 new dwellings during the 50 years totality of the project.

A public examination was held in January this year at the Colchester Weston Homes Stadium, which examined the combined Tendring/Colchester/Braintree Part 1 proposals of their respective Local Plans; Part 2, being the main part of each Authority Local Plans, will be examined later in the year.

The Planning Inspector's Decision on Part 1 is expected in the next few weeks.

The main reason for setting up this unique scheme is to ensure that development delivers infrastructure first; the proposal on the Tendring/Colchester border will provide four new Primary and one new Secondary Schools; a brand new state of the art Health facility, which not only will be fit for purpose for the new development, but will take pressure off existing clinics and hospitals; first quality leisure choices, with huge Green Infrastructure, which will promote a healthy lifestyle, and opportunities of sportive recreation on residents doorsteps.

But the main feature and one that has already been given central Government support is a link road between the A133 and the A120, which will finally resolve the daily problems on Clingoe Hill, and divert traffic from the villages of Elmstead and Frating.

On a different note, as the chairman of the Development and Regulation Committee, in leigh man's terms, the Planning Committee, I have overseen the permission to several School extensions during 2017/18, mainly in the Colchester area, with the latest permission given to a brand new Special Educational Need and Disability School in Stanway, which will provide education for up to 200 boys aged 11-16, with a varied Social and Emotional Mental Health needs.

Housing

A pioneering £11 million housing scheme for older people in Harwich – the first to be delivered by Essex County Council's £27 million investment in creating new Independent Living homes – was officially open on Thursday 22 June 2017.

I was fortunate enough to represent the Chairman of ECC, to cut the ribbon on Rosebank Park, Dovercourt, which offers housing for local people aged 55 and over who have a care need; on the ceremony, which was a celebratory event for residents, I was assisted by its first resident, Julie Beazley, aged 60 years old.

Rosebank Park, located adjacent to Fryatt Hospital, Main Road, offers 70 stylish apartments designed to meet local people's changing needs in later life. Each self-contained apartment features one or two bedrooms, a modern open plan living, kitchen and dining area and bathroom. Residents also benefit from communal facilities including a residents' lounge, bar, dining room, mobility scooter store with charging points and private courtyard garden.

The main drive behind this scheme, and the reason ECC is heavily investing in this new venture, is the huge financial difference in the cost of a traditional Care Home and the cost in this type of accommodation,

which is a fraction of the rate, as in this scheme, a resident buys the level of care suited for his or her needs.

ECC will invest £27 million, as I mentioned earlier, to help create up to 1,800 new Independent Living homes to meet demand around the county over the next five years.

This scheme has actually won national praise. Essex County Council's Independent Living programme was commended in the Local Government Association's Housing our Ageing Population report, published this autumn.

The report sets out what is required to meet the housing needs and aspirations of the ageing population nationally. In particular, Essex was commended for:

- Having a clear vision, promoting awareness and changing attitudes towards housing in later life
- Planning for its ageing population
- Delivering and enabling new housing for older people
- Promoting a combined approach towards housing, care and health.

It is the Council's ambition to provide the maximum help it can so that everyone can have somewhere safe, pleasant and supportive to live in later life.

Beaumont House in Walton opened later in 2017, with a third new scheme, Cornell Court in Saffron Walden, is due to open in summer 2018. Construction will also begin on new schemes in the Braintree, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow and Rochford districts during 2018.

The LGA is the national voice of local government, working with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

Adult Social Care

Social Care costs account for 60p of every £1 of the Council's budget, with demand increasing as the population of the County ages.

On Tuesday 12th December the Council agreed a motion that when 100% of business rates are retained by councils, expected in 2020/21, the anticipated national surplus of £6.25 billion should be ring-fenced to social care, with Essex County Council receiving its share.

With the phasing out of the revenue support grant, Essex County Council welcomes the Government's plans to introduce programmes for the retention of business rates. Essex is a supporter of the benefits of devolved approaches to finance and the move to make Local Authorities more independent and our motion supports this while at the same time, tackling the largest single pressure on its finances.

The 100% Business Rate Retention scheme, due to come in in 2020/21 will provide additional financial support to local government and create a dividend of £6.25 billion.

This money is currently unallocated, so the Council has called upon the Government to use this pot of money to meet funding of pressures in social care. The Council will work with the Government to ensure the final arrangements work both nationally and for the benefit of Essex residents.