

Essex County Council Budget 2020/2021:

The Council's Cabinet will meet to approve the proposals on Tuesday 21 January, before they go to Full Council for final approval on Tuesday 11 February.

The proposals include an extra £5million for highways to enable investment in improving the condition of roads and pavements, and new investment in technology to support social care case management, more money to help meeting increased demand for home to school transport and adults and children's social care.

A further, more detailed update will follow after the Full Council meeting.

Essex Climate Change Commission:

ECC is in the process of setting up an independent, cross party Climate Action Commission, which will have a high profile independent chair and representation from ECC Members, academics and experts in their field. This Commission will, over its two year life, make recommendations to the County Council for actions to be taken to help tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions across Essex. Cllr Finch has allocated a reserve of £5m in the budget for the implementation of recommendations from the Commission.

Essex Forest Initiative:

The Essex Forest Initiative was launched in Tree Week on the 23rd November 2019 with Cllr Finch and Andy Wright, the CEO of Braintree Council along with local school children planting 61 trees

All forestry projects depend on finding the land to plant up and people enthusiastic to improve their environment. ECC will start with our own land and land for approximately 50,000 trees has already been identified. In addition, ECC are working with our partners in the district and borough authorities to plant on their land. As for enthusiastic tree planters, ECC are being contacted by charities, parishes, communities and individuals and are now asking these partners to begin to work up their tree planting proposal so ECC can make a long-term difference to these areas of Essex which will make up the new Essex Forest.

ECC are particularly keen to engage work with the parishes in Essex as we know they are passionate about improving their villages and towns. If you have areas of land where the landowner is happy to plant trees and local people keen to plant the tree then please e-mail environment@essex.gov.uk . The team will send you a form to get all the necessary information for the tree planting scheme and a planting agreement. The Essex Forest Initiative is a 5 year project so ECC will have plenty of time to make a real difference to your local environments and doing our bit for the climate change global challenge.

Essex 2020:

Essex 2020 is an Essex-wide, year-long programme of science and creative events, exhibitions, festivals, performances, workshops, activities and opportunities for every Essex resident to be a part of. It offers a unique opportunity to celebrate Essex's pioneering past and embrace the future to create a sense of identity and pride that can drive prosperity.

Essex 2020 aims to deliver:

- 350+ events
- 500,000+ participants
- 100s of businesses, schools and community organisations taking part.

Residents can check out all the details of events registered so far here at www.Essex2020.com and find out more about the specific events in their area. Through the website, organisations and community groups are able to submit expressions of interest/event proposals, so that they too can become a part of this landmark programme.

Parishes are asked to spread the word about this very special year of events and encourage residents to check out the Essex 2020 social media channels:

<https://www.facebook.com/Essex2020>

https://twitter.com/essex_2020

https://www.instagram.com/essex_2020/

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkrZUvwcSerOjfGWfkh0NuQ/about>

All events are being co-designed and supported in partnership with Essex's local communities via the six Essex 2020 'collaborative hubs' of arts, business, education, community and local authority organisations that will steer programming in local areas, with each managed by a lead organisation:

- Uttlesford: Stansted Airport College
- Chelmsford, Brentwood, Basildon and Maldon: Chelmsford Ignite
- Thurrock, Rochford, Southend and Castle Point: Focal Point Gallery
- Harlow and Epping Forest: Harlow Creative Ways
- Braintree: Braintree Cultural Education
- Tendring and Colchester: Signals.

Through participation in science and creativity, Essex 2020 will help deliver *The Future of Essex* ambitions to **Unite behind a sense of identity** and **Strengthen communities through participation**.

For more information about Essex 2020, please contact Essex2020@alwayspossible.co.uk.

Rough Sleeping:

ECC formed a partnership with four district councils to launch the Essex Rough Sleeper Outreach Service in the summer of 2019. The service operates in Chelmsford, Maldon, Braintree and Epping Forest. The partnership commissioned CHESSE, a local voluntary sector provider with a history of expertise in working with local rough sleepers to provide personalised support and accommodation, assisting rough sleepers to break the cycle of homelessness and move into sustained housing. As a result in the first six months the partnership has helped 82 rough sleepers.

If a member of the public is concerned about a rough sleeper they can make a report to Street Link and a trained professional from CHESSE will make contact with the individual. Street Link can be contacted via the Street Link app or by going online at <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>.

Homelessness:

ECC recognises that homelessness goes beyond rough sleeping. ECC commissioned the voluntary organisation Peabody in April 2019 to provide advice and support to households at risk of losing their home in the county. Peabody provides people with support and advice on: Money management advice, housing law, attending court, housing benefit and wider benefit advice. Peabody helped over two thousand Essex families and individuals with their housing in the first six months of the financial year.

Essex Housing:

The Essex Housing Team continue to work alongside public sector partners to identify vacant or under-utilised public assets for high quality housing to meet general and specialist needs of Essex residents. Most recently, the scheme at Moulsham Lodge, Chelmsford achieved practical completion on 6 December, generating 18 private and 8 specialist apartments for adults with disabilities to live independently with an on-site carer.

A design team has also been appointed to explore options to redevelop the Shenfield Library site to include a brand-new library building with high spec apartments above. The team will be asked to explore a range of options that will include rebuilding the library to ensure the best use of the space available. We will be working closely with the library service to design the library so that it is a modern, fit for purpose building which is in line with ECC's new library strategy and will better serve the local community. A full costed design will be brought back to members for decision before any action is taken on site.

A planning application has been submitted for a proposed development at Shernbroke, Epping Forest, which will provide 10 specialist apartments for young people transitioning to adult services and 14 private apartments to help meet local housing need. The outcome of the planning application is expected in late January 2020.

Essex Highways Member led footway scheme:

Cllr Kevin Bentley invited all Members at ECC to nominate up to five footway defects for consideration for priority repair - the work, wherever possible was to be resolved in addition to the already scheduled forward capital works programme in place for footways.

Officers have been working hard to assess, schedule and mobilise the resources needed to deliver the repairs Members asked for. ECC's plan has always been to assess the sites identified over the coming months and deliver works to resolve them by the end of the financial year in March 2020.

Children and Families:

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Louise McKinlay is leading on a project to develop a better package for care leavers. This includes improving access to and quality of housing, developing better work experience opportunities for care leavers and reducing the impact of Council Tax on care leavers. At a recent meeting of Leaders and Chief Executives from across Essex, leaders were in agreement to exempt care leavers from council tax up to the age of 21.

Cllr McKinlay also presented an update to the leaders and chief execs on the JAMs (Just about managing) project. This project looks to Help 'hard working families' that sit just above the need for intervention - identified with reference to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Minimum Income Standard (MIS). ECC are currently in the data gathering stage on this project and more information will be available once the data has been analysed

In February, Cllr McKinlay is holding a workshop with parents and officers to develop a 3 year strategy for overnight respite care for children with disabilities.