

## **Cllr Barker's Parish Update – ECC Budget 2020/21**

### **Essex County Council Budget 2020/2021:**

At the Full Council meeting on 11 February, the ECC Budget for 2020/21 was given final approval. In his Executive Statement, Cllr Finch described the Budget as one that not only balances the books, keeps Essex moving, protects our residents, but also breaks new ground, and enables us to explore new and exciting opportunities to take Essex into the future.

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.

Last year Cllr Finch pledged a quarter of a million pounds to help tackle homelessness, which has directly prevented 75 different households from becoming homeless and supported many hundreds more to stabilise their accommodation status. ECC has also secured nearly half a million pounds from Government to continue our work with rough sleepers.

Cllr Finch also announced last year half a million pounds for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to help tackle the major issue of protecting our residents, young and old, from gangs and county lines through our violence and vulnerability partnership. This has proven a great success. One example of this is that the partnership engaged with hundreds of young people at their most 'reachable' moments. In these 'reachable' moments, if the approach is right, the partnership are finding they can get through to these young people and divert them away from gangs.

This is however only the beginning and ECC has committed another half a million pounds this year to continue to trial new approaches to supporting children at risk of exploitation from gangs

Last year footways in over 300 locations, nominated by ECC Members, were repaired using an investment of £700k. Cllr Finch announced that to build on this an extra £5m would be committed for improving road and footpath condition throughout the county.

Cllr Finch, as a firm believer in localism, has said many times that nobody knows more about their local community and its challenges than a local councillor. He announced at Full Council that ECC would be providing a pot of £750,000, a grant of £10,000 to each Essex County Councillor, to spend on local community initiatives in their division in 2020/2021. This would enable the local councillor to tackle some of the local issues in the community that they know about – quickly and efficiently. Providing local solutions for local problems

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## **Essex Climate Change Commission:**

As announced at the last Full Council meeting, ECC is 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.

Cllr Finch announced on 11 February that Lord Randall will be the Commission's Independent Chair which, with his experience, reputation connections and influence, will demonstrate the huge potential for the Commission to make genuine change. Lord Randall will be assisted by two co-chairs who are both students at Essex Schools and will represent the voice of Essex residents and especially the voice of youth. The full list of members of the Commission is being finalised and will be released very soon, with the first meeting taking place in the next couple of months.

Cllr Finch announced that he has allocated a reserve of £5m in the budget for Climate Action and this will be used for the implementation of recommendations from the Commission.

## **Other headlines from the Full Council:**

### **Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action:**

- Significant investment has been secured from Innovate UK to build the first ultra-rapid fast charging station for Electric Vehicles in Braintree
- We have been supporting residents and communities to purchase lower cost solar panels through our Solar Together scheme and installing solar panels on our own public buildings. ECC's Solar Together campaign to install solar panels on domestic properties generated over 300 installations in Essex, creating over 1 Megawatt of installed renewable energy and saved 300 tonnes of carbon in year one alone.
- ECC has awarded grants of £2.4m in energy and low carbon support to 360 small and medium size businesses in Essex reducing their carbon emissions by 2,400 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- We have secured nearly £750,000 grant funding from the Coastal Communities Fund for the delivery of the £1m Essex Path to Prosperity project. This project will promote the Essex coast and sustainable access to it, providing support to tourism businesses and creating apprenticeships to ensure an improved visitor experience.
- The 2019/20 floods capital programme is forecast to reduce surface water flood risk to 337 residential properties and generate £2.1m worth of income from external partners. Over the last two years the total amount of damages avoided to residential properties in Essex is in excess of £60m
- **#LoveEssexNotPlastic** – we are running a year-long behaviour change campaign with residents, schools, businesses and local organisations to reduce the use of single-use plastic across Essex. We are encouraging Essex residents to sign the plastic pledge - 2,403 individuals already signed up

### **Deputy Leader and Infrastructure:**

- As announced by Cllr Finch, an extra £5m would be committed to Highways for improving road and footpath condition. This would be used for such projects as white lining, a Member-led pothole initiative, footway/kerbing repairs, drainage repairs to tackle flooding issues, illuminated sign and bollard

conversion and Vehicle Restraints (VSR), barrier tensioning & Pedestrian barrier repairs

**Cabinet Member for Economic Growth:**

- We are committed to working with districts and boroughs to enable their Planned growth, working to support them at all the stages in the preparation of their Local Plans. We need strategic investment in infrastructure, reflecting the concerns of our residents to deliver new and better ways of living through Local Plans and Garden Communities.
- ECC wants the characteristics of the places that we live, whether rural, urban or coastal to be preserved and shape communities. We have recently launched a consultation on our Housing Strategy to ensure that housing growth in Essex enhances the best of the county, enables people to live independently and supports people to have a stable home and we are reviewing the Essex Developers Contribution Guide to ensure we build places fit for the future which reflect local communities' heritage.
- The Housing Infrastructure Funding – totalling £318 - being delivered by Cllr Bentley will support the delivery of over 20,000 homes in two garden communities in the coming decades and many Garden Communities have secured capacity funding of over £1 million this year to enable us to continue to work with partners across Essex to address the development viability challenge to ensure we get the right infrastructure in place.
- Essex is a great place to grow up, live and work but not enough people from out with our county know this. In 2020, Marketing Essex will be established to promote Essex to external audiences via a new Visit Essex website and a series of themed visitor campaigns to attract people to live, work, study, invest and visit the county. We are working with the support of the private sector and key industries that we want to see grow and develop, challenging out of date stereotypes about Essex to show the scale of our ambition for a future focused around business growth in strategically important areas of the County.

**Cabinet Member for Customer, Corporate, Culture and Communities:**

- ECC are investing £1.9 million as part of a new library refurbishment programme. Book funding for buying new stock has increased by £130,000.
- ECC are keen to increase library usage and encourage those whose library membership may have lapsed to return to the service. Cllr Barker announced that ECC is running a Book Amnesty throughout the entire month of March. This is an opportunity to return all those forgotten books that Essex residents may have had at home for months, or even years, with a guarantee that the fines will be waived. Also, customers re-joining the service during the amnesty will not be charged for a replacement membership card.

**Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care:**

- Major focus on improving the quality of life for people with dementia, those who support them and carers generally. We will continue to work with the winners of Challenge Dementia on their programme to develop VR headsets and films to improve quality of lives.
- New community care model: working with our health partners to provide better, more joined-up local services, and enabling people to get the right care at the right time.

- High-quality residential and domiciliary care: We will continue to work with the market to ensure excellent services in an affordable way.
- We will continue to drive up the scale and effectiveness of interventions such as weight managements and physical activity: Rolling out the LDP in Tendring, Colchester and Basildon.

#### **Cabinet Member for Children and Families:**

- The Cabinet Member announced that all our district /borough and city councils, along with the PFCC in Essex have agreed to work with the County Council in exempting care leavers from council tax up to the age of 21. This will give these young people much needed financial support at a critical time in their life. They also will be receiving information on financial management to help them in the future.
- As well as announcing that by the end of this year we will have invested a total of £1 million to increase the prosperity of those people who are Just About Managing, Cllr McKinlay also announced a pilot scheme for working families that will be delivered this summer in partnership with Active Essex, to help with childcare issues. This will happen in the month of August and will include 12,000 daily sessions of free childcare from 8.30am – 5.30pm, including lunch with a child able to sign up for a maximum of 10 of these sessions.

A sustainable programme for this is essential and ECC will continue to work closely with local community organisations, businesses, sporting and voluntary groups to ensure we maintain the expertise for future years.

#### **Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:**

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#### **Essex 2020:**

Essex 2020, an Essex-wide, year-long programme of science and creative events, exhibitions, festivals, performances, workshops, activities and opportunities, was launched on 20 January. 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.

Residents can check out all the details of events registered so far here at [www.Essex2020.com](http://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.