

ECC Report

**County Elections.**

I reported last time that there was a new Administration in place at ECC:

|              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| Reform       | 53 (now 52) |
| Conservative | 13          |
| Lib-Dem      | 5           |
| Other        | 4           |
| Green        | 1           |
| Labour       | 1           |
| Vacancy      | 2           |

The Conservatives are the official opposition

A Shadow Opposition Cabinet has been formed and I have the role of Shadow Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

Proportional allocation to committees means 2 Conservatives on the main Scrutiny and Planning committees.

I am one of the members on the Place Scrutiny committee.

I pushed for these positions, as they cover the most raised issues in my division – so I am able to stay abreast of developments.

**ECC Full Council Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

This was the first meeting.

Announcements by the new administration included:

- Request to Govt to cancel LGR
- Removal of library reservation charges
- Declaration of a “Pothole Emergency” – no detail was given at the meeting, but we got an email later saying £2M was being drawn down from reserves, and another public announcement that the District Teams would be increased from 9 to 12. I assume these are the MHI teams.
- Cancellation of Net Zero – no detail of what this means

There were 2 motions:

- Conservative Motion to build on the “Outstanding” rated Children’s services
- Lib-Dem Motion to have funding for safety highways schemes, in the absence of the LHPs

Both motions were amended by the Reform administration (watered down, and removed commitments) and amended motions passed.

I spoke in support of the Lib-Dem motion

At the Oral Questions part of the meeting, I asked 2 questions to the Highways Cabinet Member:

- Will the Cabinet Member continue the investment in the maintenance of the roads and underwrite commitment by the last administration made to commit an extra £50M
- Will the Cabinet Member review the consultation on the new draft Strategy and take it forward to policy

Both questions received the same answer – I need to consider and get back to you – which was a bit surprising given the announcements about the potholes.

### **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

The Government has announced that Chelmsford will join Brentwood and Maldon, along with Essex County Council services, to form a new mid-Essex unitary authority from April 2028. This forms part of the wider five unitary model which has now been selected for Greater Essex.

The new Reform ECC Administration have written to Steve Reed MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and stated that ECC “will utilise all resources at our disposal to challenge and resist LGR”

They have instructed lawyers to prepare a pre-action protocol letter.

### **Highways Road Maintenance**

The new Reform Administration have ceased the submission of Members Highways Initiative (MHI) – this was the means by which Cllrs can direct the extra funded teams to prioritise defects – including carriageway, pavements, signs, drains. The Cllr website is closed to new submissions, although they seem to be still repairing the ones in the system - my week is this week!

It would seem that the Administration is changing the use of the extra funded teams from repairing all defects raised by Cllrs, to one where they have asked each Cllr to nominate just 3 roads. Last week, we were given just 48 hours to nominate 3 roads so I wrote to my 12 PCs week and have had to select 3 roads for my entire division, with no criteria on length, level of defect, etc – so I have taken note of the 5 responses I received and selected the 3 I think have most impact on residents and are of a size that might get accepted.

This does not seem a good way to do it – I have 85 miles of roads in my division, and this will fix less than 0.5% of them, and it also rules out pavements, which are not included in the scheme –

and pavements are in a worse state than roads, but the Reform Administration have declared themselves pro-car!. I have made my views known to the Cabinet Member.

### **Drainage in Grange Road**

I have asked for an update on the works under a SWAS/mini-SWAS arrangement [surface water alleviation scheme]. I have not yet received a response.

### **Buses**

Daniel submitted an FOI and learnt that the bus company "hold no liability if services do not run to schedule or fail to show" (email from Complaints Administrator, Bus Users UK, 14-05-2026, following official complaints procedure).

I am not in a position to influence the detailed contract terms with bus companies for subsidised services.

However, I can suggest that these issues can be raised at the upcoming Transport Engagement Meeting, hosted by the Local Bus Network Community Engagement Team / Integrated Passenger Transport Unit (IPTU).

### **A City Council Issue**

#### **Chelmsford City Council Local Plan Review**

2<sup>nd</sup> June, Council agreed submission of a revised Local for Independent Examination by a government appointed Planning Inspector. This includes additional sites to address the shortfall in build rates (allocated from Central Govt).

The additional sites in my County Council division are:

- 14b – Land South of Ford End Primary School – 75 dwellings
- 18a – Land North West of Chelmsford (North of Hollow Lane) – 100 dwellings
- 19 – Land West of Patching Hall Lane – 200 dwellings

Independent examination will go on until late 2026 with the expectation that the plan will be adopted early 2027.

For more info, search Chelmsford Local Plan Review.

I spoke against this on the basis that it includes higher housing targets and additional sites even though build rates (not in Council control) are short on current targets and questioned the necessity of the extra sites. My Conservative group voted against the plan submission, but the vote was carried.