

## **MALDON DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2022 – COUNCILLOR JANE FLEMING**

This is my first report for the Woodham Mortimer with Hazeleigh Annual Parish Meeting as an Essex County Councillor. I was delighted to be elected to represent the Maldon Division at Essex County Council in May 2021.

The Maldon Division comprises Woodham Mortimer and the parishes of North Fambridge, Stow Maries, Cold Norton, Purleigh including Cock Clarks, Woodham Walter, and Maldon Town. I'm fortunate in that I've lived and worked in the Division for the past twenty five years, and already represented part of the Division as a Maldon District Councillor so knew it well before taking up the role at ECC.

The May 2021 elections returned 53 Conservative County Councillors, so Essex County Council remains a Conservative controlled Council. Following the elections, at the May Full Council, Councillor Kevin Bentley was elected Leader of the Council and a new Cabinet appointed. In July, the Leader and Cabinet published an ambitious new plan for Essex - "Everyone's Essex, our Plan for Essex 2021-2025". Focusing on Renewal, Equality and Ambition, the plan contains twenty commitments and directs investment in the Economy, the Environment, Children & Families and Health & Wellbeing.

The ECC Locality Fund reopened for applications in May, and I'm pleased to say that all of the £10,000 for the Maldon Division, has been spent. My thanks go to the councils and community groups who approached me with their projects and for the hard work put in. This financial year, Parish Council projects supported in the Maldon Division include outdoor seating, bins and boiler replacement for Cold Norton's Village Hall and Playground project, fruit trees for North Fambridge's Community Orchard, and Woodham Mortimer's projector for their Village Hall. Community Groups and organisations in the Maldon Division also supported by the ECC Locality Fund include the Woodham Walter Village Hall "Warm Up the Hall" project, and outdoor seating for the Action for Family Carers' Day Centre at Brickhouse Farm. Plus, a new freezer to support the food bank work at Peters Hospital Café, support for the project to re site the Steam Tug Brent at The Hythe, and support for the refurbishment of an outbuilding for community activities at Purleigh Community Shop.



The Locality Fund opens again for applications this May, so if you have a project or community initiative, please do contact me with your suggestions/applications at [cllr.jane.fleming@essex.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.jane.fleming@essex.gov.uk)

Essex County Council also supported the community through the Community Initiative Fund, a fund administered by the Essex Association of Local Councils on behalf of ECC. Town & Parish Councils, community groups, social enterprises and individuals in Essex were invited to apply. Successful applicants in the Maldon Division supported include the work of the Woodham Walter Village Hall "Warm Up the Hall project and the establishment of the Chelmer and Blackwater Reserve in Maldon. The Chelmer and Blackwater Reserve is an exciting new venture by a community interest company on the site known locally as Ironworks Meadow. You can view it as you walk along the river wall from the Tesco superstore towards Beeleigh and work has already started on what will become a new nature reserve.

The winter months always bring additional pressures to the most vulnerable, so a £9.4 million Household Support Fund was announced in November for Essex families and vulnerable residents. This fund included £3.2 million for School Holiday Food Vouchers during the Christmas, February, and Easter 2022 School Holidays for those eligible and £2.5 million for support those most in need with food costs, energy and water bills and other essentials. The fund also directed £120,000 for rough sleepers in Essex distributed through borough, city, and district councils and £200,000 to local Citizens Advice and £108,000 to Care Leavers for food and essential items. Also £630,000 was directed to the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service including £600,000 for a one off fuel payment to eligible families.

In the New Year, the Essex Year of Reading was launched with a programme of fun activities and events that will run throughout the rest of this year to support pupils whose education has been affected by Covid 19. In 2021 Essex County Council committed to keeping all 74 Essex Libraries open, so shortly before Christmas, the new Draft Library Plan was launched with an eight week consultation seeking residents' views on the future shape of the Library Service in Essex. The results of that consultation have just been presented to the People and Families Scrutiny Committee. There is a strong emphasis on children and young people's literacy and an excellent initiative to provide every Essex primary school pupil and Year Seven pupil with a library card. This will be rolled out prior to National Literacy Week.



You've all heard of an Easter Egg Hunt, well Essex Library Service is going to be running the Big Easter Book Hunt!

From 2 – 23 April golden tickets will be hidden in children's books across the county.

If your child is aged 0-11 and finds one, they will be entered into a prize draw to win an Lenovo Tab M7 Android tablet.

It's so easy to do, simply:

- Find a book with a golden ticket
- Take the ticket to the Hello Desk to register your details
- Borrow the book

The prize has kindly been provided by Active Essex So, on your marks, get ready, hunt!!!!

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Also launched in the New Year, was the Leader and Deputy Leader's Levelling Up Plan for Essex. Priority areas and cohorts in the County were identified to achieve better outcomes and close the gap on the Essex and national averages. Priority places identified were Tendring, Basildon and Colchester housing estates, Harlow, Rural Braintree, and Canvey Island. Priority cohorts identified were children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions, children on free school meals, working families and young adults (16-25 years) who have not been in education, training, or employment for around 6-12 months.

In February, Essex County Council agreed its new Budget for 2022/23. The one thing that strikes you as a new Member is the sheer size of Essex County Council – the net Revenue Budget for 2022/23 is £1.083 Billion. Like all local authorities, Essex has experienced a number of challenges this year including: the impact of the pandemic, issues with supply chains, inflation, and the increasing costs of adult social care. The Council had a stark choice in balancing its budget - of increasing taxes or facing unacceptable cuts in services. Therefore, the Council increased their Council Tax precept by 4.59% (£1.16 per week for a Band D Council Taxpayer) of which 2.59% is for Adult Social Care.

Adult Social Care & Health accounts for £737m of Council spending which is over 40% of the gross Revenue Budget. This spending supports the most vulnerable in our communities including older people, people with learning difficulties, mental health difficulties and physical and sensory impairments.

The Budget also contained an ambitious £1.3 Billion Capital Programme to invest in the County's infrastructure as we build back from the pandemic including £696 million for Economic Renewal, £332 million for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport and £248 million to support Educational Excellence, Learning and Employability. An additional £2 Million 'Pothole Fund' was also announced targeting fixes where they are needed the most.

Major infrastructure projects that will affect the Division in the coming years include, the A12 widening and junction changes at Hatfield Peverel, the Army & Navy Roundabout redesign, Hoe Mill Bridge replacement and highways works associated with the delivery of the North Heybridge & South Maldon Garden suburbs around Maldon.

All 12 Boroughs, City and District areas have a Local Highways Panel who are responsible for making recommendations and setting priorities for Highways Schemes in their areas. The Panels are made up of a representative number of Members from Essex County Council and the individual Borough, City or District. Meetings are held on a quarterly basis and prioritise local concerns and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for the implementation of highways schemes that meet the concerns of local people.

Local Highways Panel funding was doubled in the 2021/2022 budget, resulting in the Maldon LHP budget being increased to £400,000 per financial year and this commitment was continued for this coming financial year. The Maldon LHP has underspent this year due to staffing shortages and the impacts of the pandemic, however the underspend will be carried forward into this next financial year. The way in which the Panels work is currently undergoing scrutiny largely due to the time taken from application to implementation.

If you have concerns about an issue in the Division, please email me: [cllr.jane.fleming@essex.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.jane.fleming@essex.gov.uk)

