

## Annual Report Regarding Essex County Council 2018-19

The County Council exists to secure the economic, social and environmental well-being of Essex.

Despite the difficult circumstances of a challenging financial environment the Council did not step away from the aims it set itself a year ago because the Members believe they were and still remain the key to Essex's long-term well-being. And however difficult the circumstances we should never stop being ambitious for this great county and the residents of Essex that we serve.

The aims reflected the Members' focus on those larger ambitions that our residents have for themselves – a great education, a good job, a healthy life, a safe community, a stimulating environment to live, work, and enjoy in to old age :

a. Inclusive economic growth – we believe the only guarantee of long-term well-being is a strong economy from which everyone can benefit.

b. Helping people get the best start and age well – it is our fundamental duty to protect the most vulnerable and to maximise the opportunities for Essex people, whatever their circumstances, to make the best lives they can for themselves and their families.

c. Help create great places – we are the guardians of the county for future generations and we will always act responsibly to address the growth needs of our population whilst maintaining the essence of what makes Essex great.

d. Transform the Council – we know that none of the above can be achieved if the Council is not constantly pushing itself to be more resourceful and more efficient.

The Council, focussed on those aims, achieved much during the year and the following are a small sample of its achievements:

- Delivered more than 2,750 school places
- Delivered a campaign to promote apprenticeships to employers and young people
- Ensured there is a range of employment support services for people with disabilities, including those with mental health needs
- Influenced the roll out of broadband in Essex to support businesses and invested £5m
- Invested £120m of capital to improve and maintain the roads in Essex
- Been inspected by Ofsted and HMIP who found our Children's Services and Youth Offending Service to be outstanding
- Continued to reduce the number of permanent admissions to residential care
- Driven a truly collaborative approach with NHS partners to health and social care integration to achieve best outcomes for Essex residents.
- With partners, developed, a new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy with clear objectives around improving outcomes for mental health; obesity; health inequalities; and long-term conditions
- Developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy to take a positive approach to enhance, protect and create an inclusive and integrated network of high quality green spaces and green infrastructure in Greater Essex
- Completed an efficiency review of existing waste infrastructure to ensure it remains fit for purpose and is optimised.
- Worked with district colleagues and counter fraud experts to deliver £700,000 through identifying fraud in Council Tax and Business Rates
- Delivered £5m of receipts through sales of surplus assets which has helped to fund the capital programme and identified £7m more next year

- Delivered £59m savings and through a review of 720 fees and charges across all services, generated an extra £10m over 2 years to 2020/21

The success of some of the achievements was by working closely with partners across the county. This will become more necessary in the coming years.

In February the Council agreed the 2019/2020 budget which totals £939.9m in revenue to continue to deliver quality services to Essex residents, and £249m in the capital programme to fund investments to ensure the long-term financial stability of this council.

The Council has delivered £311m of savings in the last 4 years by improving value and will be making a further £60m of savings and efficiencies in the 2019/20 Budget.

The budget contains an increase in Council tax of 2.99% and 1% for the Adult Social Care Precept. These increases recognising that we are a low tax council, having only increased Council Tax 3 times in the last 9 years and also do this balancing the needs of the taxpayer with the need to provide our vital services and ensure they are on a sustainable footing. Additional funding, for repairs to footpaths /pavements; mental health schemes; prevention of homelessness and rough sleepers; for partnership work to help children at risk of County Lines, was announced.

Essex's ambition to be the leading Council in innovation and efficiency is at the heart of its budget proposals and Essex was recently rated in the top ten most productive councils in the country.