

Annual Report from County Councillor Graham Butland, Member for Three Fields with Great Notley Division of Essex County Council

Since being elected in May 2017 I have spent a significant period getting to know what is one of the largest geographical electoral divisions in Essex.

The Division contains nine Parishes namely, Rayne, Great Notley, Panfield, Shalford, Great Bardfield, Great Sailing, Bardfield Sailing, Wethersfield, and Finchingfield. In addition, there are a small number of residents who live in unparished areas of Braintree.

During the year, I have attended meetings of all Parish Councils in the area and established a good working relationship with both Parish Councillors and Clerks.

I have taken up several issues that have been raised with me both by individual constituents and Parish Councils. It will be no surprise to anyone that Highways matters, particularly those concerning potholes, have dominated my inbox.

It may be of interest to know that the County Council has resurfaced over 400 miles of roads – nearly 4 times around the M25 – and filled in 5,000 potholes during the last year. I recognise however, that this matter continues to be a cause for concern amongst constituents. The issue of speeding in our villages has also featured highly.

Other issues that have been raised with me are flooding and the availability, or lack of availability, of Broadband in parts of the area.

I have also been working closely with both the County Council and representatives of Finchingfield Parish Council on how necessary repairs to the iconic bridge in the village should be dealt with.

On the wider front the Key Achievements of Essex County Council during 2017/18 were: -

- 94% of Essex schools were judged good or outstanding - three points higher than the national average
- We helped 1,330 young people not in education, employment or training to move into employment or learning
- We gave substantial business support to 22 firms resulting in about £2.3m finance raised and multiple new products brought to market
- Reduced the number of delayed transfers of care due to social care to an average of 1,100 days per month
- Continued to invest in our country parks which has increased visitor numbers by 7.5% to almost three qtrs. of a million
- Supported the creation of 11,370 apprenticeships in the county, and we'll continue to invest to ensure our economy has the skills it needs to thrive.
- Promoted activities and delivered services which helped reduce the amount of household waste over the last 12 months by 32kg per household
- Begun construction work on 64 housing units – 41 units for private sale and 23 units for independent living for people with learning disabilities

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During 2017/18 three separate initiatives were launched that give local communities access to funding to make improvements in their local area:

- **The Local Connections Fund** - £500,000 committed to support community-led activity, using a crowdfunding platform known as The Essex Crowd Movement. Depending on the number of individual pledges (min. £2), ECC will match the fundraising efforts of qualifying projects up to the value of £5,000.
- **The Local Services Fund** - £500,000 to support more formal, traditional services by being more locally responsive and to improve local places. The fund is being administered by the Essex Association of Local Councils who publicise the fund to parish councils, housing associations, and other formally constituted local groups.
- **The Essex Lottery** – The lottery is open to anybody aged 16 or over who is physically based in Essex. Tickets cost £1 and the Jackpot can be £25,000.

I have been please to support a number of applications for projects within the Division.

Essex County Council Budget for 2018/19

We have set high ambitions for Essex in the face of a difficult financial context and the Council has a strong record of sound financial management, focusing on providing efficient services that matter to residents.

The Council will spend a gross budget (including schools) of £1,847m and a capital programme of £299m to deliver its priorities in 2018/19.

We have an outstanding track record of delivering value to tax-paying residents. We have delivered £350m of savings in the last 4 years by driving out inefficiency, generating income and reducing costs, and the budget now presented is based on delivering a further £59m of savings and efficiencies in 2018/19. This track record has enabled the Council not only to maintain services in new and improved ways at lower cost, but also to invest for the future so that Essex is a better place in which to live and work.

Despite our efforts, price increases, population growth and increasing demand for services, particularly for social care, means we will need to utilise the 2% Social Care precept facility offered by government, and increase Council Tax by 2.99%. The precept is being used to insulate Adult Social Care from the savings required across other portfolios.

We need to ensure effective services not just for today, but for the future. Therefore, we have ambitious plans for our capital investment - a capital programme of £299m, an increase of £32m on that for 2017/18. This investment will help deliver our strategic aims and priorities, and in some cases, give us a return on investment. The programme includes investment in independent living schemes for older and

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vulnerable adults, generating greater supply of housing, sufficiency of school places (including schools for children with special needs), and in schemes to promote economic growth, including improvements to the roads and footpaths that we all use daily. We are also providing an extra £3m investment in our highways over the coming twelve months.

Finally, I am available to try and help any resident who may be experiencing an issue which is the responsibility of Essex County Council. I can be contacted by email at cllr.graham.butland@essex.gov.uk