

Report by Cllr Derrick Louis, Essex County Council Member for Witham Southern, December 2020

1. Member Locality Fund

Essex County Council has made £10,000 available to each County Councillor for the benefit of their Division.

Please do send any additional proposals for consideration to me at: cllr.Derrick.Louis@essex.gov.uk by the end of December.

In terms of the “small print”:

What the money can be spent on:

Money must be spent in a way which benefits the division. There are three main ways of spending it:

- making a grant to a registered charity, a parish council or a properly constituted community or voluntary association for the purposes of a specific service or project in the Division;
- buying goods or services; or
- commissioning services from ECC.

What the money cannot be spent on:

- an organisation in which the Councillor is involved, unless the Leader agrees otherwise and makes a formal decision to that effect;
- an organisation which is political or undertakes any political campaigning activity or on a councillor’s constituency business;
- anything which has a significant ongoing maintenance or support liability which ECC would be required or expected to bear – unless there is a separate agreement to bear the cost with funding identified;
- anything which benefits a particular individual, business or ‘for profit’ organisation;
- any organisation which does not operate on an inclusive basis – services must be available to the community without discrimination (recognising that some services are only useful to certain groups);
- any organisation which has previously misused public money;
- anything which is unlawful

2. Member Led Pothole Programme

Cllr Bentley is now issuing weekly lists of potholes to be repaired under this scheme.

I will advise Members when those submitted by the Parish Council are notified to me.

3. New Zebra Crossing, Maldon Road

As part of the Gleneagles planning application a new Zebra crossing is to be provided by the developer. A local resident has raised concerns over the location of the crossing which I have asked ECC Highways to look into these.

4. Latney's Bridge

The broken footpath and phasing of the traffic lights were raised with me by John Cockell. I have asked ECC Highways to look into these, although the bridge and lights are the responsibility of Highways England.

5. Church Road Vegetation

I was contacted by a resident regarding concerns about unmaintained vegetation affecting their property in Ranulph Way. This turned out to be a complex land ownership issue going back to the 1980's.

The Parish Council some months ago agreed to a one-off tidy of the strip of land by removing brambles and cutting the grass, pending permission from the land owner. As the land owner is yet to be identified, this work has not gone ahead. The Environment Advisory Group will discuss reinstating the pre-year 2000 grass cutting of the area once ownership is established.

6. A12

I attended a Highways England briefing on the A12 widening project including closure of Junctions 20a and 21.

I sought assurances that the access to the station would be maintained during any construction works. I also raised concerns over the impact of this on traffic in Hatfield Peverel and how this could be mitigated, including a relief road connecting with the "super junction".

I have arranged for myself, Cllr David Bbeb and John Cockell to meet with Cllr Kevin Bentley early in the New Year as most of the responsibility for the mitigation appears to sit with ECC.

7. Covid in Essex – Update from Essex County Council

Below is an update received from Cllr John Spence (Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care) and Dr Mike Gogarty (Director of Public Health):

- The rate of covid infection continues to increase across eastern England. With the exception of Suffolk, all adjoining council areas now have higher levels.
- While disappointing, it is therefore hardly surprising that after two weeks when they were virtually level, we have now seen further increases across the county. The rate per 100,000 now stands at 140 compared with 107 a week ago.
- Within the county, we are seeing a notable geographic shift, with the highest prevalence in the west and south of Essex. This trend is being offset in north-east Essex. Brentwood and Epping Forest remain the highest areas of concern, and the Director of Public Health's team have been asked to try and investigate

the various causes of community infection. Despite this increase, and having had among the three highest infection rates prior to Tier Two, Essex remains second lowest – after Suffolk – in the region. We have received the following comment from PHE Regional Office:

- *“Our sense is that things will become clearer in the coming days with regard to tiers.*
 - *“It is worth noting Essex overall rate was greater than EoE before you took your preventative approach and it is now lower.*
 - *“The next two weeks we may still see a shift down ahead of the 2nd Dec and you have created a firm foundation on which this could happen.”*
- A Cabinet Office Task Force visited Essex on November 12th and 13th and their report praised both the partnership across all parties and the leadership provided by the Director of Public Health and local government.
 - Associated with the rate increase, we are seeing increased hospital occupancy, with 244 beds now taken by patients with covid. Very sadly, this is despite increased fatalities.
 - Our acute hospitals are facing increased pressures and there has been one instance where elective / non-urgent treatments have had to be postponed. Prompt discharge of patients is therefore critical and there is close liaison between all authorities to ensure this happens without endangering the position in residential care homes.
 - While we have seen a significant increase in the number of care homes with confirmed cases among staff or residents, the great majority of these are being tightly controlled. There are fewer than 10 significant outbreaks in care homes, as measured by case numbers, across the county. Care home hubs are in very close contact with care homes to provide constant support and reminders of the precautions they should be taking.
 - Given the prevalence of the disease, it is not surprising that we continue to see numerous “bubbles” being obliged to self-isolate from schools. There are currently 9 primary schools operating a full remote learning offer and 2 secondary schools with majority remote learning only. Given the trends in Essex and the rate of increase in adjoining areas, it is ever more critical that our residents rigorously observe the disciplines of social distancing, mask-wearing, etc, and the rules linked to this lockdown.
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- When Essex council leaders unanimously recommended entry into Tier Two, the aim was to avoid greater restrictions and to enable early emergence. Lockdown came along later. We know it will be impossible to take ambition into reality without the wholehearted and rigorous adherence by Essex residents to the rules and disciplines of covid. We thank our residents for all they are already doing and urge them to keep up and, where possible, enhance the good work over the coming weeks.

- Essex has been included in the first roll-out of “mass testing” with 10,000 tests per week potentially rising to 10% of the population per week. The DPH is currently working to establish how these tests can be deployed to maximise impact and benefit.
- Finally, the quality of our local track and trace operations is critical and Essex County Council is investing an additional £1.6m to enhance still further what is already among the best-performing regimes in the region.

8. New Developers’ Guide to Infrastructure Contributions Launched

- Essex County Council has launched a new Developers’ Guide to Infrastructure Contributions as part of a range of measures designed to support sustainable growth in Essex.
- The new guide details the range and scope of contributions Essex County Council seeks in order to mitigate the impact of development. It helps to ensure that new housing developments are supported by appropriate infrastructure including school and early years places, transport links and waste management.
- The Guide was produced by Essex County Council in consultation with the district, borough and city councils of Essex and developers to provide a transparent and consistent approach and to ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to the community for residents.
- The new 2020 Guide replaces the previous guide which was published in 2016 and takes account of national changes including the Revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which came into force in September 2019 and legislative changes requiring children between the ages of 16-19 to be in full-time education or training.
- The Guide features several new elements including a new section requiring developer contributions towards employment and skills. This new section is particularly important in the current climate as the County Council looks to support the local economy during the Covid-19 recovery phase. There is also a new section on contributions to special educational needs provision. Approximately 15% of the Essex school population has some form of special

educational needs and the cost of specialist provision can be up to four times higher than mainstream education provision.

- For a link to the Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions and other links to planning advice visit <https://www.essex.gov.uk/planning-advice-guidance/guidance-for-developers>

9. Safer, greener and healthier active travel toolkit for Essex children, young people and families now available

- A toolkit outlining ways families can actively travel to school is now available for use.
- The toolkit has been produced by Essex County Council and Active Essex, who are committed to increasing the levels of physical activity among school pupils across Essex.
- Covid-19 has given families in Essex an opportunity to rethink the school run for pupils attending the 450 primary schools in Essex.
- During this difficult and challenging time, it is possible to provide some routine to daily lives by adopting an active travel approach.
- Active travel allows families time in the outdoors, breathing in fresh air and getting some sunlight, needed by our bodies to produce vital vitamin D.
- While it is not convenient or possible for all students to actively travel to school, walking or cycling should be the default for many, whilst those living further away could park and stride – which means parking the car outside of busy areas and walking the short distance to the school.
- To download and learn more about the Active Travel Toolkit for schools, click [here](#)

If any Cllr requires help or advice, please don't hesitate to contact me on 07967 830277 or cllr.Derrick.Louis@essex.gov.uk