

achieving excellence

a better and  
**better place**

improving the quality of life in essex

Deciding our priorities for a Second Generation Public Service Agreement

**Please send comments on this document to**

Sara Ismay

Strategic Policy Unit  
Essex County Council  
PO Box 11  
County Hall  
Chelmsford  
Essex CM1 1LX

Email: [sara.ismay@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:sara.ismay@essexcc.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01245 430458

## Foreword

This is a consultation document for the residents of Essex and for the County Council's partner organisations about our next local public service agreement (LPSA) with the Government. An LPSA is an agreement under which local authorities undertake to deliver specific service improvements for a limited number of priorities (the Government asks for about twelve). If the County Council meets its targets for improvement, it and the district councils that have partnered with it will receive significant reward grant. The Government also offer smaller "pump-priming" grants to help the improvement process, and freedoms and flexibilities where Whitehall's rule-book stands in the way of improvement action the council wants to take.

This document takes the form of a draft of the submission we propose to send to the Government in May and sets out our thinking on our priorities. It reflects an early round of consultation with partners, including the County Strategic Partnership and members of our four Area Forums, and of residents' responses to a Citizen's Panel survey early this year.

The County Council's Cabinet has taken the firm view that our next PSA should focus on improving the quality of life for Essex residents at a time when many of our people feel that their quality of life is under threat. Our four themes for service improvement focus on achieving better outcomes for children and young people, on reducing congestion on Essex's roads, on improving our environment, and on helping older people to live more independently, and have more of an active role in society.

This document sets out a long-list of 17 specific outcomes we might seek to achieve within those themes. In every case, we have tried to emphasise concrete improvements to the quality of life for citizens. Our final submission to ODPM will contain a shorter list of about a dozen priorities. We would like to know your views on two questions in particular:

- (i) which of our proposed priorities would you or your organisation most wish to see us include in our PSA?
- (ii) and, for partner organisations, which would you be willing to join with us in helping to deliver?

Please let us have your views by 7 May.

LORD HANNINGFIELD  
Leader of Essex County Council

## **Why good isn't good enough: our ambition for Essex**

### **Quality of life is good...**

Essex County Council exists for one simple reason: to make Essex a better place to live and work. We do that by providing a range of public services, from schools to roads to social care to waste disposal. We spend £1.4 billion of taxpayers' money on those services and employ 39,000 people, most of whom are teachers and care staff. We also work closely with our partners to achieve this broad aim.

We also give Essex a voice: whenever government, or business, or Europe has plans for Essex, the elected and accountable council will be there to speak for our people. Underpinning all the many ways in which we touch the daily lives of those 1.3 million people, there is always to be found our simple mission to improve their quality of life. This aim is reflected as one of the seven key challenges identified by Essex's draft Community Strategy.

Essex is lucky: the quality of life for most of our people is good. Compared to other areas, our county has higher average incomes, low unemployment, above average life expectancy, and – despite pockets of deprivation - no large concentrations of multiple disadvantage. And Essex is a beautiful place to live: over four-fifths of our area is rural, we have 300 miles of coastline, and much of our built heritage – including Britain's oldest recorded town - is outstanding.

People who live in Essex know they are fortunate. They are more likely than most British people to be satisfied with where they live. In particular, two-thirds of residents say what they value most about our county is its environment. But they are not complacent: they know that what they have cannot be taken for granted.

### **...but is threatened.**

Essex's quality of life cannot be taken for granted because it is under threat. Our roads are congested and are forecast to become more so. Pollution is not the only threat to our environment: the volume of rubbish Essex County Council has to dispose of is growing at a rate of a couple of percentage points a year. And litter, graffiti, and anti-social behaviour are a growing blight on the physical expression of our community identity.

And the gathering pace of prosperity is both a blessing and a worry for Essex's people. As things stand, the government has decided that our county should find space for a 20% increase in the number of houses it accommodates over the next 17 years. That could swallow up some 6,000 acres of greenfield land that is not yet allocated for housing, and generate a huge, as yet unfunded, increase in

the pressures on our schools, and hospitals. Unless we achieved massive and unprecedented local job creation, extra commuting linked to these new houses would put pressures on our transport infrastructure that simply could not be managed.

It is no wonder, then, that Essex people are worried about the future. People in the Eastern region are, with those in Yorkshire and Humberside, the most pessimistic in the country about the likelihood that public services will improve in the long term. As the only organisation that can listen to those worries and articulate them on behalf of the whole of Essex, the county council is determined to deliver services that respond to them.

### **Essex County Council is “Good” ...**

Essex County Council is well placed to face these challenges. Our 2002 Comprehensive Performance Assessment concluded that the organisation was Good, and is well placed to improve its services further. The 2003 update of that assessment confirmed our score and prospects. Our children’s services were particularly highly marked, and our Adoption service has achieved Beacon status. We are acknowledged as leaders in our approach to direct payments for social services customers. Our approach to restorative justice has demonstrated our commitment to finding innovative, community-based solutions to hard problems. And our programme of local service agreements with our district partners show how we are willing to challenge existing ways of working and long-established institutional boundaries in order to get results effectively through partnership.

### **...but can, and will, get better**

Good is not excellent. Essex County Council is determined to get better all the time, and we are aiming to achieve an “excellent” score under the CPA framework. We are working to continually improve our service delivery for citizens, through a programme of targeted reviews and by implementing focussed, outcome-based arrangements for commissioning services. At the same time, we are also wedded to value for money. Despite the financial pressures we face, both as a result of increasing demand on services and past unfavourable grant settlements, we have delivered a low council tax increase for 2004-05. We are prioritising our spending rigorously. And our medium-term financial strategy shows clearly what we have to do to keep council tax on a sustainably low path into the future, depending always on future grant settlements.

The community strategy for Essex, “Shaping the Future of Essex”, is in its final stages of approval through the various partners’ own processes, while task groups of the partnership have started work on producing action plans for the

eight themes. These are already informing the Council's work, and will set all partners new challenges to improve the quality of life in Essex.

We have been chosen as a Pathfinder authority for the Audit Commission's new CPA framework. We welcome the Commission's wish to base the new assessments more closely on the way authorities respond to local priorities, and look forward to seeing our responsiveness to Essex's real needs put to the test and learning from the results. Naturally, we are also delighted that the importance of local priorities is now reflected in the Government's proposals for second-generation local public service agreements.

### **Securing a better quality of life despite the challenge of the future**

Against this background, we have reflected extensively on the fundamental question of what purpose our second local PSA should serve. We have concluded that our commitment to make Essex a better place to live and work is going to be tested over the coming years as never before, both by the pressures the county can expect to face, and in the eyes of an ever-more mature public whose expectations of public bodies are steadily rising. So we have concluded that this local PSA is an important opportunity to restate that central purpose.

Our overall approach to this PSA is therefore to improve the quality of life in Essex despite the challenge of rapid change.

### **What is in this document**

This document sets out:

- the four themes that have led our choice of priorities;
- the individual priority outcomes themselves, and why we have chosen them;
- an outline of the policy actions we will need to undertake to deliver the outcomes, and some freedoms and flexibilities under central government regulation that would be helpful in making improvement happen.

## **Our four improvement themes**

### **Themes**

Our priorities for this local PSA are linked by four clear themes:

**Preparing Young Essex for the Future**

**Keeping traffic moving on Essex's roads**

**Clean, green Essex**

**Independence and involvement for Essex's older people**

These themes reflect the priorities of Essex people, and are in line with Essex's draft Community Strategy. They all cut across service boundaries and require collaboration by the County Council, District and Borough Councils, and other partner organisations acting in the public and private sector. Addressing them requires us to focus clearly on the real-world outcomes our services are delivering for citizens, and to keep up the momentum of change and improvement in our organisation.

They all derive from our concern to improve the quality of life in the face of changes that threaten it. Protecting the environment and mitigating congestion are an obvious part of that story. Giving young people a better future also helps to make our local job market more sustainable. Involving older people in society is a way of adapting with the aging of the population, but also of tackling the perceived divide between young and old that often lies behind concerns about anti-social behaviour and social fragmentation.

### **Preparing Young Essex for the Future**

We want to create opportunity and build a better future for today's young people. Better education is the single most important tool we have for helping to give everyone a fair chance in life. Raising attainment in tests and exams is important for individuals' life chances. Preparing young people for the future and providing a good start in life also involves learning how to play a full part in society. Many young people need help and advice to keep safe and healthy. And the county council itself cares for over a thousand of our children at any one time. Our clear social and moral duty is to be as good a substitute parent for them as we can, continually striving to improve their chances.

We do not believe significant further growth in commuting is sustainable: so the development pressures on the county require us to urgently address skills gaps so that more employers are interested in providing jobs locally. We also believe we need to raise productivity, and a better skills base will be necessary to do that.

This theme runs through Essex's Community Strategy: it is reflected in the strategy's themes of Feeling Safe, Being Healthy, Creating Opportunity and Having Fun.

### **Keeping traffic moving on Essex's roads**

Essex's roads are rapidly snarling up. Nearly a third of Essex's working population commutes to work, and 70% of all journeys to work are by car. Car use is expected to grow 20% over the next ten years. Meanwhile, even if it made sense to spend money building more roads to accommodate the growth in traffic, beyond the current infrastructure gap of some £2bn, it would still not keep pace with need because of the lead times involved. Much of Essex's primary route network is already operating above capacity, with the likelihood that far more will be above capacity in the future. Add to this the potential expansion of Stansted Airport and housing growth well beyond locally generated needs, and the problems will be even more acute.

It is no wonder, then, that congestion is consistently at the top of local people's concerns. If our quality of life is to be sustainable into the future, we need to tackle the growth of congestion. Given that the congestion problem has a behavioural as well as a physical element, we believe we can only do so in the short and medium term by developing intelligent policies that change attitudes and incentives.

This theme is reflected in the Community Strategy's theme of Getting Around.

### **Cleaner, greener Essex**

A large majority of Essex people say that their principal reason for enjoying living in the county is its green environment. Yet that environment is under threat from the accelerating pace of economic growth. Not only would the Government's preferred scenario for housing require the allocation of large areas of greenfield land for building, inevitably raising questions about the protection of biodiversity and unique historic landscapes, but also the new population linked to that housing would add to the growth in road traffic and waste production, and put pressure on scarce water resources. Meanwhile, Essex has also been designated as the site for an airport development larger than any currently existing in Europe, threatening yet more growth in traffic, as well as noise and air pollution. One area in Essex is already designated as of special air quality concern.

On the other hand, Essex County Council has been very successful in promoting ways of mitigating threats to the environment and building sustainability. Our waste strategy is built on an aspiration to become a world leader in recycling, and on embracing new technologies that will enable us to move away from landfill without resort to incineration. Our overarching ambition is to achieve unquestioned excellence in environmental performance for the organisation, and for Essex as a whole.

This theme is reflected in the Community Strategy's theme of Conserving our Environment.

### **Independence and involvement for Essex's older people**

If our model of society and of care is to be sustainable, we must work now to anticipate the pressure on services implied by forecast demographic change. Between 1991 and 2011, the ratio of working-age people to the over-85s is set to nearly halve, implying a reduced ability to provide the support the most vulnerable older people need. But a sustainable third-age agenda is not simply about upgrading services to older people, but about seeking to help older people to play more of an active part in society. As the proportion of younger people in Essex declines, the county should be seeking to capitalise on the skills and commitment of active people in their sixties and seventies. People in that group are already the backbone of the voluntary sector. We want to look at policies that will break down the barriers, related for example to transport or employment conditions, that prevent older people contributing as much as they want to the Essex community.

This theme is reflected in the Community Strategy's theme of Being Part of a Community, Being Healthy, and Getting Around.

### **Our themes join up: so do our services**

These themes are linked in a number of ways. First, and simplest, because they reflect what Essex people have told us they value through our Citizen's Panel survey. But they complement each other, too. Our efforts to improve the environment depend in part on our success in reducing congestion; to the extent that better public transport makes it easier to get around Essex, young and old people, less likely than most to have access to a car, will be able to play more of a role in the community; skilled school leavers increase the chances that a high-productivity local labour market can thrive, making economic development, congestion, and the environment more sustainable.

In just the same way, we intend to use this PSA as a tool to further join up the way we deliver services. We believe every part of the county council has a role in reducing congestion and improving our environmental performance. Improving

the quality of life for young and old people is the business of every service, not just schools or the youth service or social services. The priority outcomes in this document have been chosen to involve a number of partners and services wherever possible, and every single county council service has a role to play in delivering them.

## Choosing our priority outcomes

This section of the document sets out how we have chosen our priority service outcomes within each theme.

### Principles

We adopted seven principles in choosing our priorities:

- real-life outcomes for citizens are the essence of our business; our choices should therefore be about meeting real needs, not simply justifying activities or institutional arrangements;
- in line with that, we need to focus improvement effort on the areas that matter most to local people: so our choices should be fully exposed to consultation;
- there is no point focussing on areas that we already expected to significantly improve in the absence of a PSA;
- we should prioritise ruthlessly;
- we should base our assessment of the need for improvement on clear evidence;
- we should try and improve value for money;
- we should involve our local partners in choosing our priorities, and insofar as it makes sense, in delivering them.

### The evidence base

We looked at five kinds of evidence:

- the latest data on performance, including our Best Value indicators, and the performance judgements made by the Audit Commission in our recent CPA update;
- what we know about our citizens' values and expectations, as reflected in our regular Citizens' Panel surveys and other public engagement activities;
- what the wide group of partners assembled in the County Strategic Partnership believe is important, as reflected in, among others, Essex's draft Community Strategy;
- what statistical information we have on need, especially differential need, in the county;
- what we believe to be the most important future trends affecting the county, including the likely path of economic and spatial development, demography, and developments in the policy environment.

## Consultation

We have supplemented that evidence with a consultation of all members of the County Strategic Partnership, including Essex's district councils and primary care trusts, and by asking about PSA priorities in the spring 2004 Citizens' Panel survey.

Our reflection on the evidence has been led by the council's Cabinet. But our Policy Development Groups have also fed into the process with extensive discussions. All backbench members, as well as other local partners, have also had an opportunity to debate PSA priorities at meetings of our four Area Forums.

We believe that the themes and priorities in this document are not only evidentially robust, but also very solidly grounded in partnership and – most important of all, in our view - the democratic process.

## Priorities not in this PSA

The priorities set out in the next section of this document reflect positive conclusions we have drawn from the evidence available. It may be useful also to record two different conclusions. We have decided that the following possible priority outcomes should not form part of this PSA, for the following reasons:

- **highways maintenance** is an area where our performance against Best Value indicators, and against targets set as part of our existing PSA, suggests we need to make improvements. There are two principal reasons why we chose not to include this in our PSA priorities for 2005-08. First, this is already a high improvement priority. To the extent we see scope to stretch performance, we are already aiming for it, and have a review of the service in hand. Secondly, highway maintenance is very resource-intensive. We have included an extra £36 million in our 2004-05 budget to address the maintenance deficit, but estimate that the actual need to spend stands at over twice that figure. Such an amount is unaffordable without a substantial increase in core funding. Thirdly, we have identified real problems with the indices that are used to measure the condition of the roads.
- **road safety** is high on the County Council's agenda and we are targeting resources to help reduce accidents and number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads in Essex. We already have a significant accident reduction programme complimented by a range of soft measures including publicity campaigns, school initiatives and driver training. This has not been included in our PSA priorities because it is already a high priority issue for the County Council.

## **Our priorities**

This section of this document sets out the kind of policy action we are taking or plan to take under each of our four themes, and the individual priority outcomes we will aim to deliver. We also outline why we have chosen those outcomes, and what extra freedoms and flexibilities we believe might help us to perform better.

### **Theme 1: Preparing Young Essex for the Future**

#### **What we will do to improve outcomes for children and young people**

Essex County Council is pioneering innovative ways of joining up service provision for children and young people. Our aim is to improve outcomes for children by encouraging closer working between agencies, and realising synergies by more closely aligning the strategic direction of the many local service providers.

So we are determined to achieve greater coordination using Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships (CYPSP) under the overall guidance of Local Strategic Partnerships in each area; we are bringing a wider range of service provision together in one place, and involving schools more in the wider community, through developing extended and full-service schools; we are introducing new model special schools to ensure that children with high levels of special educational need can be better catered for; and, in the Braintree Children's Trust pilot, we are introducing a wholly new model of working which we hope will enable earlier intervention to reduce the overall profile of need among children and young people as they grow up. At the same time, we are taking forward initiatives such as a new Essex Proof of Age card, which will facilitate easier access to public transport and other services, as well as helping the private sector to comply with the law on sales to children.

We want to work ever more closely with the full range of partners involved in delivering services to children and young people, including districts and boroughs, Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council, and the voluntary sector. We also want to forge ever-stronger links with employers, who have such an important interest in the skills base our schools work to provide.

#### **Priority 1: Improved attainment and achievement at Key Stage 2**

##### **Why is this a priority?**

Early educational success is the key to achievement later on. Analysis of national performance data indicates that attaining Level 4+ at Key Stage 2 is the most important factor in encouraging and enabling children to go on to perform well in secondary school. The draft community strategy highlights the need to be

“raising aspirations and taking action to improve areas of low educational attainment”.

### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

On national data, Essex is in the upper quartile (\*\*\*) for KS2 results in English and Mathematics. In comparison with ten similar authorities on 2002/03 data, however, we are just below the mean for both subjects; and in Maths we rank eighth out of ten, and in English fourth. Currently there is a 7% gap between attainment in English in 2003 and the Education Development Plan target for 2005 and an 11% gap between attainment in mathematics in 2003 and the EDP target for 2005. We can and should push up performance and pupil achievement. Responses from district councils to the consultation with members of the Essex Partnership (the LSP for Essex) drew attention to problems of aspiration and attainment in some geographical areas such as the Dengie Peninsula of Maldon district.

### **Priority 2: Higher staying on rates for successful education at 16 and 18**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Investment in skills and knowledge is important in giving young people both self-esteem and economic security; and is essential to creating a higher-productivity workforce. “Shaping the Future of Essex” commits LSP partners to “encouraging young people to stay on in education or training beyond the age of 16 or 18”.

#### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Essex has a low rate of young people staying on for further or higher education. While the national average is around 40% (and national targets rising to 50%), some places in Essex have staying-on rates of less than 1%. This is a particular concern in South Essex.

### **Priority 3: Reduced drug and alcohol use by children**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Misuse of drugs or alcohol by young people has damaging effects on their health and life prospects and imposes social costs on others. The community strategy, and particularly the responses to consultation on the community strategy, have linked these issues to crime and anti-social behaviour, and the strategy recognises that action on these issues represents one of the most effective health interventions that can be made by non-medical agencies.

### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Work by Trading Standards has identified that 17% of young people either occasionally or often attempt to purchase lighter fuel while underage, rising to 39% for cigarettes and 44% for alcohol. 13% of young people felt it was easy to buy lighter fuel, 20% easy to buy alcohol and 36% easy to buy cigarettes.

Concerns over youth drinking and the rise of substance misuse (including tobacco and solvents) are widespread, and anti-social behaviour was the Essex Citizens' Panel's top priority for action in the February 2004 survey. At the same time, funding for drug education advisers in schools has been withdrawn, so there is a need to find new ways of helping children learn about the risks from substance abuse.

### **What freedoms and flexibilities would be needed to help deliver this improvement?**

Under the umbrella of both the Drug Action Team and the County Children and Young People Strategic Partnership, it would be helpful to secure pooled budget and integrated working arrangements across health, police, education, social care, and locally with district councils.

### **Priority 4: Improved educational outcomes for looked after children**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Looked after children deserve as much as any to benefit from our commitment to school improvement and high skill levels. As corporate parent, we owe it to the children to do the best we can by them. The draft community strategy commits partners to "ensure that schools, colleges and local businesses cooperate to provide a wide range of opportunities for young people, raising aspirations and taking action to improve areas of low educational attainment". It also requires all the Partnership's policy-making to consider whether proposals "help break down barriers and promote social inclusion" and enable everyone to "have a fair chance to benefit and take part".

#### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Looked after children achieve less well at all Key Stages and they are less likely to remain in education and training post-16. In later life, they are more likely to be unemployed, homeless or in custody. For example in 2003, at the end of Key Stage 2, the percentage of looked after children achieving average results compared with All England and Essex children as a whole were:

	Essex LAC	Essex	All England
English	31	78	75
Maths	47	73	73
Science	34	88	87

In some areas performance trends have been favourable, for example the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 A\*-C GCSEs has risen from 9% in 2002 to 13% in 2003. But the gap between the attainment of looked after children and their peers is still unacceptably large – all Essex comparable figures for these years were 52% in 2002 and 53% in 2003.

**What freedoms and flexibilities would be needed to help deliver this improvement?**

Support streamlining of the Direction process enabling a swifter response by DfES and enable the LEA to direct what it considers to be an appropriate school without having to approach all other local schools beforehand.

Seek DfES enforcement of admission within a declared timeframe, particularly where schools reject Secretary of State’s ‘Direction’.

**Priority 5: Meeting Special Educational Needs Better**

**Why is this a priority?**

The County Council’s Learning Support Policy and Strategy for Special Educational Needs envisages new model special schools providing holistic multi agency provision for children and young people with severe and complex learning difficulties to ensure they are socially included as adults. Alongside this the Council wishes to accelerate the trend of meeting the needs of more children with moderate learning difficulties in their local schools rather than being placed in special schools. This policy will be beneficial for children, but the Council also wishes to ensure this inclusion is well supported and that pupils, parents and mainstream schools are confident about the new arrangements.

Essex’s draft Community Strategy commits us to providing “a wide range of opportunities for young people, raising aspirations and taking action to improve areas of low educational attainment”. It identifies nine key factors to consider in all the Partnership’s plans, and two of these are “Does this help break down barriers and promote social inclusion?” and “Will everyone have a fair chance to benefit and take part?”. This priority addresses these issues.

## **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this Service?**

Overall across the County 61% of pupils with moderate learning difficulties are already educated in mainstream schools. But there are large variations across the County with 85% included in Uttlesford but only 49% in Colchester. Retaining children successfully in their local schools ensure they have friends in their neighbourhood and can tap more easily into local employment and other services. Around £900k is required annually to transport children with this level of need to special schools – a cost that equates to 40% of the costs of educating them in the special school. Providing for children in their local schools would allow a long-term re-investment in services and an environmental benefit.

### **Priority 6: Extending recreational opportunities for children and young people**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Increasing sport, cultural and recreational opportunities for young people in innovative ways encourages personal and social development for all, but especially for those at risk of developing anti-social or offending behaviours. This link is strongly established in the draft Community Strategy, which identifies as priorities:

- Providing more for young people to do, and making sure they can get to and from the facilities (seen as likely to reduce petty crime)
- Promoting healthy living, involving schools, voluntary agencies and employers, and linked to sport, and exercise
- Promoting top-quality cultural and sporting facilities (including the Olympic bid).

## **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

The need for more for young people to do is a prominent response in opinion polls carried out for the County Council, and emerged powerfully from the responses to public consultation on the draft Community Strategy. For example, the 2003 Best Value general satisfaction survey reported that 44% of people thought activities for teenagers were the factor most in need of local improvement. Meanwhile, over 50% of people felt their area had a very big or fairly big problem with vandalism, teenagers hanging around, litter, drugs and abandoned cars.

### **Priority 7: Housing availability for care leavers**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Homeless care leavers are especially vulnerable, and there is a serious shortage of supply of housing for care leavers. Vulnerable care leavers are likely to put extra pressure on county council and NHS services if they cannot be properly housed. So the shortage of housing raises a clear need for better working in partnership between the county council, district councils, housing associations, the Housing Corporation and private rented sector.

**What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Demand for housing for care leavers exceeds supply. About 15% of Essex's care leavers, or 76 individuals, are currently waiting for their assessed housing needs to be met. The lack of new revenue funding from Supporting People to develop existing and new supported housing, together with new targets drawing district councils' attention to the needs of other client groups, has reduced the supply of suitable housing available to care leavers. Such housing is vital if care leavers are to make a successful transition to adult life.

**What freedoms and flexibilities would be needed to help deliver this improvement?**

All 16 and 17 year old care leavers should be eligible for Supporting People Funding at the council's discretion, without having to demonstrate specific need.

## **Theme 2: Keeping traffic moving on Essex's roads**

### **What we will do to improve outcomes for tackling congestion**

In this year's budget, Essex County Council announced a "war on congestion". The county faces a major infrastructure deficit which simply cannot be addressed in the short- to medium-term. So we are working on a range of new initiatives intended to reduce the short-term pressure on the County's overloaded transport system. In particular, we are developing proposals for integrating transport considerations into the thinking of all our services. We recognise that, as an employer on such a large scale, and as a service provider to such a large client group, the County Council can have an important effect on travel patterns in Essex through its employment practices, opening hours and patterns of service provision.

We are also examining ways in which we can incentivise partner organisations and Essex's private sector employers to take steps to limit or reduce their own contributions to congestion in the county. Already committed to a programme of Area Reviews of public transport and the introduction of park-and-ride schemes in Chelmsford and Colchester, we also want to go further in encouraging the take up of public transport in order to achieve modal shift and reduce pressure on the roads.

We believe we can work to reduce congestion in partnership with district, borough, town and parish councils, schools, the police and Highways Agency, the NHS and other major public sector employers. We also want to work more closely with private sector employers to help to influence travel patterns.

### **Priority 8: Reducing ECC's contribution to congestion on Essex's roads**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Without action on congestion, Essex's transport system is unsustainable. Our roads are overloaded now, and things are forecast to get worse if nothing is done to slow the growth in traffic. ECC 's 39,000 employees contribute around a large number of vehicle movements a day to the traffic on Essex's roads. And our impact is acute in some areas. In Chelmsford, the county town, for example, ECC employees play a major role in generating peak-hour traffic.

And ECC's working practices also help to determine the travel patterns of many of our citizens. For example, another important contributor to peak-time congestion is the school run, whose timing ECC helps to determine by the patterns of school opening hours we encourage. Opening hours of our offices

and care facilities also impact on citizens' decisions about how and when to travel.

The "Getting Around" theme of "Shaping the Future of Essex" sets out the vision "of an Essex where we can travel safely, sustainably and on time, and where things can be done without the need to travel far".

### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed?**

The trends in car ownership and use in Essex are relentlessly upward. Traffic is increasing at a rate of 2% a year. There are about a quarter more cars in Essex now than there were ten years ago. And that is putting unmanageable pressure on the roads network. Today, much of Essex's road network is already congested. On unchanged trends this can only worsen. While we are most unlikely to be able to reduce road use in absolute terms, slowing trend of deterioration is vital if we are to sustain the quality of life for residents, and minimise the negative externalities that flow from congestion.

Opinion surveys in Essex have repeatedly shown transport issues to be local people's top concern, and this is underlined by responses to public consultation on the draft community strategy. Our opinion research has also told us that congestion is the area where the priority given to improvement by the public is least matched by a public perception that ECC is doing enough to tackle the problem.

### **Priority 9: Reducing the contribution to congestion on Essex's roads made by agents other than Essex County Council**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Without action on congestion, Essex's transport system is unsustainable. Our roads are overloaded now, and things are forecast to get worse if nothing is done to slow the growth in traffic. The county could not afford to accommodate that growth simply by building new roads – and of course little can be done about infrastructure anyway in the short to medium term. Managing congestion requires us to alter patterns of car use. Tackling congestion is also seen as a top priority by Essex residents. It repeatedly heads the list of concerns expressed by ECC's citizens' panel, and featured strongly both in consultation responses to the draft Community Strategy and in responses from Essex district and borough councils to initial consultation on the current round of county LPSAs.

While we have made reducing our own contribution to congestion a specific priority, that will not be enough on its own to make a major impact on reducing the adverse trend in traffic growth. So we want to work with partners, and through using whatever mechanisms of influence we possess, to encourage individuals and employers throughout Essex to join us in helping tackle congestion.

Reducing congestion is inevitably about influencing behaviour, and so ECC sees its role as overwhelmingly one of providing incentives, encouragement and leadership, as well as providing solutions directly.

### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed?**

The trends in car ownership and use in Essex are relentlessly upward. Traffic is increasing at a rate of 2% a year. There is a quarter more cars in Essex now than there were ten years ago. And that is putting unmanageable pressure on the roads network. While we are most unlikely to be able to reduce road use in absolute terms, slowing trend of deterioration is vital if we are to sustain the quality of life for residents, and minimise the negative externalities that flow from congestion.

Our opinion research has also told us that congestion is the area where the priority given to improvement by the public is least matched by a public perception that ECC is doing enough to tackle the problem.

### **Priority 10: Increasing the take-up of public and community transport**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Public transport is an Essex priority for two reasons. First, it has an important part to play in reducing congestion. The more attractive public transport is with users, the easier it is to encourage modal shift. Secondly, Essex is still in large part a rural county. Decent, accessible public transport has an important role in promoting social inclusion for people who live in remote areas.

We believe better take-up of public transport is a central objective both because it will accelerate modal shift, but also because it will lead to more efficient use of the public money that is spent on public transport, releasing more resources for promoting accessibility and social inclusion.

Improving public transport has featured as a high priority in every opinion poll or consultation exercise in recent years in Essex, both at county and at district levels, and including all forms of consultation on the draft community strategy. The draft strategy envisages “an Essex where we can travel safely, sustainably and on time”.

#### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed?**

In 2001, only 15% of people in Essex travelled to work by public transport. Two-thirds of journeys to work were by car. Modal shift is necessary if the growth in traffic is to be contained.

## **Theme 3: Clean, green Essex**

### **What we will do to improve outcomes for the environment**

Essex is in the early stages of preparing a new Waste Strategy, which will require ever-closer partnership working between the County Council, districts and boroughs and the private sector. Through our framework of Local Service Agreements, we are developing new ways of strengthening our relationship with districts and boroughs in the area of waste and recycling. We want to build on those partnerships to achieve real excellence in our environmental performance in Essex, not only through achieving continual improvements in performance in recycling and waste minimisation, but also through looking at the way we can better manage our use of natural resources such as energy and water, in order to mitigate as best we can the very large impact a rich area like ours has on the global environment. We also want to work more closely with the private sector, exploring innovative ways of engaging firms, especially SMEs, in recycling, energy conservation, and environmental improvement.

### **Priority 11: Reduce or limit the increase in size of Essex's Ecological Footprint**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Essex's Ecological Footprint is unsustainably large and will increase without dramatic corrective action.

Community Strategy consultation told us we should be: 'Taking positive action to conserve Essex's unique environment and heritage: how can we tackle the effects of climate change such as flooding, reduce pollution levels, conserve coastal and other valuable habitats and conserve water and other resources and our historic buildings and sites'.

#### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Essex's ecological footprint is currently 5.57 global hectares. This means that if all people of the world lived as we do in Essex we would require a wholly unsustainable 2.9 planets.

Protection of the environment emerged strongly as a key concern in the MORI focus groups conducted as part of the consultation on the draft community strategy.

#### **Freedoms and flexibilities required**

It would be worth considering new flexibilities in schools funding to reward schools that meet green targets.

## **Priority 12: To maximise recycling and composting of household waste and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill**

### **Why is this a priority?**

Landfilling waste is an inefficient use of land and produces environmental disbenefits such as methane emissions. It is also penalised under the EU landfill directive and by the UK government's landfill tax. Reducing landfill and increasing recycling helps to put Essex onto a more sustainable footing ecologically and economically. The draft Essex Community Strategy makes commitments to action through environmental education, publicity campaigns and existing partnerships.

### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Currently Essex County Council's recycling rate is estimated at 26.5%. The target rate for 2003/04 is 27%. Simply in order to meet statutory targets, the County Council, in partnership with districts, must improve performance. Our ambition to be a centre of excellence requires us to set our sights much higher.

### **What freedoms and flexibilities would be needed to help deliver this improvement?**

Three of the freedoms and flexibilities in Essex's current recycling PSA could be carried forward to new PSA as they are still relevant:

- DEFRA will make best endeavours to process quickly any future application for PFI funding in administrative terms. Subject to certain conditions, DEFRA will support Essex's bid.
- DEFRA agree for the purpose of this LPSA ECC may include rubble in the definition of waste arisings at CA and recycling centres. Rubble may only count towards any performance in this LPSA over and above the 30% rate agreed.
- DEFRA will make best endeavours to legislate to enable pilot schemes on charging householders for the disposal of mixed waste at CA sites and recycling centres. Securing parliamentary approval may not be achieved in the lifetime of this PSA.

## **Priority 13: Cleaner streets and public spaces**

### **Why is this a priority?**

Both the draft Community Strategy and the Essex Approach commit us to combatting litter, especially roadside litter.

## **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

59% of Essex residents think that a greener, cleaner environment is the most important aim for Essex (Mori Essex residents survey 2002/3); while the BVPI survey 2003 lists 'Clean streets' as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important factor in making somewhere a good place to live. Yet 33% of residents believe not enough is being done to tackle litter. Litter on and alongside major roads emerged as a strong concern of the public in responses to the public consultation on the draft Community Strategy.

### **Priority 14: Make the County Council and its partner organisations into better stewards of the environment**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

It would deliver an Essex Approach commitment to seek continuous improvement of our environmental performance. The draft Community Strategy includes a vision of "a county with diverse urban and rural environments rich in wildlife, in which people live and work sustainably, conserving natural resources". Protection of the environment emerged strongly as a key concern in the MORI focus groups conducted as part of the consultation on the draft community strategy.

#### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

We have not yet succeeded in developing a strategic approach to environmental stewardship. Environmental stewardship practices are cost effective. The taxpayer ultimately pays for waste and CO2 emissions either through direct fiscal measures including council tax, landfill tax and climate change levy. EU environmental directives are focusing national legislation towards the polluter pays principle. This principle runs parallel and contributes towards the aim of creating the correct conditions to stimulate innovation and development of strategies and technology to achieve environmental improvements and secure quality of life of citizens today and future generations. Essex County Council through its unique role and sphere of influence can play a key role in facilitating this process at the local level. This includes developing and aligning environmental policy within the ECC and among our partners both in terms of service quality and of internal organisational management mechanisms.

## **Theme 4: Independence and involvement for Essex's older people**

Older people have the same fundamental needs as everyone else – such as access to services, decent housing, adequate income, social networks, chances for purposeful activity. They want to be partners in decisions that affect their lives. They want to remain as independent and as healthy as possible. They want to be treated with dignity and respect. They need to be able to access services provided for all. And if specialist services are needed, they want these to be co-ordinated, easy to access and tailored to their needs. Some particular considerations in providing services to older people do arise from the increased likelihood of ill health and frailty that comes with older age. Achieving appropriate, co-ordinated services that promote independence is a major challenge facing local authorities.

At Essex County Council, we provide a range of services for older people. To frail older people, our Community Care services are critical. These are designed to help older people remain in their own homes and to live as independently as possible. We do this through assessment and care management, purchase of care from the independent sector for our clients, home care provision, meals on wheels, day care provision, residential homes and specialist services for older people with mental health needs. We also provide other services that benefit all citizens, including older people, such as libraries, adult education classes, country parks, local tips and road maintenance, and provide support to public and community transport.

'Independent living' is a major concept in service provision for older people. This encompasses a range of ideas – helping older people stay in their own homes, providing care services in the home where possible, giving people choice and control over arrangements, developing preventive services to reduce obstacles to well-being. A number of barriers to independent living may be faced by older people, such as lack of appropriate accommodation and care support, lack of choice and control over social and health care provision, uncoordinated service delivery, transport problems, lack of information and charging for services, lack of consultation by government, attitudes towards ageing and lack of recognition of the needs of some particular groups.

### **Priority 15: Helping older people to remain at home**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

We want to help older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, as this is what research shows they want. Helping people remain at home means more than the traditional pattern of support to social care clients – important though that is. We also need to ensure that all services are aligned to promote independence and think about people with lower level needs. This priority is focused on the needs of frail older people.

Giving the elderly the support they need to stay in their own homes is one of five key pledges in the Essex Approach, our corporate policy statement. The Essex Approach also identifies quicker and better assessment of social care needs as being a top priority and this can be seen as being one way of providing support for one section of the Third Age community to achieve independence.

### **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Our CPA improvement plan highlights helping the elderly to remain in their own homes (and therefore relatively independent) as an area in need of improvement.

The public identify this area as important. In the 2003 Citizen's Panel, 41% (the highest proportion) identified community care for older and disabled people as a budget priority.

Older people often provide care for others (13% of people over 60 provided unpaid care for others in 2001) and to do so they themselves need help and support. DoH PAF indicator for supporting carers that are helping social care clients shows ECC is in bottom quartile.

### **Priority 16: Help older people to live active lives**

#### **Why is this a priority?**

We want to help all older people to live fulfilling, active lives by making it easier for them to travel around and participate in activities outside the home such as exercise, learning, volunteering.

The ability to travel around underpins older people's ability to access services, to shop, to maintain social networks and to participate in work and leisure activities. As people get older they are less likely to have access to a car, so public and community transport become increasingly important.

Taking part in leisure activities outside the home can have many positive effects – on skills, confidence, happiness. Physical activity can help people retain a level of agility and balance that will prevent accidents and falls.

The Essex Approach sets out our commitment to encouraging active and healthy living by promoting leisure opportunities and lifelong learning among older people. Our draft Community Strategy commits us to identifying the distinct needs of older people in all policy-making, and the theme of enabling independent lives and active citizenship are spread throughout.

## **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Various opinion polls have highlighted transport for the elderly as a problem in Essex. In the Mori Shaping the Future of Essex 2003 study, getting around for older people was highlighted as a problem, with 41% saying the facilities on buses were poor. The Community Strategy consultation also highlighted transport as a key issue.

Less than a third of Essex's bus fleet meets Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

Over the last two years, a £200,000 increase in Essex County's Council's subsidy to community transport has helped generate an increase in passengers from 180,000 to 320,000. This appears to be evidence that there is substantial suppressed demand.

## **Priority 17: Work together to encourage active citizenship by older people and to benefit them**

### **Why is this a priority?**

We want to encourage older people to take an active part in society by getting involved in voluntary and community groups, and also to help the voluntary sector to develop services that benefit older people. This will rely on partnership working, which is a key aim of Essex County Council, and essential in order to provide good services to our citizens.

Older volunteers can benefit by learning new skills, meeting others, staying active and feeling they are helping the community, leading to lower levels of isolation and exclusion. Voluntary and community groups could benefit greatly from their expertise and time.

By encouraging the voluntary sector to develop services that meet the needs of older people, we hope to further help older people live independent lives and raise the importance throughout the public sector of ensuring services are suitable for older people. Voluntary groups are ideally placed to offer certain services in terms of the trust they enjoy and their commitment to helping others.

## **What is the evidence that improvement is needed in this service?**

Consultation on our Community Strategy has identified the need to promote active citizenship as a significant issue, helping people to get involved in community groups and have a say. The Essex Approach, our corporate policy statement, sets out our commitment to work closely with the voluntary sector to increase opportunities for older people as volunteers.

Research on older people's views shows that they want to volunteer their skills and have clear ideas about defining their contribution in ways that maximise the benefits to others of their involvement.

**This document is issued by Essex County Council's Strategic Policy Team.**

**You can contact us in a number of ways:**

**By telephoning:**

Sara Ismay on 01245 430458

**By post:**

Strategic Policy Unit  
Essex County Council  
PO BOX 11  
County Hall Chelmsford  
Essex CM1 1LX

**By email:**

[sara.ismay@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:sara.ismay@essexcc.gov.uk)

**Web address:**

[www.essexcc.gov.uk](http://www.essexcc.gov.uk)

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