

ANNUAL REPORT – COUNTY CLLR DAVID FINCH 2016/17

Essex County Council, like many other local government bodies, was and is, under considerable financial pressure as the government redefines local government funding.

The previous method of funding comprised three elements - Council Tax (based on number of properties)

A proportion of Business rates and finally Government grant for specific functions and activities.

Process has, and still is, being redefined with removal of grants with effect from 2016-17; and an allocation by 2019/20 of business rates and funding for health issues. The result is a gap in available funding of some 200 million plus.

The County Council has responded to these challenges by looking at its services and instead of reducing them has sought to reshape/redefine services so that the end result is still a deliverable service to residents.

The largest single issue facing the County is the growth of older population where 22% of our population is over the age of 65 - against a national average of 16%. The number of 85 year olds is set to double over the next 5 years.

We have lobbied Government along with other authorities and have achieved additional funding which has eased the position, but not solved the ongoing problem. We have accepted that we need to take the 3% social care levy as a short term funding measure - but remain firmly committed to the principle that long term care of the elderly is a national issue not a local issue.

We continue to work with other authorities in the Country and the Government to bring about a long term solution.

Work within the County Council is focused on growing the economy of Essex from £33 billion to over £60 billion – and lobbying for devolved skills funding.

We are Improving the highways by investing over 200 million in road maintenance.

Providing excellent education for all our children whose achievement rates are above England average and 95% our schools are rated as good or outstanding.

New Ideas – work in progress

Find new ways of working and new ideas to provide service to help communities.

A Lottery to support local charities and voluntary groups.

Community Initiative Fund to support parishes with local expenses.

Community Initiative Funds for Voluntary charity activities in all areas of the community.

Seeking to exploit digital technology to help elderly live safer at home.

Other points

Converting surplus land into houses or flats.

Children's service continues to be an exemplar in child protection.