

MUNDON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 20 MAY 2025 AT 7PM IN THE VICTORY HALL

Email: mundonparishcouncil@yahoo.com
Website: Mundon.org – Tel: 07789 342747

Present: Cllr Gavin Rowsell, Cllr Kerry-Jane Wylie and Cllr Marita Ponting

In Attendance: Mrs Jackie Lines – Parish Clerk/RFO

Members of Public: 2

Meeting Commenced: 7.01pm

1. Chairman's welcome and to receive apologies of absence – apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Leggett, Cllr Bennett and Cllr Fittock.

2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The individual nominations received by the Clerk overall proposed Cllr Rowsell to continue in the role of Chairman and Cllr Wylie as Vice Chair (both Cllr Rowsell and Cllr Wylie were happy to continue in their roles) – **unanimous decision**. Individual Declarations of Acceptance of Office were duly signed by the Chair and Vice Chair in the presence of the Clerk.

3. Election of Representatives (Representatives attending the meeting were happy to continue in their roles)

- a) Finance – **(Cllr Wylie and Clerk with Cllr Rowsell covering in Cllr Wylie's absence)**
- b) Risk Assessment – **(All Councillors and Clerk)**
- c) Health & Safety – **(All Councillors and Clerk)**
- d) Wood Wardens – **(Les Potts, Steve Wells and Matthew Cousins)**
- e) Neighbourhood Watch/Police/Village Information – **(Cllr Wylie)**
- f) Local Transport – **(Cllr Ponting)**
- g) Plume Educational Trust – **(Cllr Wylie)**
- h) Dengie Hundred Group of Parish Councils – **(Cllr Rowsell, Cllr Wylie and Clerk)**
- i) Village Hall – **(Marita Ponting)**
- j) Community Events – **(All Councillors with Cllr Leggett as lead)**
- k) Village/Parish Council Website – **(Cllr Rowsell)**
- l) Sea Defences/Airports – **(Cllr Rowsell)**
- m) Planning – **(All Councillors)**
- n) Highways & PROW (Public Rights of Way) – **(All Councillors)**

4. Declarations of Interest

- a) To receive declarations of interest for any agenda items – no interests declared.
- b) Cllr Rowsell reminded members it is their responsibility to check that their Register of interest is up to date or if new to register at MDC i.e. if any changes occur that they are updated within 28 days on the MDC website.

5. Public Forum

A resident commented on the speed of vehicles using the unmade road behind the Woodside cottages. Residents to forward any further comments to the Parish Council.

6. Minutes of the previous meeting – 18 March 2025

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18 March 2025 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record – **unanimous decision.**

7. Review Frequency of Parish Council Meetings and Future Meeting Dates

- a) It was resolved for meetings to continue on a bi-monthly basis – **unanimous decision.**
- b) It was resolved meeting dates be set for July 25 to May 26, information to be displayed on the website and notice board – **unanimous decision.**

8. County/District Councillors Report

No County or District Councillors present at the meeting.

ECC Cllr Stamp had provided an ECC annual report for the Southminster Division dated 10 April 2025 (Appendix B on the website).

9. Policies, Procedures, Risk Assessments and Contracts

To consider and resolve any annual or new drafts:

It was resolved to re-adopt the Code of Conduct for Members – **unanimous decision.**

10. Public Transport (Cllr Ponting reported)

July 2024 – May 2025 Bus routes 31/331/332

- No feedback had been received as a result of the notices on the bus stops in the village. Residents spoke with Cllr Leggett about poor visibility at the bus shelter heading towards Maldon.
- There had been 3 timetable updates, most recently April 2025 and the new timetable is displayed at the bus stops.
- There had been a number of timetable disruptions due to road closures. Mill Road in November 2024 meant High Street stops were not serviced, Co-op on Wantz Road or St. Peter's hospital being suggested as replacements. A414 Jan/Feb 2025 overnight closure lead to bus diversions.
- Arrows Taxi folding resulted in the loss of direct links to Broomfield Hospital. New 99 service from Maldon to Broomfield and a service from Chelmer Valley Park & Ride are available as alternatives.
- Have attended a couple of MHTBUG meetings – understandably focused more on Maldon and Heybridge, so will hopefully attend Dengie Hundred Bus Users Group meetings (next one is 18th June in Burnham-on-Crouch)
- DHBUG posts useful updates on Facebook, which are forwarded if relevant. Essex First no longer post on Twitter but up-to-date service changes are available on their website.
- Love Your Bus grant was discussed and declined in January.

Future Road closures impacting Bus routes

- Wycke Hill/Spital Road roundabout: 4 June - 7 June 2025
- Limebrook Way: 9 June – 14 June 2025

- Maldon High Street: 23 June – 28 June 2025
- Mill Road: 14 July – 19 July 2025
- Main Road, Mundon: January 2026

11. The Furze

The Wood Wardens reported the footpaths are kept clear and wood chips laid on a regular basis. It is nice to have an additional Wood Warden on the Team who is currently being shown the ropes and had been helping with the continual task of clearing following storm damage.

The wood chipper requires an annual service which will be organised.

A request for the new Wood Warden to attend a chainsaw course at Writtle College was made – **Clerk to liaise with the college regarding availability and future dates.**

12. Grass Cutting/Verges

Cllr Leggett provided a report - the contractor 'Mow My Lawn' had now been reconfirmed as the ongoing provider so regular grass cutting will be done throughout the season.

13. Neighbourhood Watch

Cllr Wylie reported that since the last meeting a lone male was seen in the early hours walking through a 'yard' acting suspiciously in Blind Lane, although nothing was reported stolen. Reports also of a white transit van visiting various farms in the area acting suspiciously. Details of an Essex First Bus scam ticket offer were shared on the village NHW FB page.

Cllr Wylie attended the Chelmsford and Maldon NHW group on 20th May, with guest speaker Janet Willey the Community Speedwatch Co-ordinator from Essex Fire and Rescue. Ms Willey works in partnership with Essex Highways, Essex Police, Air Ambulance with the aim to assist in achieving 'Vision Zero' by 2040: no deaths or serious injuries by tackling the Fatal 4 – speeding, mobile use whilst driving, no seatbelt and drink/drug driving.

Community Speedwatch is a community-based traffic monitoring scheme, delivered by dedicated volunteers (min 8 required) monitoring the speed of passing vehicles using a hand-held speed detection device.

Another initiative that is being promoted from the Safer Essex Roads Partnership is 'Driving with Confidence'. It is an individual driving course for people aged over 70. The course is an opportunity for drivers to update their knowledge, improve their hazard awareness and driving skills and give reassurance and increase confidence. In turn this helps with preventing the feeling of isolation. The course is available (for a limited time) with an experienced driving instructor, in your own car, for 1 hour and is free. For further information please visit 'saferessexroads.org'.

It was also noted at the meeting that there is currently an upward trend in parcel thefts from doorsteps, theft from property and reports of dangerous catapult and air rifle use. The message continues to be, keep valuables out of sight, lock doors and windows on both homes and cars. Look after yourself and your property. Next meeting will be in July.

14. Woodside

The Clerk reported - during the last year, The Community Payback Team attended in July 2024 and repainted all the picket fencing.

Three quotes were obtained for renewing the paths at Woodside and were in the region of £30K (net of VAT). Several avenues of funding have been applied for to help with the cost but at present none have been successful.

Several panels of the picket fencing were destroyed by a single vehicle accident in Feb 25. This resulted in an insurance claim and Farm & Country kindly carried out the recent repair work to restore the fence.

15. Website and Social Media

- a) Cllr Rowsell reported - the website remains more of a legal requirement than a regularly used community asset, but regardless, it is continually updated with agendas and minutes, as well as any other important messages, documents and links.

The website does hold many links to useful sites such as Essex Highways (for checking roadworks schedules, reporting problems etc.), Bus and Taxi services and a multitude of other useful links.

Monthly usage reports show the majority of visits are through direct access (rather than from a search engine) and correlate with specific posts MPC makes on Facebook.

Our Facebook page currently has 346 dedicated followers (up from 302 last year), with some posts reaching many hundreds more, which for such a small village is quite impressive.

- b) **Email management in line with digital and data compliance** - it was resolved to observe Assertion 10 (1.47) of the updated Good Practitioner's Guide 2025 and to comply with its digital and data compliance in terms of email management, being hosted on an authority owned domain, to draft an IT Policy and for the website's accessibility statement to be updated to version 2.2AA. Cllr Rowsell to review these in the first instance – **unanimous decision**.

16. Planning

- a) **Planning Applications For Information Only**

No new applications received.

Planning Applications for Review

No new applications received.

- b) **Planning Decisions (and awaiting Decisions)**

24/01004/OUTM PP-13623594

Land South Of Threeways and 45 The Street Latchingdon Essex

Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for means of access, for up to 140 no. dwellings (Use Class C3) including 40% affordable housing; new site access and internal access roads; a new village centre (Use Class E(a)); flexible employment space (Use Class E); car and cycle parking; landscaping; sustainable urban drainage systems; public open space and footpaths; community woodlands and allotments; together with associated infrastructure.

(Clerk's DoP used – responded to MDC on 24 Feb 2025)

MPC recommend the refusal of planning permission for the reasons - Without local road infrastructure improvements, i.e. prioritising and widening of Fambridge Road, yet another 140 households on the Dengie will further compromise travel issues.

**The application does not deal with its additional 'dirty water', which will be sent to the already vastly over-capacity sewage works in Mundon, further increasing downstream flooding in defiance of both Anglian Water and Maldon District Council policies.
Pending consideration as at 19 May 2025**

25/00073/VAR PP-13716291

Mapledean Poultry Farm Mapledean Chase Mundon

Variation of condition 6 on approved planning permission 18/01034/OUT (Redevelopment of poultry farm for approximately 5030sqm B1 (b) & (c) commercial floorspace with associated access arrangements)

(Clerk's DoP used – responded to MDC on 13 Feb 2025)

Whilst Mundon Parish Council raised no objection to the original planning application 23/00744/RESM PP-12152781, concerns were raised at the time regarding flooding and a request for these to be given full consideration.

Therefore the Council feels any variation to exclude the need for an approved water drainage scheme prior to work beginning, would set a dangerous precedent.

Pending consideration as at 19 May 2025

25/00301/FUL PP-13849407

Land adjacent The Old Post Office, Main Road, Mundon

Demolition of existing outbuildings and construction of two bedroom dwelling and extended vehicle crossover.

(Clerk's DoP used – responded to MDC on 29 April 2025)

Mundon Parish Council are willing to support this application although there are concerns that the dwelling is very small, with the lounge/diner design making it more like a one bed dwelling with a large kitchen, allied to being so close to the host property and having such a small garden, it will be limited in its appeal and practicality, unless deemed exclusively an annexe, not to be separated from the existing house plot.

Pending consideration as at 19 May 2025

c) Planning Correspondence:

Members noted receipt via email of the following:

List of planning applications weeks 12 to 20.

List of planning decisions and appeals weeks 12 to 20.

17. Highways

- a) To receive any updates or concerns on new highways matters – the Parish Council had received an objection regarding the vehicle parked part on the verge and part on the road on Main Road and the lack of visibility when manoeuvring around it, felt to potentially cause unnecessary accidents.

Information obtained by the Clerk indicated, local authorities are currently unable to enforce against obstruction using their civil parking enforcement powers. However there are regulations and statutes available to the Police for vehicles standing on the pavement and/or road so as to cause any unnecessary obstruction and wilfully obstructing the free passage along a highway. Continue to monitor.

- b) To review information received from the Community Engagement Team after carrying out regular speed checks via a TruCAM – the monthly patrols continue and the results reflect:
March 2025 = 5 offenders
April 2025 = 3 offenders

- c) Update on traffic calming measures through the village – Clerk reported the dropped kerb request to Essex Highways from 2024, via Cllr Stamp, had been confirmed to be on their capital list for 2025/26. It is currently in the design stage and a date for commencement of works is awaited.
Cllr Stamp acknowledged the request for the 60mph zone within the village to become 40mph however rural roads being 60mph within the National Speed Policy is a national problem and reductions seem unlikely until the Policy is changed. Cllr Stamp has been awaiting results for a change to 40mph within Althorne for considerable time, if successful it may provide next steps for the same in other villages.
A request by a resident for any construction and service vehicles in relation to potential wind farms be routed via Fambridge Road rather than through Mundon village had been passed on to Cllr Stamp.
- d) To receive an update on village gateways – there has been no further movement since last reported at the 18 March 2025 meeting.
- e) To consider and resolve an arboriculture request received following an inspection on behalf of Essex County Council – it was resolved for Cllr Rowsell and the Wood Warden to meet and review the area – **unanimous decision**.
(See also Item 10) Cllr Rowsell to use tractor with hedge cutter after September to address the visibility at the bus stop.
- f) To consider and resolve request for bulb planting on the Bennett Junction at the start of New Hall Lane – Clerk reported, an application for a licence to plant, which a resident kindly located and forwarded to the Clerk, was logged with Licencing at Essex Highways on 28 March 2025. The process takes around 6 weeks. Awaiting conclusion.
It was resolved to accept the bulb planting project during the autumn if the licence application is successful – **unanimous decision**.

18. Community

- a) **Fundraising Committee** - Cllr Leggett provided a report - the date of this year's Village Fete is Saturday 9th August from 2-4p.m. with a summer theme. A Poster has been prepared and other preparations are in hand. The Poster will be distributed to Villagers 6 weeks before the event and placed on the Mundon Facebook page.
The Fundraising account has reimbursed Cllr Leggett for the plants that have been put in this spring and Invoices supplied accordingly.
- b) **Fundraising Account Expenditure** - It was resolved to accept the expenditure of £13.50 from Cllr Leggett for plants for the base of the original larger beacon – **unanimous decision**.
It was resolved to accept the Fundraising Account Statement from 1 September 2024 to 30 April 2025 (Appendix A on the website) – **unanimous decision**.
- c) **VE 80th Anniversary celebrations** – Cllr Rowsell wished to thank everyone who took part on the evening of 8th May with 19 people attending. To mark the anniversary, flags and bunting were displayed, people gathered on Woodside green for the lighting of the fire pit at 9.30pm and the patriotic and traditional hymn, "I Vow to Thee, My Country" was played. A certificate of the event was also acknowledged by the Royal Pageant Master.

19. Plume Educational Trust

Cllr Wylie attended a meeting held on 20th May. It was agreed that funds allow for scholarships to be offered to those leaving school this summer wishing to further their

education. The scholarships will now be promoted to 6th formers and encouraged to apply. The next meeting will be in November.

20. Correspondence

There was no additional correspondence other than already circulated via email, copy reports provided for all at the meeting or as detailed as a separate agenda item.

21. Finance

- a) To review and approve receipts, payments, bank reconciliation and budget v actual reports for March and April 2025 - List of payments are circulated to members at the end of each month prior to the meeting – **unanimously agreed** and signed off by Cllr Rowsell.

Mar-25

FOLIO	DATE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	NET AMT	VAT	GROSS
44/24-25	18/03/2025	Councillor	Expense Claim - Plants for the Parish	18.45		18.45
45/24-25	23/03/2025	Mow My Lawn	Inv 1708 - Grasscutting services 21 March 2025	80.00		80.00
46/24-25	31/03/2025	Clerk	Salary and home office month 12 March 2025	446.84		446.84

Apr-25

FOLIO	DATE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	NET AMT	VAT	GROSS
01/25-26	01/04/2025	Victory Hall Committee	Hall Hire x3 hrs (x2 mtgs) re 20 May 2025	24.00		24.00
02/25-26	31/03/2025	Maldon District Council	Inv MUN20192405 - Community Engagement Jan to Mar 2025	127.41	25.48	152.89
03/25-26	04/04/2025	Clerk	Expenses - A Frame Pavement/Chalk Board	39.99		39.99
04/25-26	01/04/2025	EALC	Inv 18554 - Annual Affiliation Fees EALC and NALC	£146.47		146.47
05/25-26	21/04/2025	Mow My Lawn	Inv 1728 - Grass cutting 4th and 18th April 2025	£160.00		160.00
06/25-26	30/04/2025	Clerk	Salary and home office - month 1 - April 2025	478.75		478.75

- b) To review and resolve the AGAR form together with the internal auditor's report and recommendations for the year ended 31 March 2025 –
- **Certificate of Exemption (page 3)** – no matters raised, form accepted and signed by Chairman and Clerk.
 - **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 (page 5)** – no matters raised, form accepted and signed by Chairman and Clerk.
 - **Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 (page 6)** – no matters raised, form accepted, previously signed by the Clerk, signed by the Chairman.
 - **Final Internal Audit Report 2024/25 (page 4)** - provided by Internal Auditor D O'Brien, together with the detailed annual audit report to include recommendations:
 1. For Financial Regulations and SOs to be updated regularly and based upon the updated 2025 model templates – these were reviewed and updated in March 2025 next review March 2026.
 2. DDR to be set up to pay ICO - Clerk to organise.
 3. A third Councillor to be added to the bank mandate as a signatory – it was resolved to set up another signatory if required at a later date. Currently two Councillors and the Clerk works sufficiently.
 4. Any trees owned by or are the responsibility of the council are inspected by an Arboriculturalist on a regular basis in line with insurance requirements – it was resolved that the Wood Warden, who is qualified, currently oversees and undertakes this work on a regular basis.

5. The Practitioners Guide para 5.35 indicates general reserves held should be between 3 and 12 months of expenditure, with smaller councils advised to hold closer to 12 months – it was resolved for the Clerk to gradually build extra reserves within future years annual Precepts and in an emergency the council could consider reallocating some capital reserves if required.
6. HMRC's working from home allowance is currently £26/mth which is not subject to tax, however Clerk, as per contract, is receiving £30/mth, therefore £4 should be included as taxable – Clerk to organise this via payroll going forward.
7. Pension Regulator registration is a statutory requirement even if any employee falls below the thresholds - Clerk to organise registration.
8. Transparency Code – land assets should be published - Clerk to discuss with internal auditor and organise.
9. Notice of public rights dates to be detailed within the minutes – refer Clerk's report, agenda item 21 (d).
10. Digital and Data Compliances updates - refer to agenda item 15 (b).
11. Email management, with every authority having a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain – refer to agenda item 15 (b).
12. Website – the accessibility statement version required to be WCAG 2.2 AA – Cllr Rowsell to review and update.
13. Variance Report – the explanation should include 15% reduction or increase on previous years - Clerk to update existing report for the website.

It was resolved to accept all AGAR Forms, Accounting Statements for 2024/25 and recommendations – **unanimous decision.**

- c) It was resolved to accept the 2025/26 annual subscription fee of £30 for the Dengie Hundred Group of Parish Council's and offer to host occasional meetings – **unanimous decision.**
- d) Clerk's Report - the parish council kept within the overall small budget for 2024/25.

A grant from the ECC Locality Fund was gratefully received in the value of £320.30 and used to purchase maintenance equipment such as postcrete, paint brushes, paint, wood chipper fuel and an additional bin.

An annual reclaim of VAT for the year to 31 Aug 2024 in the value of £218.51 was received from HMRC in Sept 2024.

Capital items purchased as assets during the year were an additional litter bin, troughs for plants at the bus shelter and dog fouling signs.

A thorough internal audit for the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 took place on 24th April 2025 with recommendations being received as detailed in item 21 (b).

Statutory reporting in relation to the audit will follow and information will shortly be displayed on the website. The notice of public rights for the year to 31 March 2025 will be run from Tuesday 3rd June until 14 July 2025.

The Parish Precept for the 2025/26 year is £8,600. Reserves at the end of the year were £500 for elections expenses and £18,423.09 relating to Capital Reserves. Bank interest received throughout the year amounted to £349.82.

The budget for 2025/26 has already been set, details provided within the minutes of the 27th November 2024 meeting and will be closely monitored throughout the year with monthly reviews and reporting to all councillors.

- e) It was resolved to accept the value of reserves to be carried forward to 2025/26 of £500 for election expenses and £18,423.09 relating to Capital Reserves. The Precept for 2025/26 confirmed as £8,600 – **unanimously agreed.**
- f) It was resolved to accept the quotation from Zurich for the annual insurance renewal from 1 June 2025 in the value of £264 – **unanimous decision.**
- g) It was resolved for this year's Locality Fund application, if available, be requested to support the cost of tree surgeon work – **unanimous decision.**

22. Training

Updates and review of future needs for Councillors, Volunteers and Clerk – chainsaw training was requested for the new Wood Warden, Clerk to liaise with Writtle College for future dates.

Defibrillator training has been offered, to include basic first aid, possibly a Monday evening, definite dates and times awaited.

23. External Meetings

To receive reports on any external meeting attended by Councillors or Clerk – no external meeting details to report.

24. Information Exchange & Items for next Agenda

An opportunity for members to raise any items they wish to be included on the agenda for the next meeting, other than what has already been decided during the course of the meeting – no requests received.

25. Date of future meetings, next meeting – Tuesday 15 July 2025 @ 7pm

26. All business having been transacted, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.31pm.

Appendix A**Mundon Parish Council
Fundraising Account
1 September 2024 to 30 April
2025****Income**

B/Fwd 31 August 2024	420.50
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Total Income	<u>420.50</u>
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Less: Expenditure

A Frame Board	39.99
Plants	<u>18.45</u>

	<u>58.44</u>
Surplus Income	<u><u>362.06</u></u>

Appendix B

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025 Southminster Division by Councillor Wendy Stamp 10th April 2025.

It has been another busy challenging year for councils, councillors, community groups and residents within the Southminster Division I would like to thank you for all your help and support and also, thank our residents in our wonderful diverse community.

Hopefully, everyone has been kept up to date throughout the year on the progress of Essex County Council's "Everyones Essex" 20 commitments launched in 2021 to 2025. The improvements and delivery of important life changing services including adult social care has reported positive change and better lives.

I am part of the working party recently commissioned called Essex Caring Communities Commission and the first annual draft report has been finished. I have no doubt this will continue to improve the care we all may need at some stage in our families and own lives. The report has been led by excellent professionals and we have consulted and met in person, with a large number of groups, medical professionals, the volunteer community sector and others. This sits alongside the large number of monthly decisions approved at Cabinet and Full Council alongside new initiatives, transformation projects – consultations, strategic and spatial policies – ECC is a very busy council with excellent staff. The biggest change in local government for 50 years has commenced. Greater Essex (Essex County Council, Southend and Thurrock Unitary Council geographies) was selected to join the Devolution Priority Programme alongside 12 District Councils to deliver for the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The governments reasoning for Devolution and LGR, is for a simpler, more sustainable (savings), delivery of services, and greater infrastructure delivery by devolving and transferring the powers and funding from national government to local government. Not everyone agrees with this as many feel the local voice will be lost.

I have supplied further links below. It is a huge subject and the consultation process closes on 13th April 2025. The link was sent out a few weeks ago and I hope the opportunity has been taken up.

The Mayoral election will take place in May 2026 alongside possible ECC elections – albeit for a very short term.

Devolution [Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation: Devolution | Essex County Council](#) and LGR- Local Government Reorganisation [Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation: Local Government Reorganisation | Essex County Council](#).

The inception of Devolution has resulted in the suspension of the recent boundary changes and County Councils elections that are due in May 2025.

I thank clerks, councillors and residents for sharing all the important news, press releases and information, including links to add on Councils websites, notice boards and Facebook sites whenever possible.

Essex County Council has a legal responsibility to operate within a balanced budget. With the changes and reductions in Government grant funding over recent years, coupled with increasing and more complex demand for core services such as caring for the elderly, protecting vulnerable children and supporting families who need it - the financial situation continues to be very challenging.

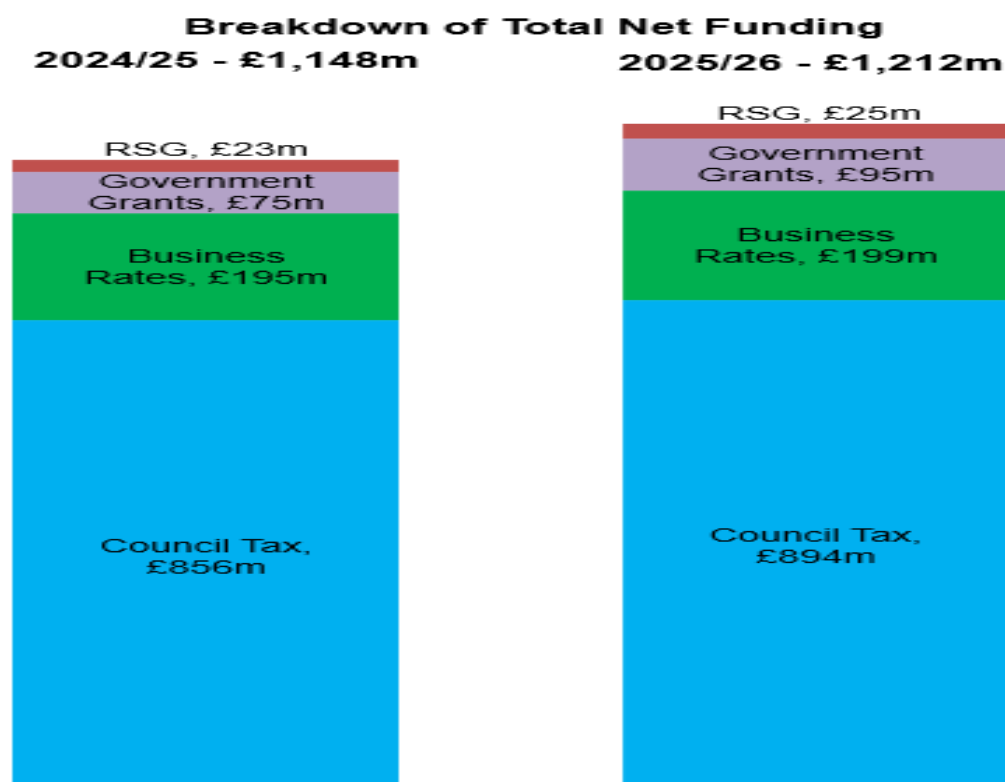
In February, Essex County Council agreed its new Budget for 2025/26. The Council again had a stark choice in balancing its budget increasing taxes or facing unacceptable cuts in services. The budget was balanced against a backdrop of some of the most challenging times that local government has ever faced. New financial pressures caused by measures introduced in the October Budget and continuing cost of living crisis, high energy costs and inflation levels, *and* the war in Ukraine have all landed on top

of existing challenges to reform and reshape our services and respond to huge increases in demand from those who need our help the most.

The “Everyone’s Essex” Annual Plan and budget was approved at Full Council in February, and due to the financial challenges facing local government, the budget for 2025/26 is increasing. Gross expenditure to be incurred in the delivery of Council services in 2025/26 is **£2,718m**. After taking income and specific grants into account, the net cost of services amounts to **£1,212m**, which is an increase of **£64m** or 6% over 2024/25. The net cost of services was set at **£1,212.0 million** and the net revenue budget requirement was set at **£1,117.3m** (net cost of services less general government grants) for 2025/6.

The total council tax funding requirement was set at **£891.6m** for 2025/26 – Essex County Council’s element of the council tax was increased by **3.75%** comprising of a 1.75% increase in general council tax and 2.0% adult social care precept. This spending supports the most vulnerable in our communities including older people, people with learning difficulties, mental health issues and physical and sensory impairments. The precept is being used to insulate Adult Social Care from having to make higher savings, and support the growth in need, caused by changes in the demographics of our population and inflation, including the national living wage rise.

This resulted in the Essex County Council element of the council tax being **£1,579.59** for a Band D property in 2025/26 - this is an increase of **£1.09** per household per week.



Net expenditure of £1,212m is funded by council tax, business rates, Revenue Support Grant and General Government Grants. Income from Council Tax is the largest funding stream and will make up 75% of our funding in 2025/26.

A public consultation on the proposed budget was undertaken during November and December 2024. Through this exercise, the Council gathered the views of residents and those who run businesses within the county. There were 2,105 responses to the consultation and the key messages from respondents are that pressures on healthcare and the NHS are viewed by participants as the most

important issue facing Essex today. The responses also recognise the pressures on social care provision and crime/community safety as key issues to be addressed. Topics of most concern for people personally are the condition of roads and pavements, crime levels and anti-social behaviour. When asked about things that should be prioritised for immediate action, respondents identified developing Essex's infrastructure as the top issue. This was followed by supporting those who care for the sick or vulnerable people and securing high standards in education.

Three main areas of disappointment and concerns are the sad loss of Arrow and some of the Dart bus services, the normal Highways challenges and the lack of local suitable SEND provision in the Maldon District.

The lack of a convenient service to Broomfield Hospital from the Dengie has been catastrophic and whilst the new 45 service is welcomed, this hasn't been without a large number of complaints and inconvenience. A round table was held at Maldon Town Hall with Dame Priti Patel and Sir John Whittingdale with Essex County Council Passenger Transport, major bus operators, "The Dengie Hundred Bus Users Group" and the relevant elected County Members. I certainly won't lie and say in my opinion this was a success, as I don't think it was. Despite a great deal of pressure, further meetings and hard work from DHBUG and residents the improvements are small and disappointing. I raise these concerns at every opportunity to bring a better service. Two Councils Mayland and Burnham applied for Love your Bus Grant funding and were successful, I obviously sent a letter of support. Thank you and well done. There is, still work to do.

"SEND" in the Dengie and "SEND 4 ALL", still work very hard fighting for local school provision for equality for ALL children. A huge amount of work and resources has been directed to catch up on Local Care Health Plans (LCHP) to help for school provision. This followed on from the shocking truth regarding the failure to deliver them within in the council BUT there is still so much more to do. This is a national crisis that has been recognised by Central Government. Sadly, we do not have local school provision for year 7 in the Maldon District despite talks, hope then disappointment. We are all still working hard. My personal view is that every school should be inclusive for all children, unless their needs are severe of course. I also think a total review and revolution is required for the education of all children and young adults – I am no expert but I do listen to residents of all ages.

As a positive, I must thank the clerks and officers, again, for their support and professionalism and those who have worked hard in applying for funding for important community projects from the Locality Fund allocation and for ECC continued funding. The awards this year are:-

Recipient	Amount allocated	Amount Claimed
Asheldham and Dengie Parish Council	£1,500	£1,500
Southminster Parish Council	£750	£574.91
Maldon District Tourism Group (T24)	£1,200 (pooled with Cllrs Durham and Fleming)	£665 (£221 from each member)
Althorne Parish Council	£366	£336.37
St. Lawrence Parish Council	£660.51	£660.51
Mundon Parish Council	£323.45	£320.30
Althorne Parish Hall	£1,000	£980.00

The new initiative of members priority pothole scheme has helped deliver a variety of works but so much more is required.

The scheme has currently been suspended whilst we wait for an update from the Chairs of the panels, no date for the meeting is scheduled as yet!

I receive a huge number of speeding traffic concerns and requests for lowering the speed limits but so far, sadly not one has met the criteria or been delivered. One of our villages has been waiting for a speed limit reduction for a number of years and we are still waiting for a decision. we keep trying!

“Levelling Up Essex” was launched in 2022. By levelling up, the Council means that everyone should have the opportunity to succeed in life and fulfil their potential; and that all places and communities should be able to share in this.

“Levelling Up in Essex” is about making sure residents have the education and skills they need to find good quality employment, take pride in where they live and make lasting improvements to their lives. Essex County Council, alongside partners, including, city, borough and district councils, the NHS, charities and businesses, have provided job opportunities, skills training, and financial support. A huge range of projects are having a positive impact on communities throughout the County, underpinned by over £22million of funding, which has delivered specific initiatives, as well as enhanced existing projects and programmes.

On 3rd March 2025 Essex County Council published the third in a series of annual impact reports outlining the progress and achievements of “Levelling Up Essex”. “A Thriving Essex – More Opportunities, Better Lives” spotlights some of the dozens of projects that are being delivered across Essex, with almost 100,000 residents and businesses being positively impacted by projects since the start of the programme in 2022. This clearly demonstrates that Essex is investment ready – economic growth is vital for prosperous success and lively communities.

Key achievements so far include.

- Direct benefit to over 100,000 residents and is on track to deliver benefit to over 140,000 residents overall.
- Enabled over 100,000 children from low-income families to access holiday and activity clubs, and more than 20,000 children to benefit from targeted education and careers support.
- The creation of more than 2,000 new job opportunities, with more businesses operating in our targeted growth sectors in Essex and a year-on-year increase in the number of people starting Advanced Apprenticeships and Higher Apprenticeships in Essex.
- Co-funded projects with partners on shared goals. For example, Levelling Up Essex co-funded work with health partners which resulted in 450 residents into NHS employment in and around Basildon. This delivered multiple benefits of improved life chances for those residents in priority places, addressed a skills and capacity shortage in the NHS and achieved greater impact and value for money.
- Investment in proactively addressed the root causes of issues, rather than responding to the symptoms. For example, the Poppins and Nightingale Bursary Schemes [New bursary supports training in Early Years | Essex County Council](#), designed to increase capacity and skills in sectors which face massive recruitment challenges. by providing pathways into employment in this sector.
- THE ESSEX YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY [Introducing Essex Year of Opportunity | Essex County Council](#) – was a £1.2 million programme which did encourage career aspirations, training, and learning - it improves life chances for individuals and supports people.
- Greater Essex Business Board (GEEB) has also helped drive economic growth by forging strong partnerships and policies for innovation and addressing skills shortages. [Document.ashx](#)

Next Steps Levelling Up Essex Year 3 A Thriving Essex – More Opportunities, Better Lives 'Impact Update - Levelling Up Essex is a generational change. The work undertaken to date has laid the

foundations for longer term work and approaches to support the delivery of long-term outcomes through Devolution.

In the coming year the Council will continue to progress all in-flight activity and launch a range of further interventions, designed to support communication in early years and further support young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

Tackling the lack of Infrastructure including the NHS and poor rural transport services.

Following my persistent hard work, Councillor Bentley eventually agreed to convene a group of stakeholders, officers, NHS partners and elected members from Essex County Council and Maldon District Council, to form the “Maldon Summit” group. The group has met several times with the next date scheduled at the end of April 2025.

Work is progressing on addressing the poor lack of infrastructure which has deteriorated due to the large number of developments across the Maldon District.

The current challenges regarding the National Health Service and funding crisis has recently been reported in the media and continues causing concerns to everyone. NHS England is being abolished.

The NHS working group recommended that St Peter's Hospital remain operational for about five years while funding is gathered for a new facility on the current site. The new facility would provide outpatient services and primary care space for local GPs. Inpatient care should not continue at St Peter's because it cannot be operated efficiently and low usage, but pre- and post-natal appointments should remain, with midwife-led births continuing at Braintree Community Hospital. These recommendations will be included in a Decision-Making Business Case for review by the ICB (Integrated Care board), in the summer.



Finally, I wish to thank the Youth Service and the Community & Voluntary Service, for the Community Gaming Service and Beyond the Ballot. Beyond the ballot is how young leaders can drive political change. Our youth are our future and one of this division's excellent ambassadors is Burnham's Tyler May, who continues to inspire, engage and encourage people of all ages. Tyler was the recipient of the Mayor's award in Burnham, presented by Joan Costello and myself.

I have supported residents with a huge number of issues, problems and concerns, assisted parish and town councils, whilst attending a number of scrutiny meetings, working groups and council meetings at Essex County Council. If I can help in anyway, please contact me Cllr.Wendy.Stamp@essex.gov.uk