

County Council Annual Report 2017

This year the County has pegged its proportion of council tax with no increases on the general fund. However, due to continuing Government grant reductions we have reluctantly increased the Social care element by 3%. This reflects the increasing elderly population in Essex, and their care demands. In all £524 million will be spent on Social Care this coming year.

Front line services remain our priority and we have set aside £260 million for capital projects on our highways network. £263 million has been allocated for a capital investment programme, included in this is £5 million to protect homes from flooding, and significant investments in new schools. On education, Uttlesford pupils are amongst the best performing in the County, and Country.

The Local Highways Panel continues with additional top-up funding of £100,000 split 50:50 between the County and Uttlesford District Council. A wide range of projects are on our list for discussion in April, when the funding will be allocated. Again our project list exceeds our budget so some tough decisions will need to be made.

Waste reduction remains a challenge, and a number of schemes will be promoted this year to encourage more reuse and recycling. That said Uttlesford residents are one of the best performers for recycling, so well done! So the County will be encouraging more food waste collections, more composting, clothes recycling and reminding people those small electrical items can now be disposed of in many of the County Libraries. The waste plant in Basildon is still in commissioning, but is processing waste and preventing it from going to landfill.

A key consultation on the A120 has recently closed, and it has attracted a lot of responses. These will be analysed and new routes shortlisted for the Government to consider. Getting this route improved to the east of Braintree will unlock what is an important east-west route across the county, and with its improvement economic growth will follow.

Country Parks are one of our major success stories and across the County has a range of innovative things for visitors to do. Locally, there is great Notley Country park, which has a number of exiting elements to it, including a fishing lake and the sky ropes structure. A zip wire is now being considered, and could be the longest in the east of England. Other parks offer the Gruffalo Trail, or just quiet space to walk and enjoy nature.

During the past year my role changed and I am now on the Cabinet with responsibility for Environment and Waste.

It is a wide ranging portfolio, and deals with disposal of household waste, recycling and a number of environmentally related areas of work. Included is flood prevention, country parks, rural and coastal matters. Part of my role includes chairing the Essex Rural Partnership which launched its Rural Strategy

this year, and I have chaired a group which is determined to reduce industrial fly tipping in the county.

Simon Walsh

March 2017