

## County Councillor Report October 2019

### **Essex County Council takes the lead on environmental initiatives**

Councillor David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council, announces the Essex Climate Change Commission. The new cross party working group will look at how the council can work to reduce its carbon footprint, reduce waste, promote recycling and sustainable transport and work with the community, businesses and suppliers to support them in becoming more environmentally aware and proactive in tackling climate change.

In addition, there are ambitious plans to plant 375,000 trees across the county over the next five years. More details to follow, but it is likely we will be working with local communities to identify suitable sites and groups who wish to get involved. This plays directly into the Green Infrastructure initiative and I will be seeking to ensure every opportunity is taken to make Essex a greener and healthier place to live.

In order to stress the importance of this initiative and recognising the wide public concern regarding the environment, my role has been renamed Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action.

With that I will be doing even more to make ECC buildings and schools more energy efficient, such as replace lights with LEDs, boilers with energy efficient combined heat and power units and installing solar panels across the County Council estate.

### **Brexit**

The UK is getting ready to leave the EU on 31 October.

The Government has provided a range of advice for residents and businesses on Brexit, to help you or your business take the necessary steps to prepare.

You can visit our [dedicated Brexit pages](#) for all the latest information, and for general updates on the Brexit process.

## **The art of building relationships**



It's easy to think that living in a place where you're surrounded by other people, you would naturally make friends, build relationships and never feel alone. However, many older people living in a care home experience loneliness and can become socially isolated. They may have moved away from a familiar environment and as they've got older, their social circles have reduced.

That's why for the past two years, we've worked with Anglia Ruskin University and some of the UK's leading arts and health organisations to explore the power of arts and culture within care home settings, and how they can build and strengthen relationships between residents and care home staff.

What we found was that the arts - music, dance and crafts - have a unique way of engaging people, enabling them to express themselves creatively, build on their strengths and help them to connect with others in positive ways. We saw the breaking down of boundaries between residents, their relatives and staff, as well as residents and their wider communities.

The information we've gathered will now be used to inform future thinking around arts provision in care home settings as well as future programmes of work. You can find out more about what we found on the [Explore Culture website](#), or by watching the film below.

## **Highways and flooding**

You may have noticed some rain recently, it seems nature is playing catch-up.

This time of year with leaves falling and after a relatively dry spell, the road gullies may be getting blocked. If you notice any please report them using the online reporting tool. The highways gully team will get to them as soon as they can, but as you might imagine they are particularly busy at this time of year.

Simon Walsh

County Councillor for Thaxted Division

October 2019