

# ESSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

## COUNTY UPDATE

### Special Edition

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019 - 2020

*Celebrating Community*



**No. 198**

### Annual Report to the EALC Membership by the Chairman, Cllr Peter Davey



The EALC continues to be recognised nationally in its own right for the work it carries out in support of the Parish and Town Council sector within Essex. Through our highly professional training programme and legal support services which will always remain our top priority, and whilst looking for new areas where value can be added to member Councils. To meet the challenges presented throughout the year, it is essential we work diligently and successfully with our partners to create mutual benefit. As the County Association we must exploit every opportunity to work on your behalf, primarily with Essex County Council and the National Association of Local Councils.

This year has seen the continuing progression of our succession planning process with the appointment of Charlene Slade, our Executive Finance Officer and Buildings Manager, to the position of CEO Designate in November following the pending retirement of our current CEO, Joy Darby, who stepped down into a supportive role at the end of March.

The newly introduced CIF and Micro-Grant Funds this year have proved to be an overwhelming success under the stewardship of the EALC. The Leader of Essex County Council, Cllr David Finch, requested the EALC to continue to manage the funds for both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years with grant monies of £300,000 and £50,000 per annum respectively. This will enable Constituted Community Groups and Town/Parish Councils to continue to deliver new services into the area in which they operate. I would like to acknowledge Cllr David Finch's continuing support for the sector in these financially challenging times.

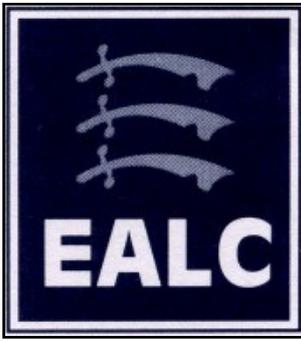
Since my appointment as the Chairman of the EALC in November 2017, together with our staff and with your support and co-operation and the collaborative work with our partners, we have made significant progress towards making Essex both a safer and more enjoyable place to live whilst enhancing our support for Town and Parish Councils. I have also retained my role as Chairman of the Accreditation Panel of Essex. This panel awards the Foundation, Quality and Quality Gold to Councils in Essex to enable them to excel at what they do, and as a County Association we have the greatest number of accreditations in the UK.

We continue to strengthen our involvement with the Essex County Council initiatives on Health & Wellbeing and Mental Health through the appointment of the EALC Health & Wellbeing Officer, Danielle Frost in 2019. This key appointment has been funded by Essex County Council for a 3-year period. To compliment and influence this work, I continue to be a member of the Essex County Council Health & Wellbeing Board and Chair the newly formed EALC Health and Wellbeing Board.

In February this year, I was also appointed to the Independent Essex Climate Action Commission Chaired by Lord Randall. A strong focus on climate change and the environment will have economic benefits for Essex, as well as helping the global climate and improving the environment for citizens at the local level.



The Essex Association of Local Councils wishes to thank Essex County Council for the continued support and financial commitment to enable services to be delivered to the Parish sector in Essex.



**Executive  
Committee  
Members**

**Chairman**

Cllr Peter Davey

**Treasurer**

Cllr David  
McPherson-Davis

**Vice Chairman**

Cllr John Gili-Ross

**Committee  
Members**

Cllr Alan Acott  
Cllr Linda Belgrove  
Cllr Stuart Berlyn  
Cllr Mandy Cohen  
Cllr Jim Devlin  
Cllr Abdul Hafiz  
Cllr Roy Martin  
Cllr Richard North  
Cllr Don Smith  
Cllr Stephanie Gill  
Cllr Wendy Stamp  
Cllr Roger Mannion  
Cllr Alan Townsend  
Cllr Jeanette Stilts  
Cllr Mandy Hessing  
Cllr Sheila Jackman  
MBE  
Kirsty O'Callaghan  
Helen Symmons

**President**

Cllr John Jowers

**Vice-Presidents**

Cllr Sheila Jackman  
MBE  
Cllr Ann Brown  
Mike Page  
Dominic Petre  
Margaret Grimster

Essex County Council aims to ensure that it has the best advice about what it can do to tackle climate change. The purpose of the Commission is to identify ways in which ECC can mitigate the effects of climate change, improve air quality, reduce waste across Essex and increase the amount of green infrastructure and biodiversity in the county by drawing on in-house expertise, commissioning research and forming new external partnerships. The Commission is invited to make recommendations to Essex County Council, for the Council to implement, recommendations and policy suggestions should be transformative, but practical.

The EALC is also continuing to work alongside the Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner of Essex, the Devolution Engagement with Essex Leaders, the Safer Essex Initiative, the Rural Crime Forum, and the Essex Rural Partnership.

I was re-elected for a second term in December as both Chair of the NALC Finance and Scrutiny Committee and a Member of the NALC Management Board which enables the EALC to play a unique role as a County Association to be part of, and have a major influence over, the strategic initiatives that are taking place across the UK. I would like to thank Cllr John Gili-Ross, our Vice-Chairman and Cllr David McPherson-Davis, our Treasurer, for their continuing work with our Strategic Partners as well as the Executive Members who work tirelessly to ensure our member's voices are heard and acted upon.

Without the absolute commitment, hard work, dedication, professionalism and foresight given to the Association by Joy Darby, our CEO, Charlene Slade, our CEO designate and our Staff, the many EALC achievements this year both strategic and supportive could not have been possible.

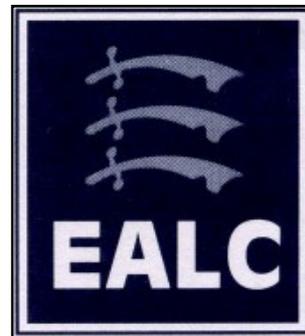
**COVID-19**

As lockdown in England occurred towards the end of our financial year on 24th March 2020 I wish to acknowledge and thank on behalf of us all the sheer dedication and commitment of all those on the front line in the NHS and our care homes, the voluntary sector, our Town/Parish Clerks and Councillors and the EALC and NALC staff. I would also like to thank Councillors and Officers in our County Council/District/City and Borough Councils and the thousands of volunteers who helped to fight this deadly virus making our County and Country a safer place to live.

Cllr Peter Davey,

*Chairman of the Essex Association of Local Councils*

## EALC Training



EALC training is one of the most comprehensive services that the EALC runs to benefit Member Councils. The Service is also available to Non Members at a cost of 200%+, which broadly places the costs similar to the commercial sector. The courses are aligned to the Clerks qualification and to support and develop Members. 2019/20 was an extremely busy year for the Training Department. We provided 13 sets of Councillor Training Days 1 & 2, 3 sets of Chairman's Training Days 1, 2 & 3 and a total of 75 courses to the membership throughout 2019/20. Along with our regular courses we have also hosted a Highways Briefing in conjunction with Essex County Council Highways Department & worked with the Gypsy, Traveller & Rural Engagement Team delivering an Unauthorised Encampment Briefing.

### CILCA

During 2019/20 we ran for the first time 4 CiLCA courses throughout the year. We also had 15 Clerks that successfully passed their qualification. Essex continues to have one of the highest pass nationwide.

### Online Training February 2020

Our New Online Training Programme was launched in February of this year & we are delighted that it has proved extremely popular.

#### Courses Currently Available

- ◆ Introduction Module to Health & Safety
- ◆ Data Protection Essentials (GDPR)
- ◆ Introduction to Display Screen Equipment
- ◆ Equality & Diversity Essentials
- ◆ Phishing
- ◆ Introduction to Resilience
- ◆ Managing & Reducing Stress

### Short Courses

Additionally we have run a record 32 Short Courses throughout 2019/20. This is where the courses are taken out to a Town or Parish Council.

Please note these Short Courses have been designed to give a brief overview of essential modules grouped into one course for a single Council. The course is designed to last up to 2 hours & is delivered to the entire Town/Parish Council.

### Essex Clerk's Bursary

Essex Clerk's Bursary Scheme: Parish & Town Councils are invited and encouraged to apply for a Bursary towards any skills or personal training that will aid them in their Council Work.

The bursary limit is 75% of the cost of the training course, to a limit of £500 in any one financial year. Clerk's from Council's with an annual budgeted income up to £80,000 are eligible to apply. If a Clerk works for more than one Council, they are eligible if one Council comes within the £80,000 criteria. Please find the application form on the EALC website. For all enquiries please contact Pearl Willcox for more information.

#### Staff Members

##### Chief Executive Officer

Charlene Slade

##### Executive County Training Officer

Pearl Willcox

##### Parish Support & Development Officer

Amanda Brown

##### Funding Officer

Louise Gambardella

##### Communications Officer

Eli Haines  
communications@ealc.gov.uk

##### Health & Wellbeing Officer

Danielle Frost

##### Sage Administrator

Lucy Alston-Nogueira

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##### Staff Emails

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##### Legal enquiries:

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## Local Council Awards

During 2019/20, the Parish Support Officer, Amanda Brown, continued to support Councils with the development of the awards. It takes time and effort to reach the high standard required by the Essex County Accreditation Panel to gain an award.

During 2019 there were Councils re-accrediting as their four-year accreditation had come to an end since the scheme had been revamped during 2014/15, with some of these Councils choosing to re-accredit at a higher level.

The Essex County Association leads the way nationally, achieving the most awards in the Country with Essex increasing its lead to 58 as Gloucestershire's total stands at 30 and the next closest being Norfolk with 25. The number of accreditations for Essex increased on the 2018/19 totals by 12 awards during 2019/20.

The interest in the scheme by Parish & Town Councils continues to grow with five Councils already gaining accreditations this year, and a further 10 who have registered their interest with the NALC and the EALC.

## Community Initiative Fund & Micro-Grants

For the 2019/20 Financial year, the Micro Grants awarded a total sum of £49,917.00 to 105 successful applicants. These projects ranged from tables and chairs for the homeless, a video projector, toddler group equipment, shed inside, soft play area, providing emergency meals for the vulnerable, pop up marquee for a community group, telephone box library and a school uniform bank.

The launch of the new CIF in April 2019 saw a big influx of applications. In total we received 143 applications and the Panel approved 50 with an amount of £244,187.00. With the remaining money unallocated, Essex County Council decided to allocate £30,000.00 for any Emergency Projects. We had 12 applicants come forward and the Panel approved 6 worthy cases, they ranged from emergency counselling service, village park refurbishment, stroke exercise group and a replacement server.

We were also given the opportunity to administer a new grant that welcomed projects from groups, charities and organisation that support men's suicide prevention, Mental Health or other underlying risk factors in North East Essex. We received a great response and the panel approved 10 with a total sum of £29,374.00. The projects ranged from Specialist Counselling, Men's Fix It Project, Legal Advice for Family Breakdown, Support Group and a Drop-in Centre.

## National Association of Local Council's

The EALC is affiliated with the NALC, who work on behalf of the Councils in Essex to bring services and support, including legal advice and training. The Legal Services (referrals for desktop advice) and the provision of Legal Topic Notes and briefings available through the website, are professionally provided by NALC solicitors.

The Development Team work hard on lobbying Government on policy and influencing Ministers to achieve the very best for the sector. The strong leadership by the NALC Council and the Chief Executive Officer ensure that the needs, wants and aspirations of our Communities can be achieved.

## Health & Wellbeing

The majority of last year was spent setting the foundations of what the Health and Wellbeing agenda meant for Local Councils and building links with the various partners. The five key elements of Social Isolation, Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Physical Activity and Weight Management were broken down into practicable elements which Councils could adopt, signpost or add value to depending on their individual circumstances.

The Health & Wellbeing Board met and finalised their remit. They will promote best practice from both within their areas and across the Voluntary Sectors, to Local Councils. Key agenda items are mental health and understanding and signposting the relevant partner information to their residents. The Board is made up of a diverse selection of members each with a keen interest in the Health & Wellbeing Board and with relevant experience in certain areas.

In October of last year Danielle Frost presented two workshops in the main conference room at the NALC Annual Conference about the work the EALC was doing on Health & Wellbeing. The conference was a very professionally rewarding event to attend, as it allows networking with other Local Councils across the Country on Health & Wellbeing. Work was also published twice last year, firstly in DIS and then latterly the LCR magazine.

Towards the end of last year, Health & Wellbeing Plans were created and relevant training for Local Councils to complete and use to further their own strategic action plans. This 'living document' allows Local Councils to promote what they already have, signpost to the Local and National Community or support groups, learn about funding opportunities and inform their residents of the work they are doing to help lead happier and healthier lives.

### VineHR

The EALC has, through a subscription, provided the Membership of VineHR to all our Member Councils. This is a pay for service, where any Member Council can seek HR support for their Council. This is normally at a preferential rate as part of the membership package.

### Essex Legal Services (ELS)

The EALC has negotiated good rates from Essex Legal Services, enabling the Councils in Essex to use commission work that requires a solicitor to act for the Council. These services have been used during the last year and Councils are encouraged to ask for a quote.

## Partnership Working with Essex County Council

For many years, Essex County Council have developed a good working relationship with the EALC and the Town, Parish, Village, and Community Councils of Essex. The Partnership continues to grow with new initiatives and the EALC playing a larger role in developing new schemes and ideas.

The EALC has developed over the years due to the support of the Leader Cllr David Finch and Essex County Councillors who have provided the sector with a range of financial and other support. The EALC wishes to record the thanks of the EALC, and it's Membership for the continued partnership. Together we can make a real difference.

