

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
PROPERTY STRATEGY
2022-2025

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Foreword for Property Strategy

The County Council has adopted its new organisation plan for the next four years; Everyone's Essex– Our Plan for Levelling up the County 2021-2025. This new Property Strategy describes how our asset portfolio will underpin Renewal and strengthen Equality in Essex and the use of our Ambition to maximise its potential.

Our land and property can strengthen our economy through creating new opportunities for employment, skills training and growing new and existing businesses. The success of the Essex Housing LLP in delivering new homes will continue through the reuse of existing assets.

The Essex Climate Commission has set a clear agenda for the Environment in the County and our target is for our Estate to be Net Zero by 2030. We will make progress towards this target through rationalising our core offices, using technology to support new ways of working, reviewing our estate to identify poorly performing buildings and implementing schemes to minimise our energy use. The ongoing collaboration with our partners, public, private and the third sector, is key to providing the best services for the health, wellbeing and education of all our residents. As a core objective of the Strategy we will ensure that they are provided in the right properties in easily accessible locations and are fit for purpose.

COVID has transformed the way everyone uses property. Hybrid working is a norm and we are now a digital council, with many of our teams able to work flexibly from across the county and other locations. That means there are huge opportunities to create a better outcome for the council taxpayer by using our property differently.

Although this strategy focuses on our assets, we need to ensure that public sector property across the County serves our residents and workforce as flexibly as possible. That means rethinking traditional approaches to organisational footprints and we are keen to work in partnership with all interested parties to develop new ways of working.

Over the next four years we will use our property and financial resources to maximise the commercial opportunities from new and existing assets. This will support growth in the County as well as contribute to the financial resilience of the County Council.

To ensure we succeed with our ambitions we will challenge our thinking and use of property through exploring radical options for change and learning from those organisations who are leading the way in thinking about their property portfolios.

All our objectives can be met through strengthening our existing Corporate Landlord arrangements and the principles set out in this Strategy. This approach will balance our policy priorities with service needs, whilst recognising our property assets are a finite resource and must be used and managed for the benefit of the whole Council.

Our property portfolio is a key component of achieving our Everyone's Essex outcomes and I welcome and commend this Strategy to you.

Councillor Lesley Wagland OBE
Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning

The Everyone's Essex themes and strategic priorities drive the Property Strategy Vision and Objectives and will thread through both the Strategy and Action Plans.

Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling up the County 2021-2025

The Council has set out three themes and four strategic priorities in its Organisation Strategy for the period 2021 to 2025.

Three themes: **Renewal, Equality, Ambition:**

Four strategic priorities:

- **Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy**
- **High Quality Environment**
- **Health, Wellbeing and Independence for all Ages**
- **A Good Place for Children and Families to Grow**



Property Strategy Vision

To meet the **Everyone's Essex** strategic priorities the property portfolio will

- enable wellbeing, growth and prosperity for the residents of Essex
- lead by example in contributing to the County Council's Zero Carbon Essex 2050 outcomes
- maximise commercial opportunities for the County Council
- hold the right assets in the right place and condition to facilitate excellent service delivery by the County Council and its partners



The County Council's **Property Portfolio Objectives** underpin the **Vision**

1. A portfolio that supports the Everyone's Essex strategic aims
2. A portfolio that creates inclusive economic renewal across the County
3. A portfolio that meets the Council's plan for a Net Zero Estate in 2030
4. A portfolio that maximises the financial return for the Council
5. A portfolio that enables our communities to thrive
6. A portfolio that provides opportunities for collaboration with public, private and third sector partners and promotes social value
7. A portfolio that is efficient, adaptable, fit for purpose and compliant with statutory and regulatory codes

To achieve those Objectives we will adopt a series of principles to manage our portfolio and those are detailed later in the Strategy.

Property Strategy - Context

Essex – the County

Essex is one of the largest counties in England covering an area of around 346,000 hectares with a population of over 1.48 million people. The County has very diverse geography and demography which affects how the Council and partners deliver services to residents, employers and visitors to Essex.

Within the County Council's administrative boundary there are twelve City, Borough and District Councils. Following Local Government Reorganisation in 1998 the Boroughs of Southend-on Sea and Thurrock became unitary authorities. In the longer term, the Government's Levelling Up White Paper is expected to outline new structures for local government in those areas with existing two-tier arrangements.

The Council works with a wide range of public, private and third sector partners in delivering its services. A significant area of change in the early life of this Strategy will be further NHS re-organisation. This will create three new Integrated Care System (ICS) Boards covering parts of Essex as well as neighbouring authorities. This, together with further wider service transformation, will create opportunities for our estate to be used as an enabler for these changes.

Plans for residential growth, including Garden Communities; the demands for services from an ageing population; areas of deprivation, particularly in our Levelling Up priority areas of Harlow, Colchester, Tendring, Basildon and Castle Point; together with the economic growth corridors based on the Thames Estuary, the M11 and Stansted Airport and the A120 and Harwich will create significant opportunities and challenges for our asset portfolio.

The Council's aim for a Net Zero Estate by 2030 and to achieve a Zero Carbon Essex by 2050 will be a key driver in our response to the opportunities and challenges and the future make up of our portfolio.

The Council is spending £2.082 billion in 2022/23 providing services to the people of Essex and has a capital programme of £284 million to deliver projects to achieve the Everyone's Essex themes and priorities. The Council is facing a challenge to balance the budget for the years 2023 to 2026 and further savings of £119 million will be required in 2025/26. Efficient use of our property estate and generating further revenue income will assist in achieving those required savings over that period.

The Council's property portfolio

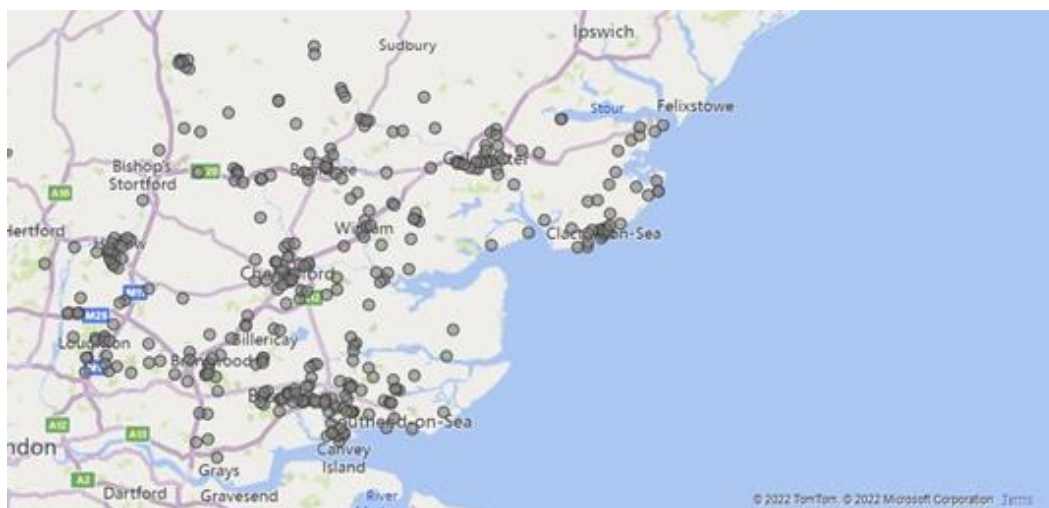
The portfolio comprises of 1,412 assets, 884 freehold properties, 110 leasehold properties and 418 managed sites, the majority of which are Academy or other school sites. The book value of the portfolio for accounting purposes is just over £1.48 billion (as of 31 March 2021). The portfolio has remained broadly similar in size, although there have been significant reductions in office buildings and the number of depots and storage facilities. The Council has secured £107 million of capital receipts between 2011 and 2021.

The tables below show the distribution of assets and summarise the operational sites.

Asset Table				
	Freehold	Leasehold	Managed	Total
Basildon	90	7	30	127
Braintree	119	14	53	186
Brentwood	48	7	24	79
Castle Point	43	5	30	78
Chelmsford	129	13	48	190
Colchester	99	20	54	173
Epping Forest	71	8	29	108
Harlow	50	13	27	90
Maldon	36	4	22	62
Rochford	36	6	18	60
Tendring	84	6	43	133
Uttlesford	61	6	31	98
Southend	6	0	2	8
Thurrock	3	0	2	5
Out of Essex	9	1	5	15
				1412

Number of operational sites	
Libraries	74
Children's Services	48
Adult Care	46
Waste	30
Travellers' sites	12
Highway depots	11
Country Parks	10
Heritage sites	7
Adult Education Centres	7
Outdoor Education	4
Park and Ride	3
Enterprise Centres	1
Records Office	1
Warehouse	1

The map below shows the distribution of the non-schools' estate assets across the County.



Property Strategy – our principles to achieve the Property Portfolio Objectives underpinning the Vision

1. To manage the Council's property assets as a corporate resource to meet current and future customer and service needs.
2. To collaborate with services to plan for provision of the appropriate property to deliver the Council's outcomes.
3. To manage and maintain our property effectively and efficiently, maximising financial return and commercial opportunities.
4. To ensure our current and future estate is as sustainable as possible in its design, construction and operation to meet our Net Zero Estate 2030 plan.
5. To use land and buildings to enable development and growth together with supporting local community needs.
6. To actively work and collaborate with partners to provide benefits for service delivery and secure efficiencies for the benefit of Essex taxpayers.

How we will implement those principles:

- 1. To manage the Council's property assets as a corporate resource to meet current and future customer and service needs.**
 - Managing the property assets through established Corporate Landlord protocols
 - Clear corporate decision making and challenge on all property matters
 - Property budgets managed corporately to prioritise key investment needs.
 - Property is integrated with other resources with coordinated planning for future requirements.
 - Achieving an effective balance between corporate and service priorities.
 - Capital Projects are prioritised and managed efficiently and effectively to support the Council's Strategic Aims.
- 2. To collaborate with services to plan for provision of the appropriate property to deliver the Council's outcomes.**
 - Working with services to understand their longer-term requirements to plan for the future.
 - Adopting different geographies to assist asset reviews as part of planning service delivery and community shaping.
 - Making our property accessible and inclusive for all our users and visitors.
 - Challenging the use of assets including repurposing or disposal where appropriate.
 - Seeking efficiencies in occupancy and utilisation and introducing new ways of working.

- 3. To manage and maintain our property effectively and efficiently, together with maximising financial return and commercial opportunities.**
 - Ensuring property is properly managed and maintained within budgetary constraints.
 - Ensuring property is suitable and sufficient for service delivery.
 - Ensuring property is secure and safe for users and visitors.
 - Ensuring our property meets statutory health and safety requirements.
 - Challenging the cost of property activities to drive performance improvement.
 - Improving the quality of property data and use of a new enhanced database.
 - Balancing financial return and commercial opportunities against social objectives.

- 4. To ensure our current property and future estate is as sustainable as possible in design, construction and operation to meet our Net Zero Estate 2030 plan.**
 - Having flexibility in our buildings to facilitate future changes in working practices
 - Taking a 'fabric first' approach ensuring our properties are as efficient as possible prior to installing low energy technology.
 - Using whole life considerations in our business cases for construction projects reducing energy and water consumption and CO2 emissions.
 - Using renewable energy where appropriate.
 - Minimising waste in our construction projects.

- 5. To use land and buildings to stimulate development and growth together with supporting local community needs.**
 - Using existing assets to stimulate and support regeneration and inward investment.
 - Targeting investment and acquisition of assets for regeneration and to create local employment and training opportunities.
 - Managing the new Essex Renewal Fund portfolio; effectively balancing regeneration and economic benefits, job creation, income generation and the Council's ambition for net zero carbon development to achieve a financially self-sustaining fund.
 - Identifying potential sites which could be brought forward for use either by Essex Housing LLP or for employment development.
 - Using our land and buildings to strengthen community resilience and wellbeing.

- 6. To actively work and collaborate with partners to provide benefits for service delivery and secure efficiencies.**
 - Working with partners and the third sector to achieve co-location and joint service delivery.
 - Working to support the development of the NHS Integrated Social Care system infrastructure.
 - Supporting the One Public Estate programme.
 - Working with Anchor Institutions.
 - Supporting District Councils on Local Plans.
 - Working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

Financial Strategy

The Everyone's Essex Annual Plan 2022-23 sets out the Council's Financial Strategy for the period from 2022 to 2026.

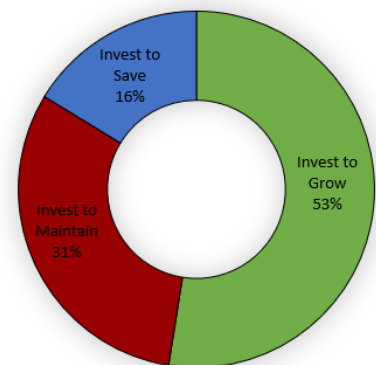
The Council's gross revenue budget (including schools) for 2022-2023 is £2.082 billion which after grants and income amounts to a net revenue budget of £1.08 billion. Whilst this budget is balanced there are challenges in balancing future years budgets. The funding gap for 2023-2024 is currently £24 million increasing to £119 million in 2025-2026.

Against this backdrop the Council has achieved savings of £222 million since 2018 with a further £36 million of planned savings to be achieved in 2022-2023. Those savings include the transformation of community care for older people and more efficient use of our buildings. Further savings of £14 million are already identified for 2023-2026.

There will be a continuing focus on commercialisation, effective contract management and working with partners to secure value for money in delivering our strategic aims and priorities.

The capital programme for 2022-2023 is £284 million.

- **Invest to Maintain** totals £89m and includes areas where the Council is maintaining (but extending the life of) its current assets, for example, highways and the flood programme.
- **Invest to Save / Generate Return** totals £46m and includes areas where the Council is investing to generate a return or saving, for example, accommodation for older people with disabilities, LED lighting and the Essex Housing Programme.
- **Invest to Grow** totals £149m and includes areas where the Council is expanding its capacity, for example, economic growth schemes in infrastructure and highways, creating new school places to meet additional demand from demographic changes, new housing developments and enhancing skills in key growth areas.



Revenue and Capital budgets for Property for 2022-2023

The net revenue budget for property in 2022-2023 is £14.364 million, excluding the schools' estate, and the capitalised maintenance allocation is £5 million.

The approved capital programme for 2022/23 and aspirational programme for future years to 2026 is shown in the table below:

Capital programme for property related schemes (Excludes Highways and Transport)		2022/3	2023/4	2024/5	2025/6
Portfolio	Scheme	£000	(aspirational) £000	(aspirational) £000	(aspirational) £000
Adult Social Care and Health	Independent Living - Older People	452	417	7	76
	Independent Living - Adults with complex needs	304	2196	3200	3200
	Bridgemarsh	200			
Children's Services & Early Years	Early Years	737	5	5	5
	Children with Disabilities	200	200	200	200
	Adaptations	1077	450	450	450
Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance	Changing Places	100	100	100	100
Devolution, Arts, Heritage and Culture	Country Parks Maintenance	60			
Economic Renewal Infrastructure and Planning	Economic Growth Fund	6538	3500	3500	500
	Essex Housing Programme	28474	36211	28029	6434
	Harlow Investment Fund	5000			
	Jaywick Market & Commercial Space	1682			
	Local Space Cluster Warehouse	186			
	Localities	2337	12328	8315	
	Loughton Library	159	8965	2694	
	Moulsham Lodge (Essex Housing scheme)	20	13		
	Primrose Meadow (Essex Housing scheme)	106	12	8	205
	Shenfield Library	2245	1012		
	St Peter's Independent Living - Older people	282	7	7	7
Westfield (Essex Housing scheme)	22	4	6	6	
Education excellence, lifelong learning and Employability	Basic need schemes	27856	53394	38147	40326
	Schools Capitalised Building Maintenance	6400	6400	6400	6400
	Special schools including PRU	18591	23061	3218	
	Temporary Accommodation and Relocatable Replacem	6735	3500	3500	3500
	Schools Feasibilities	250	200	200	200
Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs	Capitalised Building maintenance (Non schools estate)	5000	5000	5000	5000
	Salix Grant Projects	750	750	750	750
Leader	ECC Estate Energy Storage	65			
	LoCase II (public estate)	215			

(Source: Everyone's Essex Annual Plan 2022-2023)

Estate Commercialisation

The portfolio has secured capital receipts of £107 million over the last ten years. This is the result of a traditional approach to releasing surplus assets to reduce costs and generate capital receipts. One of the effects has been the loss of assets to enable longer term opportunities for growth or generating additional revenue income through repurposing existing buildings.

Whilst there will still be a case for disposal of assets, the portfolio offers opportunities to contribute to the commitments underpinning the Everyone's Essex strategic themes through either retention and repurposing or acquisition of land and property. Examples of this are shown in the table below.

Strategic Priority	Commitment	Commercialisation example	Benefits
Strong Inclusive Economy	Green growth	Acquisition of building to support innovation and improved productivity in green industries. The Essex Renewal Fund would be the enabler for this acquisition.	Increased choice of high-quality business accommodation for Essex businesses, improved productivity, job creation, business and economic growth Seeding new SME's and technology spin offs. Revenue income from letting the new building
High Quality Environment	Net Zero	Identifying opportunities for wind and solar generation and energy storage on ECC and partner sites.	Revenue income from letting generation and energy storage sites. Reduced carbon emissions
Health, Well-being and Independence for all ages	Promoting independence	Collaborating with Essex Housing and other partners or third-party providers to create opportunities for senior living and extra care accommodation within the County.	Capital receipt or rental income depending on model of provision and treatment of property asset. Improved health and well-being outcomes.
A good place for Children and Families to grow	Education outcomes	Provision of site and investment for higher education provider.	Capital receipt or rental income depending on model of provision and treatment of property asset. Improved educational attainment and skills

			levels, higher economic productivity, increased household incomes, reduced deprivation.
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Additional revenue opportunities include advertising and filming rights, minerals, landfill mining, natural capital, digital infrastructure and open storage linked to emerging demand from the logistics industry. These opportunities will be reviewed in tandem with the Commercial and Income Generation Board.

How we manage our property portfolio – the Corporate Landlord model

As the Council seeks to implement the Everyone's Essex plan and achieve further revenue savings, our Corporate Landlord approach to holding and managing our assets becomes even more relevant and applicable to our property portfolio.

The County Council holds and manages its property assets in a Corporate Landlord model, which was approved in 2011. The guiding 'Rules of Engagement' to the model have underpinned the Council's previous property transformation activity. They are also reflected in the principles that we will use to achieve the Property Portfolio Objectives.

Using the Corporate Landlord model enables an overview to be held of the existing asset portfolio and future service needs and requirements. It also enables a co-ordinated approach to investment and implementation of internal or external policy changes.

This model allows for the most efficient management and maintenance of the portfolio through adopting a 'whole Council' approach, maximising the available revenue and capital spend on assets and ensuring that we meet our statutory health and safety obligations. We also need to ensure our buildings are accessible and inclusive for all our visitors and users. It also aligns with the Council's Governance arrangements in terms of decision making.

Challenging the use and retention of our property will be critical to our policy and savings objectives. This approach is already being implemented as part of the Ways of Working programme. It will also be a key part of any service transformation activity that is implemented across the Council. This approach will balance our priorities with service needs, whilst recognising our property assets are a finite resource.

Corporate Landlord – property management and maintenance

The day-to-day maintenance and management of the portfolio is carried out by MITIE and their sub-contractor Lambert Smith Hampton, under a contract.

The Director of Performance, Investment and Delivery, through the Heads of Infrastructure Delivery and Property, is the commissioner for the services provided under the contract.

The Facilities Management team within Infrastructure Delivery act as interface with MITIE for the hard and soft facilities management, including maintenance, of the portfolio. Similarly the day-to-day acquisition, management and disposal of property is co-ordinated by the Essex Property team and they commission the appropriate advice and service from Lambert Smith Hampton and deal with the necessary governance.

Property Performance and Data

A key component of an effective Corporate Landlord model is to have timely access to ownership information and data showing the performance of the property portfolio.

Ownership data includes the title to the property, whether freehold or leasehold, landlord or tenant information, rents received or paid and the capital accounting valuation. The performance data includes its overall condition and suitability, statutory compliance, energy and water consumption and efficiency together with other holding costs.

Ideally this information should be held in one system with the ability to generate reports and other performance information. This can be used to support key performance indicators, targeted investment in under-performing properties and for asset reviews.

Currently the Council's data is held in several locations on different software packages or programmes, some managed and owned by MITIE and Lambert Smith Hampton, with varying degrees of access by the commissioners.

The ownership of that system and the data within should lie with the Council but the management and maintenance of the data can remain with MITIE and Lambert Smith Hampton.

To be an effective Corporate Landlord the integration of that data into one system together with full access to the data by the commissioners is a priority action.

Property performance indicators can be used to assess performance of the portfolio over periods of time and provide useful comparator information with other local authority and partner portfolios. It is proposed to use the former NaPPMI (National Property Performance Management Initiative) indicators and some other commonly adopted indicators to support the assessment and performance management of the portfolio.

A table of draft performance indicators is shown below. It is proposed to introduce a set of these indicators for the 2022/23 financial year.

PROPOSED PROPERTY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	
PI 1 ASSET CONDITION AND MAINTENANCE	
PI 1A	% of GIFA in condition A - D
PI 1Bi	Required maintenance by cost expressed as a total in each priority level 1-3
PI 1Bii	Required maintenance by cost expressed as a % in each priority level 1-3
PI 1Biii	Total estimated cost of required maintenance
PI 1 Biv	Required maintenance by cost expressed as the total overall cost per sq.m GIFA
PI 1 C	The total annual % change in required maintenance over the previous year
PI 1 Di	Total annual spend on maintenance
PI 1 Dii	Total annual spend on maintenance per sq.m GIFA
PI 1 Diii	% split of total maintenance spend between planned and responsive
PI 2 ENERGY AND WATER CONSUMPTION AND CO2 EMISSION INDICATORS	
PI 2Ai	Annual energy costs in £/sq.m GIFA
PI 2Aii	Annual energy consumption in kw/h per sq.m GIFA
PI 2Bi	Annual water costs in £/sq.m GIFA
PI 2Bii	Annual water consumption in cu.m per sq.m GIFA
PI 2C	Annual CO2 emissions (CO2E) in tonnes per sq.m GIFA
PI 2D	Annual overall change in CO2E from property
PI 3 SUITABILITY INDICATORS	
PI 3A	% properties surveyed graded 'Good' or 'Satisfactory'.
PI 4 SUFFICIENCY (CAPACITY & UTILISATION) INDICATORS	
PI 4 Ai	The average floorspace (NIA) per workstation in offices
PI 4 Aii	The annual property running costs per workstation in offices
PI 5 PROPERTY RUNNING COSTS	
PI 5A	The gross property running costs of the operational estate as a % of the gross revenue budget
PI 5B	The gross property running costs per sq.m GIFA
PI 6 PROJECT COST AND TIME	
PI 6A	% of projects where the actual contract period is less than 5% above the original contract period
PI 6B	% of projects where the final cost is less than 5% above the original contract sum
ADDITIONAL INDICATORS	
PI 7 ACCESSIBILITY	
PI7A	% of publically accessible buildings with accessibility audits
PI7B	% of publically accessible buildings that are Equalities Act 2010 compliant
EXISTING MITIE/LSH CONTRACT INDICATORS	
KPI08	Rent collection - %value of total rent roll collected within 30 days
KPI09	Property inspections - % of Annual property inspections undertaken

Working with partners

An underlying theme of the 'Everyone's Essex' organisation plan is Service Excellence. A clear commitment to excellent value for money public services is supported by the intention to work with partners to join up services and to support the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

Our property portfolios are a key element of improving service delivery and we already work closely with our Borough, City and District colleagues on opportunities for co-location and consolidation of services and properties, together with regeneration opportunities. The recent Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund initiatives, together with the Levelling Up Priority Areas, are enabling a review of opportunities and assets across the County to explore the potential for future projects and bids to new and existing funding programmes.

Our NHS partner bodies across the County are reshaping into three Integrated Care Systems (ICS). These are bringing the providers of health and social care functions under one organisational structure. The proposed Essex ICS' are Hertfordshire and West Essex, Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership and Suffolk and North East Essex. These will combine NHS, local government and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) resources to provide enhanced access to care and support to improve the health of all residents in the County.

From an Estates perspective we are engaged with the Estates workstreams across the three ICS' and supporting the development of their strategies and plans.

The Greater Essex One Public Estate Partnership has been successful in identifying opportunities for the release of surplus assets and their development for housing and other uses. The Partnership will continue to add value in our collaboration work with partners.

Ways of Working – WoW programme

As part of our Ways of Working programme we will be reconfiguring our core office estate across the County. The Council has already reduced its office portfolio from 52 to 6 core offices and introduced agile working practices.

Building on those changes the Council is implementing a new workstyle programme, Ways of Working.

The key objectives of the Ways of Working programme that relate to our offices are:

- re-configuring our workspaces to enable employees to better adopt their hybrid working styles
- making our buildings and the way we work more efficient, reducing waste and moving to digital solutions where possible
- providing and testing technology that will improve and support us to work in a hybrid way

The review of the core offices has identified the opportunity to reconfigure the accommodation in Goodman House, Harlow; Ely House, Basildon; Magnet House, Clacton and County Hall in Chelmsford. The review of Essex House and Stanwell House in Colchester has highlighted the opportunity to consolidate our accommodation requirements in the town.

In reconfiguring our offices we will ensure that the accommodation is accessible and inclusive for all our users and visitors.

The accompanying Action Plan to the Property Strategy includes the next stages of implementing the office accommodation review as part of the Ways of Working programme.

Net Zero Estate 2030

In November 2021 the Council agreed an action plan in response to the Essex Climate Change Commission report 'Net-Zero Making Essex Carbon Neutral'. The Council's land and property assets are key enablers for the action plan and their contribution is summarised in the table below.

Action Plan objective	ECC assets	Commentary
Land Use and Green Infrastructure		
Flood Resilience – Capital Flood Programme and Climate Resilience Programme	ECC land and property assets on the coast and in areas subject to flooding events. These assets may provide protection to third party land and property.	ECC and the Environment Agency (EA) are working on coastal flood defence issues. Coastal flooding risk is identified in the Corporate Risk Register.
Essex Forest Initiative	ECC owned amenity or low-grade agricultural land that can be planted.	Cressing Temple Barns has been planted with 5595 trees.
Building With Nature	ECC land that is proposed for future development.	Where land is promoted for future development, the promoter will be required to incorporate the Green Infrastructure Strategy within their proposals
Water Strategy	ECC land that is proposed for future development and existing properties where water is used.	Where land is promoted for future development, the promoter will be required to incorporate the Water Strategy within their proposals. Water consumption will be monitored, where metered, and water saving devices installed in ECC operational properties.
Energy		
Buying renewable energy	ECC operational land and buildings.	Using our purchasing power to procure electricity from renewable sources
Generating renewable energy on the public estate	ECC land and buildings.	Incorporating solar and wind generation capacity, including panels, canopies, and small turbines, within new buildings and retrofit of existing buildings and other assets. Assessment and use of amenity or low-grade agricultural land for suitability for solar and wind generation and battery storage.
Renewables Policy	ECC land and buildings.	Enabling opportunities through estate commercialisation for

		solar, wind, bioenergy, hydrogen, and energy storage.
Built Environment		
Retrofit Schools	ECC controlled schools.	Continue the smart meter roll out, installation of solar panels on school buildings and a further programme of reglazing. Create a team of School Energy Surveyors to review utility consumption data and survey schools to identify low carbon investment opportunities and assist in the journey to Net Zero operation
Retrofit ECC core estate	ECC owned and leased buildings.	Develop a plan for the transition to Net Zero for all ECC buildings utilising condition and energy survey data. Implement retrofit projects on a “fabric first” basis to ensure maximum efficiency of the base building ahead of employing renewables generation and decarbonisation technology
Essex Housing Carbon Zero Housing pilot	ECC land and buildings proposed to be transferred to Essex Housing LLP.	Land transfers to Essex Housing LLP take into account the additional costs of exceeding legal requirements for sustainable construction, achieving ‘A’ EPC ratings and using new technologies and materials to achieve Net Zero housing schemes.
New Schools Net Zero	ECC schools.	Pilot schemes to determine the most effective design solutions for net zero school buildings. All new school buildings to be designed to ‘A+’ EPC rating.
Garden Communities	ECC land that is proposed for future development.	Where land is promoted for future development, the promoter will be required to incorporate net zero carbon technologies in all buildings, sustainable drainage, green infrastructure gain, biodiversity net gain and localised energy solutions.
Transport		

Electric Vehicle Charging Network	ECC operational land and buildings.	Inclusion of Electric Vehicle Charging points at all ECC operational sites and identify further estate commercialisation opportunities.
Waste		
New Joint Municipal Waste Strategy	ECC operational land and buildings.	Property and Waste colleagues are collaborating on a review of existing sites and future requirements.

As Corporate Landlord we are developing a plan to achieve a Net Zero Estate by 2030. As part of that plan, we are also working on ensuring our compliance with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.

The Infrastructure Delivery & FM team are currently working to compile a programme of necessary works to deliver Net Zero across the ECC estate. This will be based on Energy survey data, establishing the interventions required at each building on a ‘fabric first’ approach. ‘Fabric first’ means improving building efficiency ahead of installing renewable generation equipment or low carbon heating. It is addressing the heat loss and electrical demand of a building through improved insulation and air tightness alongside protection from excess heat in summer to prevent the need for mechanical cooling.

Having good data on our buildings is essential and we can gather this using ½ hourly smart meter data alongside data provided by Building Management Systems (BMS). This will identify “easy win” improvements that will be implemented as soon as possible alongside the more challenging and higher cost projects.

Having good data and business cases “on the shelf” allows for improved access to grant funding opportunities which will be essential in supplementing ECC’s own investment in the delivery of its Net Zero ambitions. The programme will be intrinsically linked to the capital maintenance programme to ensure that equipment, like boilers, is replaced with more efficient solutions at the point of lifecycle replacement.

A programme-based approach will be adopted to ensure best value for money is achieved, allowing projects of a similar nature across the estate to be batched and providing a clear pipeline of work over several years. This approach also gives confidence to the market of ECC’s intention to deliver on this goal and the level of investment required which will bring with it significant opportunity for green growth across Essex. We will also seek to maximise these opportunities for the benefit of Essex businesses through our procurement activity.

Whilst every effort will be taken to reduce the core estate carbon footprint to the lowest levels, the age and nature of the buildings mean that achievement of this goal through physical and behavioural interventions is unlikely in some cases. A degree of “offsetting” will therefore be required to mitigate any remaining emissions which can be delivered through excess renewables generation at other sites or tree planting for example.

Compliance with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES)

The current Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) require us to ensure that a minimum EPC rating of E applies to all properties that are the subject of new lettings. From 1 April 2023 any property that is the subject to an existing tenancy must have a minimum EPC rating of E.

There are further changes to the MEES that will require all commercial buildings to have an EPC rating of B by 2030. There are two compliance periods to enable the transition to the B rating. The first will require all buildings to hold an EPC certificate by 1 April 2025 and to hold an EPC rating of C by 1st April 2027. The second will require a building to either hold an EPC rating of B on 1st April 2028 or works to be put in hand to ensure that it holds an EPC rating of B by 1st April 2030.

An assessment of buildings which fall into these criteria that was carried out in August 2021 suggests that 56% (73 buildings) will require further work to meet the 1st April 2027 compliance point and 94% (121 buildings) will require further work to meet the 1st April 2030 compliance point.

Essex Housing and Essex Housing Development LLP

Established in 2016, Essex Housing is ECC's in-house residential development arm which works with public sector partners across Essex. Essex Housing's purpose is to help to address housing need throughout the county by building high quality affordable, specialist and private homes. In February 2021 it started to operate partly via Essex Housing Development LLP.

Essex Housing supports the strategic aims of Everyone's Essex by delivering more new homes and communities as part of ECC's ambition for 'a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy'. Essex Housing also contributes to the commitment towards 'future growth and investment' by maximising the impact of public sector spend within the county by generating surpluses for reinvestment, including into ECC services, as well as creating new opportunities to achieve social value through development.

Essex Housing has now established a significant development programme that will deliver quality, sustainable homes and improved places to live. Measures that contribute to carbon reduction, such as electric car charging points, cycle storage, photovoltaic panels, high levels of insulation to improve efficiency and air source heat pumps are included within all schemes.

Residential units at the next two schemes to be developed, Purford Green and Shenfield Library, are designed to achieve an EPC 'A' rating and a carbon neutral pilot scheme is also underway at Hargraves House, Chelmsford.

Essex Housing – Key Facts:

- Essex Housing has successfully developed a range of schemes across the County, with an approved pipeline of sites to enable the construction of 996 homes
- Completed construction of 78 units with a GDV of £24m.
- 74 of these units have been sold or have sales agreed (the remaining 4 units are being marketed for sale)
- 26% of the completed units are specialist units for people with learning disabilities which are delivering annual revenue savings to social care of £428,000.
- Approved business cases for a further 996 units of which 50% are specialist or affordable.
- 345 units have planning permission and a further 26 are awaiting determination.
- The GDV of the current programme is c.£300m (excluding units already delivered)
- Over £4m of capital grant funding has been secured to overcome abnormal costs existing on Essex Housing schemes

Essex Renewal Fund (ERF)

As part of the Council's commitments to levelling up and enabling further economic growth in the County an Essex Renewal Fund is being established.

Over the next 20 years, the Fund aims to invest over £100m, support 1,000 jobs, and add £200m to the Essex economy. This will be achieved through land and property projects that the market either wouldn't deliver or may not deliver to such high standards.

The Fund will access the Council's Commercial Investment in Essex Places reserve as well as securing central government grant funding, attracting private sector funding and revolving its own rental income and capital receipts.

The Fund will have a catalytic impact beyond the projects that it supports directly by building confidence in Essex places and property markets.

The Fund is to be launched in 2022, with procurement and recruitment activity to follow the Cabinet Decision to approve the Fund in April 2022.

Examples of development or refurbishment projects proposed to be undertaken by the Fund:

- Acquiring and repurposing an existing building to safeguard jobs in a town centre
- Delivering new R&D / high-tech floorspace to support higher productivity employment
- Providing industrial 'Grow-on Space' for businesses that have outgrown their initial accommodation
- Kick-starting commercial development in a new Garden Community

Examples of development land projects proposed to be undertaken by the Fund:

- Master planning to deliver high-quality placemaking
- Delivery of infrastructure / enabling works to resolve market failure
- Disposing to private sector for onward delivery of new homes, with conditions to achieve zero carbon / use off-site manufacture

The Fund may also hold income generating assets, increasing 'ballast' over time and generating revenue to be reinvested.

Whilst the Fund will be led and managed within the Council, with enhanced internal capacity and capability, there will also be independent specialist advice provided to support the selection, delivery, operation and maintenance and disposal of individual projects. Each project will be subject to its own business case.

Acquired assets will form part of the Council's property portfolio. In accord with Corporate Landlord principles the property team will be involved in the scrutiny and assessment of acquisitions and enable the necessary property and facilities management for those assets.

Maintenance of the Portfolio

A £5 million per annum capital budget is currently in place for the capital maintenance of the core estate (excluding schools). Alongside this there is a £750,000 per annum low carbon budget which acts to supplement the maintenance budget and facilitate the delivery of enhanced solutions to achieve Net Zero standards.

Capital maintenance is undertaken on a programme-based approach determined from stock condition information and reporting from building users / managers. The programme is set on a priority basis with due consideration given to the future of the site as part of the investment decision.

The programme is determined by ECC FM and Property Teams and is delivered under the Mitie contract. By undertaking planned maintenance based on condition, ECC significantly reduces the risk of building failure and unplanned closure which can have a detrimental impact on the business.

Condition surveys were undertaken across the Estate in 2015 and the current backlog maintenance figure is estimated at £39.7 million between the 2021/22 and 2030/31 financial years, which is required in addition to the annual £5m currently budgeted for. A limited condition survey programme has been undertaken in 2020 and 2021 and a further programme is to be agreed with MITIE.

Assessment of the condition and cost information will be used as part of the asset review process together with the proposed property performance indicators. This will ensure there are clear links between the continuing suitability and retention of property and the annual maintenance and Net Zero Estate 2030 plans.

Engagement with communities and Levelling Up priority areas

The Council has a Community Asset Transfer policy, which has been in place since 2014. Whilst the scheme hasn't been used in recent years it enables groups to acquire assets to support the well-being and vitality of local communities.

The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) forms an integral part of the Council's approach to delivering services and support to local communities. As further opportunities arise for collaborative working the Council will encourage the use of Council premises by the sector.

As part of the Everyone's Essex strategy six priority localities have been selected as part of the Levelling Up programme. The priority localities are shown in the table below:

Priority Locality	Areas of interest
Tendring	Clacton and Jaywick; Harwich and Dovercourt
Harlow	Harlow Investment Fund and employment and growth sites
Colchester	St Botolph's, Greenstead
Basildon	Safe and Sound Estates programme: Felmores, Lee Chapel and Five Links estates
Castle Point	Canvey Island Town Centre and Sea Front
Rural Braintree	Digital connectivity, access to employment and community well being across the District

In each of these localities there are a range of assets held by the County Council together with partners that can contribute to growth and regeneration schemes. The reviews of assets and subsequent project development will build on initial work that has been undertaken by Economic Growth and Localities teams.

Service Transformation

Our property assets assist in enabling transformational change in services delivered by both the Council and partners. Besides the Ways of Working activity referred to elsewhere in the strategy the following services are relying on property assets to support their transformation.

Adult Community Learning (ACL Essex)

The Adult Community Learning service currently operates from 9 main centres which offer a wide range of adult learning courses, together with childcare settings in 4 of the centres. The service also delivers courses from a wide range of other locations as well as having a significant 'online' presence.

The service is developing a new strategy, which will include relocation and further sharing of premises with other services and partners. As part of that strategy a refresh of the Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) is being undertaken.

ECC Day Care assets

The ECC Adult Social Care commissioners source services from Essex Cares Limited for Learning Disabilities and Autism and Older People. Those services are provided from a range of properties across the County. A review of the assets will be carried out in parallel with the development of the commissioners' strategy for their service procurement.

Essex Cares Limited is a wholly owned Essex County Council company that provides social care services in Essex, London and West Sussex. ECL has a property strategy for the period 2021-2026 and occupies a mixture of freehold, leasehold and licenced accommodation.

In their Medium-Term Business Plan ECL recognise the need to transform and realign the properties that they occupy to deliver services in the required locations and to maintain high quality service standards. ECL also wish to move to longer term leases for properties that will receive investment or form part of their longer-term service offer.

As part of the Action Plan there will be a review of both the ECC day care property holdings and the ACL Essex property requirements as there are opportunities for collaboration and release of assets currently used by both organisations.

Waste Management and Operations

The Waste Operations service is transferring services into the Council from 1st April 2022. The service currently has twenty-one recycling centres and five transfer stations. The service is being supported in finding a suitable location for a vehicle operating base to replace the current contractor's facility.

A refresh of the Service Asset Management Plan will be undertaken to identify any opportunities for rationalisation of sites.

Libraries

The Library Service has prepared a new plan, Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026, which looks to use the 74 libraries in the County to support improvements in literacy, the library buildings and the resilience and well-being of local communities.

As part of the plan the aim is to maximise the use of each library to enable colocation with partners, to increase the usage of meeting rooms and spaces and widen access by their local communities.

Both enhancements to existing buildings through installing LED lighting and alternative heating systems, together with further opportunities for relocation within new developments are planned.

The Service Asset Management Plan for Libraries will be updated as part of the implementation of the Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026 plan.

Countryside, Heritage and Green Space Assets

The Council holds a number of heritage and outdoor assets including Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Sites of Scientific Interest. Some of those may have more than one designation and may also be located in the Green Belt. Additionally sites will also have appropriate designations within Local Plan proposals maps and applicable policies.

A review of these assets is currently being undertaken to clarify current management and maintenance responsibilities together with options for their future retention or, in limited cases, release. Retention options also include funding sources, such as Countryside Stewardship, to help underpin longer term responsibilities or new operating vehicles.

There are some schools and their playing fields which are either designated as Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments and these are excluded from the review.

This review is included within the Property Strategy Action Plan as it also links to commercialisation opportunities for the assets.

Children's Services – Looked after Children and Young People

The Department for Education as part of a series of reforms to improve the standards in children's social care, has placed restrictions on Local Authorities placing under 16s in unregulated accommodation from 9 September 2021. Similar restrictions prohibiting the use of unregulated accommodation for young people up to the age of 18 are expected in 2023.

ECC have previously, when sourcing regulated placements for Children and Young People with highly complex and challenging needs, used short-term unregulated settings as a temporary alternative, when regulated provision is unavailable.

Currently the required accommodation is sourced outside of Essex at significant cost and there is limited provision of regulated provision. In order to reduce those costs and ensure that provision is available in Essex, the Council is looking to either repurpose existing Council owned residential properties or acquire new properties, to be managed by a specialist care provider.

The first two properties have been sourced from within the ECC estate and a programme to secure planning permission for a change of use and conversion work is being implemented.

Gypsy & Traveller sites

The Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU) is a partnership of Essex County Council, local councils, Essex Fire and Rescue Service and Essex Police. ECTU support Gypsies and Travellers to access services, including: supporting children into school and further education; health services; site and home fire safety visits. ECTU also manages Unauthorised Encampments on partner land.

ECTU manages 12 Essex County Council sites and they are located in the following Local Planning Authority areas: Basildon, Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon and Uttlesford. 11 of the sites are owned freehold by ECC and 1 is held on a lease.

Whilst the County Council has no formal obligation to provide sites, it has day to day responsibilities to manage and maintain its existing provision, including statutory compliance and consideration will need to be given to capital investment in the sites. The Property Team will support ECTU in considering future options for the provision of gypsy and traveller accommodation by the County Council.

Planning for Change - Action Plans

Strategic Actions for the ECC Estate

Action No.	Action	Description	Portfolio Objective	Timeline			Accountability	Resources
				2022/3	2023/4	2024/5		
1	Adoption of ECC Property Strategy 2022-2025	Adoption of the Property Strategy	All	Implemented from 1 April 2022			Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and External
2	Ways of Working programme – offices	Implementation of the plans for the core office estate	All	Ely House, Goodman House, Magnet House County Hall	County Hall, Essex House, Stanwell House	County Hall	Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and External
3	Achieving a Net Zero Estate by 2030	Implementation of plans to achieve a Net Zero Estate by 2030	1, 3 and 7	Essex Records Office, Goodman House, Witham ACL and Great Notley Country Park converted to Air Source Heat Pump technology. Programme developed for the interventions required at remaining sites in the portfolio.	Programme delivery commences prioritising those sites with greatest impact. Grant funding opportunities sought with developed business cases for low carbon projects. 'Fabric First' approach followed where possible.	Programme delivery continues ensuring secure future for sites ahead of investment decisions being taken. Value for money achieved through batching and development of ECC low carbon framework.	Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and External

4	Identify and implement commercialisation opportunities across the Estate	Working with the Commercial and Income Generation Board to secure new income generation and commercialisation opportunities from the Estate	All	New opportunities identified and implemented	Further Opportunities Identified and implemented	Further Opportunities Identified and implemented	Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and External
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Operational Actions for the ECC Estate

Action No.	Action	Description	Portfolio Objective	Timeline			Accountability	Resources
				2022/3	2023/4	2024/5		
1	ACL Service review	Provide property advice and support to ACL service review, including co-location opportunities with ECL and other services	1,2,3,5,6,7	Service review concluded and property proposals implemented			Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and external
2	ECC Day Care Asset Review	Undertake asset review of ECC Day Care assets	All	Asset review concluded and outcomes being implemented	Asset review outcomes being implemented		Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and external
3	Waste Management and operations asset review	Provide support to preparation of a new Waste Strategy and review of the assets following transfer into ECC	1,2,4,6,7	Asset review commenced	Asset review concluded and outcomes implemented		Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and external

		from contractor on 1 April 2022						
4	Everyone's Libraries Service 2022-2026	Provide property advice and support for projects across the Library portfolio as part of the new strategy	All	Action plan developed and agreed. Projects implemented	Action plan and project implementation	Action plan and project implementation	Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and external
5	Countryside, Heritage and Green Space Assets	Provide support to review of assets and development of action plan, including, retention and commercialisation or release	All	Development and implementation of action plan for retention and release options	Implementation of retention or release options		Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and external
6	Property data and performance management information review	Review of existing data sources and locations. Identify options and implement improvement plan	1,3,4,7	Review of existing data against requirements. Options appraisal and prepare improvement plan	Implement actions from agreed improvement plan		Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and external
7	Targeted asset reviews in Localities or Priority Levelling Up areas	Review of assets, in localities to support Levelling Up projects. Asset reviews may be single service or cross-cutting or with partners, including the Greater Essex OPE programme	All	Asset reviews in each locality and support to individual projects	Implement projects in each locality	Implement projects in each locality	Executive Director of Economy, Investment and Public Health	Internal and external

Public Sector Equality Duty

Essex County Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty which requires us in the exercise of our functions to have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Implementing a corporate approach to property will increase our oversight of the potential impact of decisions on citizens and staff with protected characteristics, socio-economic inequality, and sources of inequality that are not specifically covered by the Equality Act. This will allow us to embed analysis of equality impact into property policy and strategy development, so decisions are made based on the deepest possible understanding of their implications for equality and inclusion.