

Essex Caring Communities Commission

Membership and Terms of Reference

Background

At a meeting of the Essex County Council in May 2024, the Leader announced his intention to create a Caring Communities Commission. He said:

'The ambition of the Commission is to radically transform outcomes for our residents while addressing the demand on public services.

'The Commission will determine which dimensions to focus on to support its work - but we want it to both influence government thinking while effecting change here in Essex. We want to take the future of care and shape it - with the voice of the front line and the experience of the resident.

'I see this as a cross-party Commission. It will work alongside the Council toward the end goal of a diverse care market of professionals, with sought after careers promoting health and independence for our residents. It will work towards an innovative system, using cutting edge technology to promote early help and prevention, constantly driving towards improvement.'

Purpose

The public sector in Essex is facing a range of challenges as the ongoing impacts and consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and the recent economic challenges put individuals, families, and communities under enormous pressures on a day-to-day basis which directly impacts on their long-term health and wellbeing.

These challenges, alongside funding models and national policy which has not yet recognised the risks to the public sector, require new ways of thinking; re-shaping public service to deliver solutions which recognise the lived-experience and the aims of Essex County Council to offer everyone the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

We cannot continue to respond to social care demands as we currently are. And we cannot rely on others to find solutions for us. Through a new Caring Communities Commission, we will transform how we respond to the new challenges facing health services and social care in Essex, looking widely across the challenges facing public services.

The Commission's first report is due in March 2025. This will be to explore local and community-based solutions; exploring the impacts and role of early intervention and prevention, and the social contract between the citizen and the state to respond to social care pressures.

The Commission will determine which dimensions to focus on to support its work in the longer term, but is expected to consult the Leader of the Council in making this determination.

Essex County Council Cabinet will consider all the Commission's recommendations and make decisions, having regard to the costs and benefits of implementing them to the council and the communities it serves.

Membership

The Commission membership will comprise of appointed commissioners as follows:

1. Councillor Beverley Egan (until May 2025) – Cllr Egan will Chair the Commission
2. Two councillors from the majority party nominated by the leader of the majority group
3. One councillor from each opposition group, nominated by the leader of the group.
4. Other Commissioners appointed by the Director, Policy on the advice of the Chair, drawn from:
 - a. Academics
 - b. Health experts
 - c. Community organisations

Role of Commissioners

Commissioners will support the Chair in:

- a) Shaping the Commission's work programme and the topics to be considered
- b) Reviewing the evidence and ideas brought before the Commission
- c) Shaping the Commission's recommendations
- d) Reviewing and inputting to the Commission's reports
- e) Championing the work of the Commission

It is anticipated that Commissioners will have:

- a) Relevant experience or expertise in the commission's area of work
- b) Availability and enthusiasm to carry out the tasks of a commissioner (as described above)
- c) Ability to contribute new perspectives and ideas
- d) Ability to work collaboratively as part of a team under the leadership of the Chair

Support for the Commission

The Commission will be supported by a decided officer recruited for the duration of the Commission .

The Council may commission an external organisation to provide the Commission with external policy advice.

The Commission can, and is expected to, seek advice from experts (including those with lived experience), professionals, observers and forums such as the Children in Care and Leaving Care Council, Essex Family Forum and others to inform their activities.

Meeting Frequency and Format

We anticipate the first meeting will be held in September 2024 and thereafter the commission would look to meet every 4-5 weeks. There will be flexibility in terms of how meetings are held to ensure effective participation.

Advisory status

The Commission is an advisory body and has no decision-making powers, but it may – and is expected to – make recommendations to the Council. Any decision to accept or implement any recommendations will be considered in accordance with ECC's usual decision making arrangements set out in its Constitution.