

## **County Councillor's report, April 2019**

### **New-look 'Community Initiatives Fund' opens for applications**

Individuals, voluntary organisations and community groups with a vision to boost their local communities and help make Essex a great place to live and work could gain much needed funding from Essex County Council's 'Community Initiatives Fund' (CIF).

Launching on 1 April 2019 the 'new-look' fund brings together a variety of Essex County Council funded community grant schemes under one roof for the first time. The £650,000 fund, which comprises the existing Community Initiatives Fund, Local Service Fund, Local Connections Fund and Cultural Development Grants, will be administered by the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) over a two-year period.

Cllr David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council said: "Even in times of extreme financial challenge we want to continue to invest in our local communities. A big thank you to our partners the Essex Association of Local Councils who will administer the scheme on our behalf. I encourage individuals and groups who have a great idea to improve their local communities, and especially those who have not applied before, to make their applications."

Grants of up to £10,000 can be awarded for projects that benefit the wider community and demonstrate a real community need. These may be for new amenities, equipment, new local services or cultural initiatives all of which contribute towards strengthening communities.

In addition, micro-grants of up to £500 are available throughout the year to enable community projects at a grass roots level to quickly and easily access vital funds for projects that can help reduce social isolation, improve wellbeing and support better connected communities.

Projects are excluded in Southend and Thurrock. For more information visit [www.EALC.gov.uk](http://www.EALC.gov.uk) or contact the Funding Officer Louise Gambardella [louise.gambardella@ealc.gov.uk](mailto:louise.gambardella@ealc.gov.uk)

### **Great British Bake Off contestant at Cressing Chocolate Festival**

We can now announce that Jon Jenkins, who appeared on last year's Great British Bake Off, will be at Cressing Chocolate Festival on 19 April.

Jon, who was well known for his love of bright shirts made it to week seven and made a number of fantastic bakes along the way.

If you want some top tips, Jon will be making an Easter themed chocolate ball reveal and a chocolate collar around a cake. He will also be hosting a question and answer session, so anyone attending the workshop will be able to find out more about his techniques and experience on the Bake Off.

Jon said: "I'm really excited to be part of the inaugural Cressing Chocolate Festival on Good Friday, it promises to be a fantastic event! I'm going to be tempering chocolate, to make an amazing Easter-themed chocolate ball reveal and a chocolate collar around a cake, if you want to be part of it please do come along to Cressing Barns, I can't wait to meet everyone"

The festival will host a wide range of bookable workshops for those who like to get hands on including: Make a chocolate pizza (for children), chocolate tempering with Chappel Chocolate House and choose the perfect tippie to complement your favourite chocolate with wine expert Neil Bull.

The Cressing Chocolate Festival promises to have something for everyone this Easter with visitors not only having the opportunity to sample the very finest chocolates, but to find out more about its origins.

Families will also be able to relax and enjoy a screening of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory on a large outdoor cinema screen, before embarking on an Easter trail and meeting the Easter bunny.

General tickets for the festival are available at a special on-line price now. Bookable workshops are also available to book now. Tickets can be booked at [visitparks.co.uk](http://visitparks.co.uk) or by calling 0345 603 7624.

### **New Domestic Abuse Helpline to access Community Based Services and Specialist Accommodation in Essex**

A new helpline has been launched to help people in Southend, Essex and Thurrock who are victims of or who have experienced domestic abuse.

COMPASS will go live today, Monday 1 April 2019 and is the new point of access for victims of domestic abuse across Southend, Essex and Thurrock; providing information, advice and guidance and, where appropriate assessment and access to specialist services. Its function is to increase accessibility to ensure victims of domestic abuse get the right support at the right time.

COMPASS is funded by Essex County Council in partnership with the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex to support victims of domestic abuse

across Southend, Essex and Thurrock.

It will help women, men and young people aged over 16 to access specialist support including community-based services and specialist accommodation to help them recover and move on from domestic abuse.

COMPASS will be accessible 24hrs a day. Callers can speak with a trained member of staff and there will also be an online form for both public and professionals wishing to make a referral via the website.

COMPASS is delivered by Southend on Sea Domestic Abuse Projects. The telephone number is 0330 333 7 444. The website is [www.essexcompass.org.uk](http://www.essexcompass.org.uk)

Community services and specialist accommodation will be delivered by SOS Domestic Abuse Projects, Changing Pathways and Next Chapter. These community-based services are local hubs incorporating specialist accommodation such as refuges, IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors) and outreach work.

### **50 groups put their hat in the ring to run community managed libraries**

Over 21,000 people responded to the Future of Libraries consultation which closed last month and now groups from all over the county have come forward interested in running community managed library services.

50 expressions of interest have been received so far from a broad range of groups. Two of these proposals are for brand new locations that have never had a library to call their own.

Interest has been received from pre-schools, parish councils, churches, small local businesses, charities, care companies, community groups, those interested in forming a community group as well as the University of the Third Age.

Cabinet member for Corporate and Customer, Cllr Susan Barker said: "We have been delighted with the number and broad range of groups that have come forward with expressions of interest and I am hopeful this number will continue to grow."

### **Only a few weeks left to nominate for the Who Will Care Awards 2019**

The prestigious Who Will Care? Awards 2019 make a much anticipated return in May, but be quick, nominations close on Friday 12 April.

The date of the 2019 awards has now been confirmed as 22 May and will see a celebration of volunteering across the county.

The awards bring together communities and individuals across Essex who are working to make Essex an even greater place to live, work and visit.

Leader of Essex County Council, Cllr David Finch said: "These awards recognise those that make a real difference to people's lives by giving up their time to help others and their local communities.

"I am delighted that the awards are back for another year. If you know an individual, group or business that deserves to be recognised please nominate them before 12 April. I am looking forward to hearing about all of the people and groups nominated and would like to wish everyone the best of luck."

This year there are nine categories:

- **Business Award:** awarded to commercial organisations who have made an impact on their community.
- **Individual Overcoming Adversity Award:** awarded to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding commitment within their community either independently or through a charity/community group or through their employer, whilst overcoming personal adversity.
- **Individual Volunteer – Young Person's Award:** awarded to a volunteer under 18 who have demonstrated outstanding commitment within their community. This may be something they have done independently or in connection with a charity or community / youth / school group or employer.
- **Individual Volunteer – Adult 18+ Award:** awarded to a volunteer aged 18+ who have demonstrated outstanding commitment within their community. This may be something they have done independently or in connection with a charity or community / youth / school group or employer.
- **Individual Volunteer – With a Disability Award:** awarded to a volunteer with a disability who has demonstrated outstanding commitment within their community either independently or through a charity/community group or through their employer.
- **Innovation Award:** awarded to social enterprises, commercial organisations and individuals of any age who have demonstrated innovation in developing a service / project to support the community.
- **Voluntary Community Service Award:** awarded to charities and community groups who are able to demonstrate outstanding service delivery to support their community and / or service users.
- **Volunteer Team Award:** awarded to a group of two or more volunteers of any age who have made an outstanding contribution to their community either independently or with a charity, community group or employer.

- **Social Media Volunteer Award:** awarded to a volunteer who has demonstrated outstanding commitment within their community through the use of social media. This may be something they have done independently or in connection with a social media group.

If there is a business, organisation or individual that you feel deserves recognition for their volunteering efforts in Essex then nominate them now by filling in an online [here](#).

For more details please email [whowillcareawards@essex.gov.uk](mailto:whowillcareawards@essex.gov.uk)