

County Councillor update, December 2019

Share your views on next year's budget



There are only a few days left to have your say on how we should spend our budget next year.

We spend around £2 billion on essential services for residents annually, including social care, highways and education. However, for every £1 we received five years ago from the government to fund these services, we only receive 37p today.

With the population of Essex growing year-on-year and costs increasing it is vital we are achieving best value for money and continuing to work effectively.

We have already had to make over £370m of savings over the past five years and want to find out more about what your priorities are to inform our spending plans for 2020/21.

The deadline for completing the [budget consultation](#) is Sunday 15 December 2019.

Stay well this winter



Now that winter is well and truly here, there are lots of things you can do to help you and your family stay well.

The cold weather can affect our health and wellbeing in different ways, and this is particularly likely if you are over 65, under 5, pregnant, or have a long-term health condition or disability. However, there are some positive steps you can take:

- talk to your local pharmacist if you start to feel unwell, even if it just a cough or a cold and particularly if you have a long-term health condition like COPD
- keep warm inside and outside; heat your home to at least 18 degrees and wrap up warm when out in cold weather

- have a flu jab; many groups, including older people, those with a long-term health conditions, pregnant women, some young children and some carers are entitled to free flu jabs. Contact your GP or local pharmacy to find out more
- if you take prescribed medication, ensure you have plenty to see you through the winter period and particularly over the Christmas and New Year period
- check in on elderly family members, neighbours and friends who may need a little extra help this winter
- if you do need medical help over the holiday period when GP surgeries and pharmacies are closed, contact NHS 111 for advice

For more information about how to stay well this winter, visit www.nhs.uk

Spread a little kindness this Christmas



This Christmas, we're encouraging you to spread a little kindness and make a difference to someone's life as part of the next phase of United in Kind – a social movement aiming to bring communities across Essex together to help reduce social isolation.

The festive season can be an incredibly lonely time for many people, with over half a million elderly people saying they expect to feel lonely at Christmas. However, little acts of kindness can help to increase people's sense of community and belonging.

People just like Dorothy who, thanks to the Harwich Bereavement and Friendship Club, was able to make new friends after the loss of her husband. The club has made a real difference to her life and given her the opportunity to get out and about and enjoy the festive period.

Dorothy said: "I moved into my new sheltered home while I was grieving and arranging a funeral. I didn't know anyone here at first but when I started attending the Friendship Club it changed everything."

Similarly, in Bicknacre, Shirley and Dennis are proof of the role that communities have in supporting local people who are isolated or lonely. Shirley moved from Kent to Bicknacre around six years ago to be near her daughter after her husband died. She met Dennis at the Bicknacre Friendship Club three years ago and they have since become firm friends.

She said: "I didn't know anyone in the village but moving here was the best thing I ever did. Dennis and I are great friends, we do a lot of things together and it's lovely to have someone

else to cook for. Our friends Martin and Molly have also become a couple through the group.”

In a world where people are more connected than ever, no one deserves to feel alone, especially at Christmas. So why not pledge to do something kind for someone this festive season? More information about United in Kind can be found at www.unitedinkind.org.

Season’s greetings to you all

Simon Walsh