

Annual Reports from Councillors Appointed to Outside Bodies 2021/22

1 Stansted Airport Trust – David Carter

This has not met. Due to the pandemic, it has no funds. The Chairman is hoping it will resume this summer as airports get back to normal.

2 Essex County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – David Carter

The committee sits every month in the council chamber at Essex CC in Chelmsford.

I have attended every meeting since appointed to the committee. We are reviewing the Ambulance Service which is in Special Measures. The service has a new CEO and a new team at the top. It has faced many problems during the pandemic.

The main one is picking up patients and being stuck outside hospitals with nowhere to put them sometimes this can be up to 6/7 hours stuck with patients in the ambulance which prevents them from attending other people. This has led to frustration and low morale within the service.

These issues are being addressed by the new management team. The team have to come back to the committee on a regular basis to give updates on progress.

We are reviewing hospital performances. We have had reports including attendances from PAH Staff. It seems they are all short staffed and things have become worse due to patients coming direct to hospitals as GPs have been too difficult to see.

Again Managers are getting to grips with these problems. Frontline staff are tired and overworked and also have a morale problem. Managers are addressing these issues. The Committee have asked the managers to attend again for updates.

The county is also very short of Midwives around 5 to 7 hundred more are needed. It takes 3 years to train them and an urgent programme has been set up.

My overall impression is that the committee is dedicated to improvement with visits to hospitals being set up and a firm hand on underperforming areas of the service. But it seems to me that it's a service where frontline workers are over stretched and tired and that the whole system is too big to be managed effectively.

I enjoy the challenges of this and believe the committee is effective.

3 North Essex Parking Partnership – Alastair Gunn

Since being appointed to NEPP, I've attended in-person meetings in Colchester, Braintree and Tendring. NEPP is due to meet in Harlow later this year, at which I look forward to hosting our fellow North Essex Councils.

A variety of new schemes were approved in October 2021, which will be put out for public consultation during this year. I would wish to place on record my thanks to residents and Councillors who have proposed these schemes, and to Council officers who have helped design them.

NEPP was set up ten years ago during which time parking enforcement in Harlow has gone from loss-making to being profitable, supporting the investment in schemes aimed to improve parking problems across North Essex including Harlow.

The time has come to decide whether to renew this successful partnership for another 10 years, and I recommended that Harlow Council support this step at last week's Cabinet meeting. This report was written ahead of that meeting, though I am confident the proposal to continue with NEPP will have been supported.

4 Fawbert and Barnard's Educational Foundation – Joel Charles

Trustees have continued to meet on Zoom to carry out the Foundation's primary role, which is to provide grant support to enhance the educational experience of local disadvantaged school children. There is a plan to move to hybrid meetings so that Trustees can once again meet face-to-face. The Foundation is focused on enabling improvements in the educational attainment of children, impacted by the pandemic, who have missed certain aspects of school life that help further their personal development.

In November last year, the Foundation took the decision to provide funding to support Fawbert and Barnard's homework club for 38 pupils, which now meets two evenings a week. The homework club covers years one to five and supports a number of disadvantaged pupils who need additional support. £200 was allocated to the club. The Foundation also supported the primary school's eco-warrior club, donating £100 to purchase items for the project.

In March this year, the Foundation allocated a further £150 to the homework club, so that it could carry on into the summer. £150 was allocated to cover the cost of extracurricular activities. The school is planning to take, for example, its pupils to an animal park. No school trips have taken place since the pandemic commenced, so it was felt that some funding from the Foundation could help accelerate plans for more educational trips. A £100 grant was also approved by Trustees to support the school's plans to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The Foundation continues to maintain a strong financial position. Investment interest gains allow the Foundation to allocate around £400 in donations at each Trustee meeting.

Trustees are keen to allocate more grants to support individual requests from pupils who would like to further a particular educational interest. The Foundation encourages young people to pursue activities that help them gain more confidence in their ability to learn and develop new skills.

5 Epping Forest & Harlow Community Transport – Alastair Gunn

Epping Forest and Harlow Community Transport has been working together since February 2016, helping Harlow and Epping residents by providing much needed Community Transport thereby preventing social exclusion, supporting the elderly, disabled and other groups within the community. Many of their users would otherwise have no access to suitable, affordable transport.

Epping and Harlow Community Transport worked through the pandemic and associated lockdowns, supporting the Harlow community in several ways:

- Delivering prescriptions for the NHS Princess Alexandra Hospital to vulnerable & Coronavirus patients.
- C392 bus service from Harlow to Hoddesdon and return for key workers of a pharmaceutical company.
- Dial-A-Ride service continued for emergency health appointments, essential shopping, and Coronavirus vaccines.
- Admin staff working from home supported volunteers, furloughed staff and passengers to check on well-being and see whether help was required.

As we all move on from the pandemic, Epping and Harlow Community Transport are seeking to raise their profile again within the Harlow community.

This service is especially important in those parts of our town that are poorly served by bus routes. They have recently received the excellent news that the DaRT87 service between Harlow bus station and Epping town centre will continue to be funded by Epping Forest District Council for next year. This service was introduced to replace Arriva's 87 route, which ceased operating in December 2020. The service will need to increase its passenger usage.

Epping and Harlow Community Transport has the capacity to be doing more in Harlow and wants to go further, by identifying unmet transport needs and expanding their offering. I've committed to helping them achieve this in the year ahead, making residents, Councillors, and other potential stakeholders more aware of their service and how to access it.

To help with this, an additional Trustee from Harlow with a good understanding of the town's needs is being sought, to help promote the service and ensure Harlow benefits fully from the charity's excellent service. I'd encourage interested parties to get in touch.

6 Active Harlow – Alastair Gunn

Active Harlow is the Community Sport and Physical Activity Network for Harlow. It strategically supports the development of sport, physical activity and movement, with the aim of increasing physical activity levels amongst Harlow's residents.

During 2021/22, Active Harlow accessed £10,000 from Active Essex to help achieve its objectives. This funding was distributed to ten community-based projects that are increasing levels of physical activity, reducing health inequalities and assisting the recovery of the sector from the pandemic.

Some funded projects have faced challenges in delivering through the pandemic. In these instances, Active Harlow are supporting them through to the point of delivery.

A further £18,700 was accessed from the Containment Management Outbreak Fund to deliver activities to address deconditioning as a result of the pandemic. Delivery has started on much of this work, such as Yoga4Health. Planning is underway to go further, for example by upskilling physical activity providers.

Harlow Council has recruited a full time Strength and Balance Officer, as part of the West Essex Strength and Balance Service commissioned by West Essex CCG. The aim of this is to reduce the number of falls within the community and improve long term health and wellbeing outcomes for participants. Already, over 100 Harlow residents have accessed the service with another 100 on the waiting list.

Looking ahead, £13,567 has been accessed from Active Essex to support the continued delivery of Active Harlow's work until 31 March 2024.