

## Public speaking:

Daniel Brett said he would welcome the cancellation of the running track at Carver Barracks in favour of a new reserve for community infrastructure across the district. It was unfair that vast reserves were allocated to Saffron Walden when Stansted sports provision was underfunded. He said the Council was currently investing in a niche asset, but the programme lacked coherent strategy and ignored emerging risk. There needed to be a constant examination of risk across several asset classes. One investment should not make up such a big proportion of the Council's assets under management. Brexit was a big risk as tenants of properties at Chesterford Research Park might not renew their contracts. It was crucial the investment strategy was not linked to the local economy.

Martyn Everett said there had been a lot of cuts to libraries over the years, but they were important services for socially excluded people. They contribute footfall to town centres, generate activity and add £7 of social value for every £1 local authorities £1 spend on them. The County Council's plan to close 44 libraries and reduced hours and staffing at the remainder, would deprive a third of current users of libraries of their local libraries. There was a definite need for libraries. Many people throughout England had low literacy and numeracy skills, which led to low pay, poverty and ill health. Essex County Council had a legal obligation to provide this service. It made such a profound improvement to people's lives, councillors should be fighting to keep libraries open.

Trina Mawer said she had set up a library, and to do so was very difficult. It was important for towns to have proper libraries. A library without a librarian was not a library, but a room of books, and could not be run by volunteers. The Leader of the Council had kindly offered for UDC to pay the rent on Thaxted Library, but this was not what was needed. Thaxted deserved a library, with a librarian. The Ambition for Public Libraries document published by the government said skilled staff were vital for the service. Much was wrong with Essex's proposed scheme for libraries, which aimed for 7 outcomes, but you needed libraries to get these outcomes.