

Candidate Pack: **Chair**

**citizens
advice**

Essex

Welcome

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming the Chair of Citizens Advice Essex. It is an opportunity to lead a significant, Essex-based charity whose work enables impactful support to be given to the least well-off people in the diverse communities of Essex, Southend, Thurrock, and further afield.

I have been the chair of Citizens Advice Essex before, helping it to begin its journey of growth and development on which it is still on and I return now as interim chair, to lead the process of appointing a new, permanent chair. It will be a very exciting time to join the charity, with a number of new initiatives and partnerships in development and with our national association, Citizens Advice, increasingly recognising and endorsing the need for more regional working between member local offices.

Citizens Advice Essex, in the main, does not provide services to clients directly but supports shared endeavour and joint, big-ticket projects delivered by the nine local Citizens Advice charities, forming the Citizens Advice Essex consortium, in the greater Essex and surrounding areas. I am continually impressed by the dedication and enormous passion of staff who, in turn, support contracts and grants amongst the local Citizens Advice network in our area that support hundreds of volunteers and paid staff who, in turn, help over 50,000 unique clients across the area, to find a way forward with the problems they face.

The network we support offers a range of services to people across the greater Essex area on issues such as debt, welfare benefits, budgeting, employment, housing, and consumer and Citizens Advice Essex itself has been successful in bolstering these capabilities to a

great extent, securing and managing funding from corporates and other larger national charities including but not limited to British Gas Energy Trust, Macmillan, Cadent Gas, The Energy Redress Fund and others.

The role of the Trustees is not just about ensuring financial stability and planning for the future in a practical sense, but as Chair also leading the board through a process of continuous appraisal of the strategic context in which our organisation, and the consortium it supports, implements existing projects and plans new areas of business development and shared endeavour. It can be challenging at times, but it's always rewarding to be part of a wider organisation that helps and advocates for some of the most disadvantaged members of our community.

My fellow trustees and I are also committed to increasing the diversity of our board (and our thinking) at Citizens Advice Essex, so we would particularly encourage applications from women and people from black, Asian, or minority ethnic communities.

If you are interested in this role, please do get in touch to discuss the opportunity further with either myself or Martin Lord, Consortium Director. Our details can be found at the end of this pack.



David Pickles

Interim Chair



About Citizens Advice Essex

- Citizens Advice Essex is a registered Charity (number 1153582) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (number 06150651)
- Members of the Board are both Charity Trustees and Company Directors. Other trustees are nominated from the member local Citizens Advice (LCA) charities within the Citizen Advice Essex Consortium. Typically, they are the Chairs of the relevant LCA
- Our income in 2023/24 was just over £2.1 million around 80% passed on to the local Citizens Advice within Essex, to deliver specific services and projects funded by a wide range of funders
- In 2023/24, more than £1 in every £4 of local CA offices' income was secured by Citizens Advice Essex
- The "consortium lead" charity directly employs only a small number of remote-based staff, presently a Consortium Director and several Project Managers and Administrators. This keeps the overhead of delivering services at scale, as low as possible whilst capitalising on the benefits of a member network, rooted in local communities and with a high degree of local funding autonomy
- We are part of a network which gives independent, impartial, free and confidential information and advice to help people overcome the problems they face, such as benefits, debt, employment, housing, relationships and immigration
- We are part of a network that uses our knowledge about our clients' problems to identify trends and campaign to improve the policies and practices that affect peoples' lives.

The Citizens Advice network

The Citizens Advice service offers free, confidential advice online, over the phone and in person. We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward—whatever they are, and whatever their problem. We're independent and impartial.

Citizens Advice is a network of around 250 independent local charities across England and Wales. Our services are provided by 11,000 local volunteers, 1,900 Witness Service volunteers, and 7,800 local and 1,000 national paid staff. We're in 1,870 community locations (including GP surgeries, libraries and courts) in England and Wales.

Through the training, information systems and operational support it provides, national Citizens Advice equips local Citizens Advice to deliver the highest quality advice to their community. Each local Citizens Advice is a member of the national Citizens Advice charity. All together we form the Citizens Advice service.

How the Citizens Advice network works

Citizens Advice Essex is the consortium lead charity for the nine local office members in the Greater Essex area. We possess "consortium" membership of Citizens Advice and each local office possesses full membership the Citizens Advice network.



The network of Local Citizens Advice are all independent charities, delivering services from over 600 local Citizens Advice outlets over 1,800 community centres, GPs' surgeries and prisons. The network does this with 7,700 local staff and over 21,300 trained volunteers.

How much time do you need to give?

Our Trustee Board usually meets 4 times a year. Considerable time will need to be spent liaising with other Citizens Advice chairs from across the consortium network, some of the role's ambassadorial and stakeholder engagement elements and in directly supporting and liaising with both the Treasurer and the Consortium Director, Martin Lord who is the organisation's most senior paid employee.

We do not under-estimate the time commitment. On average, we think the role requires a time commitment of up to eight hours per week. This is more than is often required for a regular trusteeship of a local Citizens Advice but equivalent to a chair's role in a charity of similar size or complexity and also in line with the "minimum" expectation often required of Citizens Advice volunteers fulfilling advice roles.

Meetings are currently held on a "hybrid" basis i.e. supporting both in person and online attendance but we are open to changing these arrangements.

Role Description:

The Board of Trustees at Citizens Advice Essex serves as the organisation's main governing body, offering support, strategic guidance, and constructive feedback to paid staff within the organisation and other board members.

The Chair of Citizens Advice Essex leads the Board, guiding it to achieve the organisation's strategic goals effectively, thereby making a meaningful impact on the lives of the people served by Citizens Advice Essex members.

The responsibilities of the Chair include:

- Leading the Board in monitoring progress towards strategic priorities and maintaining clear oversight of the charity's activities, while upholding high standards of governance.
- Establishing an effective partnership with the Consortium Director and their team, offering support, constructive challenge, and encouragement.
- Acting as an ambassador for Citizens Advice Essex, engaging with stakeholders, clients, volunteers, government officials, and commissioners across various platforms.
- Fostering an environment where the Board functions as a cohesive and effective team, encouraging contributions, positive relationships, and open communication.
- Ensuring the Board possesses the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to fulfil our strategic priorities and that its practices remain relevant and effective.



- Conducting annual evaluations of the Board, its committees, and individual trustees, addressing strengths and weaknesses accordingly.
- Prioritising equitable and inclusive practices throughout the organisation, promoting a culture where all individuals feel valued, treated fairly, and included.
- Demonstrating exemplary standards of conduct and integrity, serving as a role model for others within the organisation
- In addition to these responsibilities, the Chair is expected to undertake any reasonable additional duties commensurate with the role's profile and responsibility.

Your knowledge and experience:

- Senior leadership experience.
- Practical experience in leading organisational transformation and stabilising organisations during periods of significant change.
- Experience working with diverse non-executive board memberships and fostering inclusive and diverse boards.
- Knowledge of governance principles and practices within charities.
- Proficiency in effectively communicating with diverse stakeholder groups.

Your skills and abilities:

- A strategic mindset, focused on long-term goals and integrating from various contexts.
- Sharp commercial acumen and the ability to foresee future trends.



- Strong board chairing skills, including facilitating discussion, summarising key points, and building consensus.
- Compelling communication style, excellent judgement, and diplomatic skills.
- A trusted presence with high personal credibility and a collaborative approach.
- An interest in organisational development and supporting broader organisational dynamics.
- Personal integrity, fairness, inclusivity, and openness in leadership style.
- Values aligned with those of Citizens Advice Essex and a commitment to aims and principles of the Citizens Advice Service.
- Sensitivity to the political, social, and economic context in which Citizens Advice Essex operate

Applications by way of a CV and letter application demonstrating how you meet the requirements of the role to david.pickles@citizensadviceessex.org.uk

Recruitment Timeline:

Closing date for receipt 5pm Friday 29h June

In-person Interview (in Chelmsford) 22 July (subject to panel and candidate availability)

For a further information or for an informal discussion please, feel free to contact:

David Pickles: Interim Chair, 07943 444321

Martin Lord: Consortium Director, 077422 31152