

## NEWS RELEASE

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### OBE FOR ESSEX COMMUNITY FOUNDATION CHIEF

Laura Warren, Chief Executive of Essex Community Foundation has been awarded the OBE in the New Year's Honour List. The honour is in recognition of her services to the voluntary sector in Essex.

As the founding Chief Executive of Essex Community Foundation, Laura has led its development, making it one of the leading community foundations in the UK. Since the independent Community Foundation first launched its grants programme in the autumn of 1996, virtually all aspects of charitable activity in Essex has been funded to benefit local people. Voluntary and community organisations working for many different causes have already received grants from Essex Community Foundation totalling well over £10 million and another 400 charities are expected to benefit this year.

Laura Warren, who was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Essex last August said "I am delighted to receive this prestigious honour, which I value as recognition of the role that the Community Foundation plays in supporting the voluntary sector in Essex."

Since it was established in 1996, Essex Community Foundation has built-up a capital fund of £8.3 million from funds established by local people, companies and public agencies, all keen to support voluntary and community groups in Essex. The income from these endowed fund will be distributed, in perpetuity, to charities, voluntary and community organisations throughout Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

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#### Notes to Editors:

**Essex Community Foundation** was set up in 1996 and has established a grants programme which has seen more than 2500 Essex based charities and community groups receive over £10million in grants. Funds are distributed on behalf of a wide range of donors who want their charitable giving to be accessible to local charities. [www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk)

**Laura Warren DL**, is the founding Chief Executive of Essex Community Foundation and has developed it to become one of the leading community foundations in the UK, with 9 staff, £8.3 million in endowed funds. The grant making foundation has distributed well over £10 million from funds established by local people, companies and public agencies, all keen to support voluntary and community groups in Essex. Laura was appointed to be a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex in August 2007. The Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Lord Petre said "Laura's commitment to Essex through her work at the Community Foundation has been tremendous and the growth of the Foundation is a result of her hard work and effort. Her recognition and appointment as a DL of Essex is justly deserved".

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Patron: The Lord Lieutenant of Essex

Chief Executive: Laura Warren



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Laura had spent 25 years at Volkswagen Audi, progressing through the company to become Head of Public Affairs for Volkswagen Audi UK. Needing a “mid-life” change of direction, Laura left Volkswagen to work in the voluntary sector. To gain some knowledge and experience, she undertook some consultancy work with the National Eczema Society through the “Working for a Charity” Scheme.

Whilst completing her project with the National Eczema Society, Laura was asked by Essex businessman Ian Marks to undertake a feasibility study to explore whether there would be support for a community foundation in Essex. Although the concept was unknown, interest in the potential of pooling community assets to support charitable activity throughout the county was strong and within six months, the steering group gave the go-ahead to register the new charity.

Essex Community Foundation was launched in April 1996 and Laura was appointed Chief Executive. From one desk in an attic room, generously hosted by the Rural Community Council at Mackmurdo House in Chelmsford, and guided by a newly appointed Board of Trustees, she started to build the Foundation into the organisation it is today. Last year, in its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, Essex Community Foundation won three awards:

- The Countywide Business Awards for its work in the Community
- The Essex Business Awards for being Best Business in the Community
- A Quality Accreditation from the UK Network of Community Foundations which is endorsed by the Charity Commission as meeting the hallmarks of an effective charity. The quality standards clarify how independent community foundations can help individuals, companies and other agencies achieve lasting value from channelling their charitable giving into their own communities.

For more information about Essex Community Foundation, visit [www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk) or contact Jo Murphy on 01245 355947

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