Firstly can I give my apologies for being unable to attend the parish council meeting this evening. I have had a long standing arrangement to speak at a STEM award ceremony for young people who have, in conjunction with their schools, carried out design projects to make and understand engineering and scientific principles and produce a working project based on those parameters. The projects this year have been of an exceptionally high standard and I look forward to congratulating the winners in conjunction with colleagues from Anglia Ruskin University.

This leads to the whole issue of Apprenticeships as a means of training young people and Essex County Council have carried out some considerable work in promoting this process. At last this appears to be becoming a viable and sort after alternative to University. However, people may be aware of the apprenticeship levy that is paid by larger employers to fund the support for the training offered by FE Colleges and other training providers and it is becoming increasingly evident that a significant proportion of this money is being returned to government because it is unused. This is a very unfortunate outcome and it is essential that employers step forward to employ apprentices – it is a unique opportunity for those companies to train a skilled workforce and offer careers not just for their own benefit but for the industries in which they operate.

I turn lastly to the matter of Stansted Library. Members of the Parish Council will be aware that a paper will be taken to ECC Cabinet on the 23rd of this month. However, before anything further can be progressed in relation to Stansted Library we must await the outcome of the Cabinet Meeting and ascertain whether the paper will be called in. It is my suggestion that after the paper has proceeded through the council's process, that I arrange to meet with a small group from the parish council to discuss the next steps for the opening of the Library in the new building when it is available.

Ray Gooding