

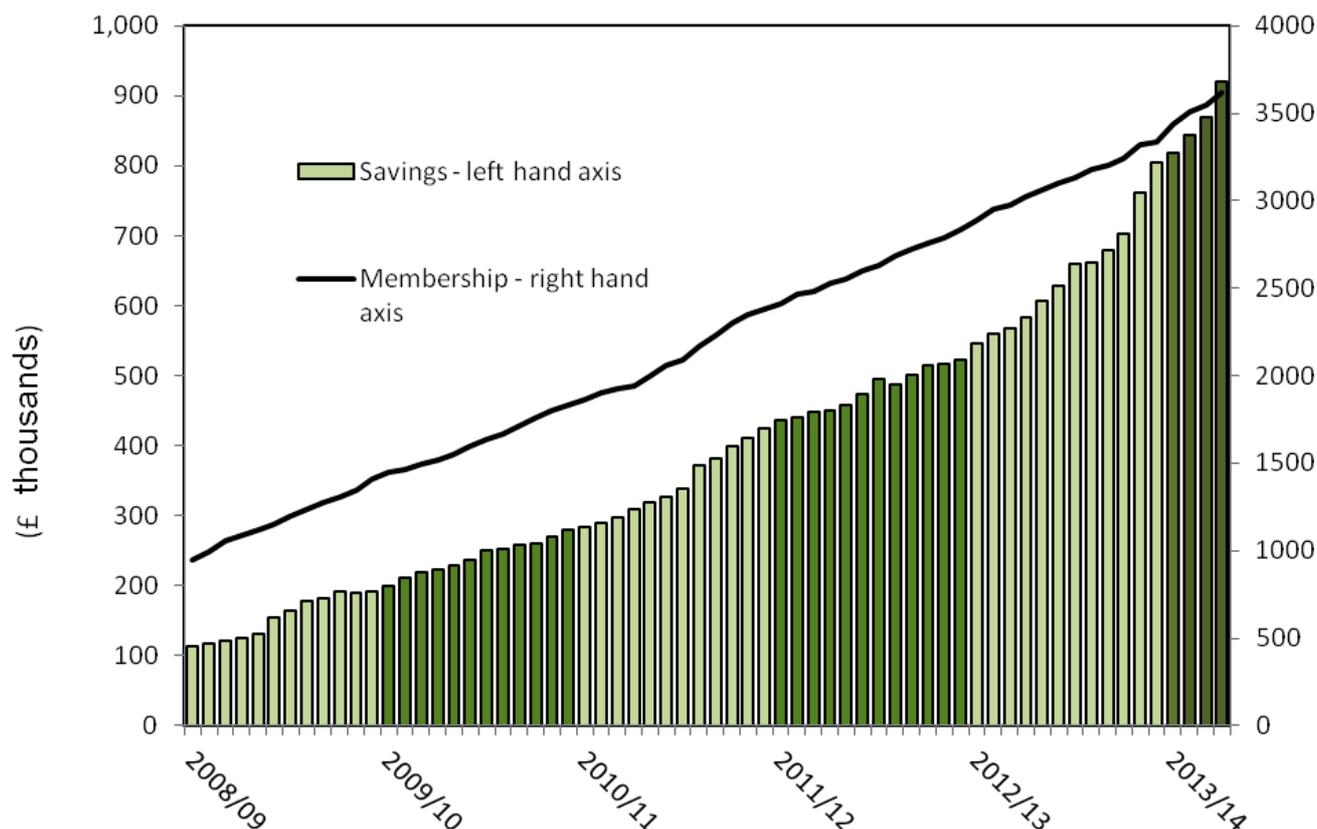
The Board's annual report for the financial year 1 October 2012 – 30 September 2013

(as presented to the Annual General Meeting, 21 February 2014)

2013 was the year the Archbishop condemned 'PayDay' loans and gave his vociferous support to credit unions.

Essex Savers has been a beneficiary of this publicity since July. People in the East and South East had been very unsure about credit unions until then so it brought an influx of members, savings, volunteers and churches looking to set up service points in their locality.

Savings have grown strongly since the summer



Credit unions have continued to be in the spotlight as the Archbishop continued his campaign to oust predatory lenders, a goal he shares with Essex Savers. We are harnessing the enthusiasm of those he has inspired, ministers, churches and the general public to raise awareness in communities and expand our service points.

Membership numbers increased by 532 from 2,838 – 3,367 during the last financial year and is now 3,625 (another 458 in just 4 months).

Savings rose from £524,994 - £805,665, an increase of £280,661 and are currently in excess of £900,000.

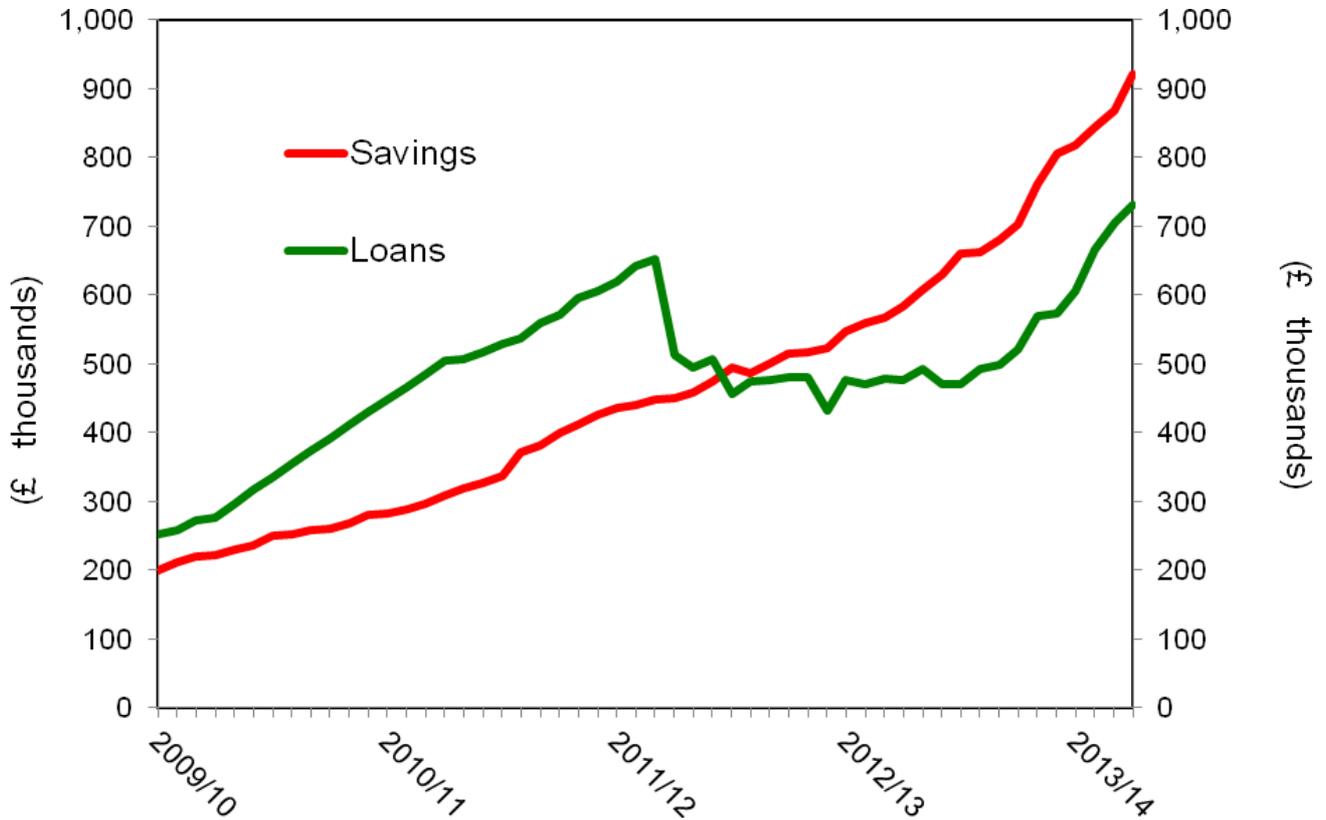
Loans issued in the year amounted to £758,972 (683 loans) with a further £440,300 (332 loans) being issued since October.

Total loans are now over £3.1million (4,070 loans) up from £2.2 million this time last year – a dramatic increase!

Essex Savers has grown enormously over the financial year, very much due to a better understanding of credit unions and what they offer. Membership is still accelerating with

monthly membership nearing 100. Savings are much improved too, including high level deposits which began with Project 250, the RC initiative announced at last year's AGM which has also drawn in the general public. We so appreciate our members, who are able to save with us, and willingly give up the interest they could earn elsewhere for their money to be used to help others.

2012-13 Savings have grown consistently while loans accelerated towards the end of the year



The demand for credit continues as banks remain reluctant to lend, leaving a gap in the market for us to fill. We are now in a better position to meet this high demand and are helping more members, in and out of work, and struggling with the cost of living, reduced income and benefit changes. We are also helping those tempted or desperate enough to use 'PayDay' lenders. However, we do need the people of Essex to join us, not just coming to us in crisis, which limits the help we can provide.

Our lending has now reached over £3 million in approximately 4000 loans. This has not only helped those borrowers but earned us £75,000 in interest in the financial year. We paid off Wonga and saved a member's home from repossession this year. Similarly, we have saved hundreds of rented homes from repossession, saving over £40,000 a time. With this and other cost benefits, we are saving Essex millions of pounds. It is residents who will 'foot the bill' for extra care and services required by those in crisis or struggling financially if we were not here to assist. Our budgeting account and debit card together with payment of priority bills will be vital as the current wave of welfare changes come into effect, needing individuals to manage their own finances.

Access to our services is greatly improved with internet use, both through use of our website and email correspondence. Many more members use standing orders to make their payments to us and receive BACs payments for loans and withdrawals. Payroll deduction is also being used more and we are actively recruiting firms to provide this. Loans taken by those on payroll are lower risk enabling us to make larger and more profitable loans.

We continue to develop our network of service points to provide face-to-face contact throughout Essex. We are using Barclays Banks, as well as libraries and churches premises. Church members are deploying their skills to promote and run our services at new service points in their locality.

With the realisation of our need to be better known and our 'brand' recognised, we have improved our marketing in the past year with new information leaflets, posters and flyers. We are looking to provide signage, posters and banners for permanent display in all our service points. We have a new website that is kept updated (do visit it to keep abreast of developments). We do have 'Facebook' and 'twitter' accounts but need a social media person to help us take full advantage of this highly effective form of communication.

Corporate membership, another area of growth with twelve corporate members at the end of the year: local authority; housing association; businesses, including start ups; charities; churches and a branch of the Women's Institute. These continue to be added to. We are targeting marketing to local businesses to raise awareness which we hope will also bring in some investment to help us in improving our capital as we grow. Offering organisation membership also brings membership from their staff and customers.

Our level of business has grown rapidly this year. There is also pressure to speed up service delivery as people face crises. We have done well to meet all the challenges while still reliant on a few part time staff (also doing volunteer time) and numerous dedicated volunteers: those dealing with the central administrative and 'back office' tasks, those in the field, at our service points and our Board members, who give time to assist in addition to their Board duties. They are all due a vote of THANKS from all the members of Essex Savers.

We have started this new financial year well with greater growth than ever and most importantly our financial Key Performance Indicators moving in the right direction for financial sustainability, which this evening's presentation demonstrated. We look to our members to assist us in reaching our targets by promote us to their friends and colleagues. Thank you.

*Alison Davies
President
February 2014*