

## **County Councillor's Report September 2016**

### **Bus route consultation**

A public consultation on a number of routes Essex County Council (ECC) funds is due to close on Wednesday, 28 September.

Many of the services currently cost taxpayers more than £5 for every passenger carried, which is the maximum level of support ECC will normally give.

The proposed changes aim to support the future running of essential travel routes while offering the best value for money for the taxpayer.

The Council is keen to get bus users to give up just a couple of minutes of their day to feedback on a number of bus services in their area.

The consultation lists each service (by district) and says what the proposed change is (if any) plus the reasons why. Tendring district is not included in this consultation.

Residents can submit their feedback online, in libraries or over the phone up to Wednesday, 28 September.

Questionnaires are available:

- online <https://surveys.essexinsight.org.uk/BusConsultation>
- from Essex County Council Libraries
- by phoning: 03457 430 430

### **Secondary School Places**

Parents can now apply for their children's secondary school places for 2017.

Parents and carers of children due to start at secondary school (Year 7) in September next year can apply between 5 September 2016 and 31 October 2016. It is crucial an application is received by the closing date.

Applications can be made at [www.essex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions). The website also enables parents to search for school information, and check admissions criteria.

### **Exam results**

A-levels: More than 4,000 students took exams at Essex schools this year and initial data shows 76% per cent of the grades awarded were A\*-C.

Essex pupils again exceeded the national average pass rate, with 98.3% per cent of all grades awarded A\*- E, while over 23% per cent of students gained A\*-A grades.

There was also similarly high success in vocational level 3 subjects, with 75% per cent of passes distinctions or better.

GCSE results: Provisional figures received from schools today show 65 per cent of pupils in Essex have achieved A\* to C grades in both English and maths, compared with 61 per cent last year.

In addition, 24.6 per cent have achieved the English Baccalaureate, up from 22.4 per cent in 2015.

About 15,000 young people were entered into GCSEs at schools in Essex this year, which is the first since changes to the way school performance is measured at Key Stage 4.

The trends remain good, with Uttlesford schools performing very well.

### **Highways**

Energy-saving LED lamps are set to be installed on all-night street lights across the county to save taxpayers thousands on electricity costs.

The new longer-lasting lamps require less maintenance and use less electricity.

Essex County Council is starting a programme to replace 9,000 existing lamps later this month (August). The work is part of a two-year project to replace 19,000 street lights with LED units.

Taxpayers can enjoy predicted savings of £600,000-a-year on energy and maintenance costs, as well as carbon taxes, once the programme is completed.

### **Waste**

Waste from Essex businesses, which has been illegally left at recycling centres, has left taxpayers with a disposal bill running to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

‘Man with a van’ operators offering cheap rubbish clearance, property developers and independent building and home improvement trades have swamped many sites.

Local facilities have seen the amount of DIY and construction waste alone leap by over 50% in the last two years.

To tackle the problem, Essex County Council is set to announce changes to the way sites will operate in the future, to prevent taxpayers footing the bill for business waste, reduce queues for genuine customers and reduce daytime closures.

By law, Council run recycling centres are only for use by residents bringing in household waste from their own property. Businesses exploiting these public facilities to avoid paying waste disposal costs have pushed Essex County Council to introduce new rules to ensure that queues, congestion and site safety are improved for residents. Business waste of any kind is strictly prohibited from all Essex recycling centres.

Legislation does not count DIY and construction waste as household waste. The legal rule of thumb is that household waste covers things which a householder would normally take with them when they move house. If the waste is something you would leave behind, like doors, a fitted kitchen or bathroom, or soil and hardcore, it is construction waste.

The current plan to improve the operation of recycling centres means that from the 31st October, about half of the county’s sites will also no longer allow vans or multi-axle trailers in and will no longer offer any disposal facilities for DIY and construction waste.

The remaining sites such as Saffron Walden and Braintree, will still offer access to residents disposing of their waste who only have access to a commercial type vehicle, but will place strict limits on how much DIY waste can be disposed of. Vans and pick-ups will be under greater scrutiny though, and those identified as bringing in waste from any kind of business activity will be refused entry and owners may be liable to prosecution.

Simon Walsh

September 2016