

County Councillor's Report October 2016

Education:

Essex County Council is set to spend about £85million creating more than 400 new special school places across Essex.

The record investment comes following an increase in the number of young people in the county being diagnosed with autism and with a growing demand for special school places.

The £85million includes £42million from the Essex Schools Forum, as well as £43million of capital funding from Essex County Council.

Exact proposals have yet to be finalised but the new places are likely to include:

- 24 new places in the Braintree district for pupils with severe physical and neurological needs
- A new 70-place school for children with social, emotional and mental health needs in the Chelmsford area
- 80 additional places for pupils with severe needs in the Colchester area
- 20 new boarding places for pupils with severe needs in the Castle Point/Rochford area
- 24 new places for pupils with autism or social emotional and mental health needs in the Epping Forest district

Subject to planning processes, it is hoped building works will start in 2018.

Three separate free school applications are also set to be submitted to the Government this month.

They include proposals for a 75-place autism-specific school in the Braintree district (for pupils with severe needs), a 70-place autism-specific school in the Chelmsford area (for pupils of mainstream ability but with anxiety and/or behavioural problems) and a 60-place school in the Harlow district (for children with autism or social, emotional and mental health needs).

Teaching Awards:

Pupils, parents and school staff are being encouraged to make nominations for the 2017 Essex Teaching Awards.

The annual awards, which are run by Essex County Council, recognise the outstanding contribution made by teachers and support staff in the county's schools.

Now in their fourth year, the awards this year include a new School Website of the Year award.

The other categories are:

- New Teacher of the Year
- Teaching Assistant of the Year
- Primary School Teacher of the Year
- Secondary School Teacher of the Year
- Special School Teacher of the Year
- Primary/Special School Headteacher of the Year
- Secondary School Headteacher of the Year
- Governing Body of the Year
- School Team of the Year
- Lifetime Achievement Award
- Student Choice Award

The winners of the Essex Teaching Awards will once again be entered for the Pearson Teaching Awards – a national awards scheme celebrating excellence in education across the UK.

Nominations will close on Friday 18 November 2016.

The Essex Teaching Awards 2017 will take place in February 2017.

Libraries:

Over 40,000 children across Essex took part in this year's Roald Dahl themed Reading Challenge, it has been announced.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Roald Dahl, the challenge was renamed the Big Friendly Read. The event, which was organised by the Reading Agency and run locally by Essex Libraries, saw thousands of kids sign up to read six books over the summer holidays.

Supported by a website, online forum, events and activities across the county's libraries, the challenge has been branded a phizz-whizzing success!

To keep up to date with activities and events happening at your library visit essex.gov.uk/Libraries.

Adult Education:

ACL Essex (Adult Community Learning) is reminding residents that there is government funding available for learners who are keen to boost their qualifications and achieve their educational goals but are in need of some financial assistance to support their studying.

For those studying accredited courses funding can contribute towards the cost of travel, educational visits, books and equipment, as well as childcare.

While qualifying criteria applies, the following funds are available:

- The Advanced Learner Loan for learners who are aged 19 to 90 (and beyond!) studying a qualification at level 3 or 4. The loan doesn't even need repaying until you earn over £21,000 and if you go on to university then you don't repay the loan at all
- The Discretionary Learning Support Fund and Community Learning Fund can assist learners who may be struggling with finances and can be used to help with childcare, study resources and transport
- The 16-18 Discretionary Fund for learners who are aged 16-18 as at 31 August 2016 (help with the cost of lunch may also be available)
- The Bursary Fund for non-accredited courses for learners who are 19+ as at 31 August 2016 (help with fees is only available if you have paid the full fee)

The Advanced Learner Loan is currently being promoted by further education establishments across Essex who are encouraging potential students to "invest in themselves" and be aware of Government funding available. More information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan/overview>

ACL Essex also has a separate fund to cover the cost of support within the classroom for learners who have a learning support need, for example visual impairment, mental health difficulties and those with other medical and physical conditions. The ACL Learning Support team can support learners in accessing this funding and arranging support.

Application forms to apply for funding are available at all ACL centres. To find out more visit www.essex.gov.uk/adult-learning

Health:

Smoking prevalence in Essex is around 17.6%, meaning that an estimated 200,000 individuals in Essex smoke.

This October, we are urging Essex smokers to sign up to Stoptober, a Public Health England campaign encouraging people to stop smoking for 28 days, offering support and encouragement every step of the way.

Smoking is on the decrease nationally with Public Health England releasing new figures today showing that there are now twice as many ex-smokers (14.6 million people), than current smokers in England (7.2 million) as sales of cigarettes decrease.

To stand an even better chance of quitting, local people are encouraged to sign up with their friends, family and colleagues, as evidence reveals that this type of 'social quitting' can dramatically improve people's chances of successfully stopping.

For information on local support please take a look at www.essexlifestyleservice.org.uk/stop-smoking