

## **The Report from ECC and CCC Councillor– Mike Steel. For September 2024 Meeting.**

### **Broomfield Hospital staff parking charges:**

The hospital are reintroducing Staff Parking Permits and charging from September. This is something many Trusts have already done.

Staff car parking charges were suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the Government covering the lost income to NHS organisations. That funding stopped at the end of March 2022 and the Trust has since covered the cost and would continue to face significant financial losses if they did not re-introduce staff parking charges.

Providing free parking has also led to a significant increase in the number of staff driving into work, meaning they have unsafe numbers of cars parking on site.

The number of permits currently allocated far exceeds capacity, so everyone who already has a parking permit will have to reapply and demonstrate that they meet the standardised criteria. The process begins in August.

Lower-paid staff who are eligible for permits – working at bands 2 and 3 – will not be charged to park. Most staff will be paying less than they were before the pandemic.

### **Benefits of introducing parking permits:**

There will be a more equitable system of parking with an agreed criteria across our main sites.

- maintain safe levels of parking on the sites.
- Staff will be encouraged to use public transport or greener forms of transport to reduce the environmental impact.
- Money will be reinvested into the car parking infrastructure and sustainable travel initiatives.

The hospital are aware that the new system will mean some people who currently drive to work will not be allocated a permit and will therefore need to explore other forms of transport

### **Shuttle service relaunched with seamless travel to Chelmsford hospital.**

The Chelmer Valley Park and Ride will return to Broomfield Hospital on Thursday 1 August. It will run every half-hour from 6:30am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday.

The shuttle will be run by Essex County Council's minibus fleet, Ugobus, with standard Park-and-Ride [ticket prices](#).

The Chelmer Valley to Broomfield Hospital service closed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The council has since been working with the Mid Essex Hospitals Trust to see it reintroduced.

Demand for parking at Broomfield Hospital frequently exceeds the number of spaces available, so the return of this service will help to take away the stress of finding a space for staff and patients and ease parking pressure at the hospital site.

The shuttle bus service will run every half-hour from 6.30am to 8.00pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays). Normal park and ride ticket prices will apply, with NHS staff paying a discounted rate of £1.50 for the Broomfield Hospital route.

### **A particularly wet and warm year has led to accelerated plant growth along the county's roads and pavements.**

Overgrown grass is being cut back across Essex to keep roads and footpaths safe following unprecedented temperatures and rainfall. Essex Highways has launched its grass-cutting programme to clear verges along the A13, A130, A133, A127 and A1245.

The programme includes rural areas around Colchester, Epping Forest, Tendring and Uttlesford. Other areas will be addressed by the relevant district, borough and city councils.

Grass within a metre of road edges is trimmed twice a year by Essex Highways to ensure clear lines of sight, improved visibility and safer navigation.

Recent months of heavy rainfall and warm temperatures have resulted in plants growing at faster rates.

East Anglia saw its wettest February since records began, according to the Met Office, as well as its warmest ever spring.

Essex Highways is working with Essex County Council's arboriculture team to preserve vital wildflower species and support local biodiversity where it is safe to do so.

Vegetation maintenance is one of the key areas which will benefit from the [£25 million Priority One funding boost](#) recently announced by the council for Essex Highways.

Note – I have already arranged monitoring and extra cuts at the junction between Great Waltham and Little Waltham

### **Local Transport Plan 4**

Essex County Council has launched a public consultation on its Essex Transport Strategy, formally known as the Local Transport Plan.

The strategy will provide an overarching plan for transport across Essex and outline the council's vision.

The consultation focuses on key themes and outcomes as an opportunity for the public to provide feedback, helping inform further development of the strategy.

The consultation also proposes a new ‘Place and Movement’ approach. This would introduce a more flexible and people-focused way to categorise roads and streets in Essex.

ECC are still in the process of developing the strategy and this public consultation is an early opportunity for people to provide feedback on the key principles.

The initial public consultation will run for seven weeks, closing on Sunday 22 September 2024, and can be accessed at

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/essex-highways/essex-transport-strategy/>

A second consultation on the full draft strategy and a programme of planned investment in different parts of Essex is expected to take place early next year.

I have attended presentations on this and my own view is that this is overdue and vague.

It includes a methodology for new classification of roads into a 3 by 3 matrix based on “place” and “movement” (rather than the existing 3 – PR1, PR2, Local Road) but it does not go far enough and say what roads will be what. Furthermore, there it indicates that PCs will not be consulted on the allocated classifications (although District Councils will). I have expressed my disappointment with the strategy document.

### **Improvements to the Highways Tell Us tool**

Improvements have been made to the Essex Highways Tell Us tool to make it easier for residents to report issues on the county’s roads.

The improvements made to the Report It tool in recent weeks include:

- ability to report some urgent issues such as large potholes, fallen trees or flooded roads online
- an option to tell us that a known issue has got worse
- the ability to sign up to updates on an issue, allowing Essex Highways to make the reporting map clearer
- defect photos so residents can decide if the issue they wish to report is an existing one, or something new

A successful trial of reporting urgent issues online took place between February and April. During the trial, 242 online enquiries were received with 58% requiring emergency action.

The number of emergency issues reported during the trial increased by 84%, highlighting the effectiveness of the new online reporting option.

Other positive outcomes from the trial included a significant reduction in the average time taken to make issues safe, with response times reduced by more than half.

The number of highways-related calls also reduced, saving approximately 23 hours of call centre agent time in March alone.

Arrow have ceased trading.

I don't believe that ECC got any forward warning.

Once they heard, they have been working urgently to identify the best approach for the services due to be run by the company.

Services affected are

1. Service 10 Temple Grove to Pleshey
2. Service 12 Wickford to Billericay
3. Service 45 Bradwell to Soth Woodham Ferrers
4. Service 99A Chelmsford to Woodham Walter
5. 322/323/324 Great Dunmow to Saffron Walden

Announcement on alternative arrangements here;

<https://www.travessex.co.uk/news/update-on-bus-services-12-45-10-dart-3-322-323-324-and-99a-previously-operated-by-arrow-taxis-and-essex-and-suffolk-dart>