

## **ECC information for March 2022 meeting**

The Essex County Council [Arts and Cultural Fund](#), will unlock £1,000,000 of funding over five years to support the creative sector.

Creative individuals and organisations that submit successful applications will see the Essex County Council Arts and Cultural Fund provide grants to deliver projects to help support and rejuvenate the Essex creative sector, as well as the county's towns and city high streets.

Applications for this year opened on Tuesday 4 January 2022, and close on Monday 28 February 2022 at midnight. (Applicants will be advised of outcomes by Thursday 31 March 2022 with a view to supported projects being delivered from April 2022 onwards).

You can read more about the Fund on this link here: [Arts and Cultural Fund | Explore Essex \(explore-essex.com\)](#)

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Time is running out for residents to have their say on Essex County Council's (ECC) draft 'Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026 draft plan' with the survey closing online at the close of **Friday 21 January**. Paper copies should be returned as soon as possible.

The draft plan and survey can be found at [www.essex.gov.uk/everyoneslibrary](http://www.essex.gov.uk/everyoneslibrary).

Helping children and adults improve their literacy, encouraging people to enjoy reading for pleasure and increasing the range of online resources available to customers are just some of the commitments in the plan.

It also commits to keeping all 74 libraries open with investment in training and development for library staff.

The plan also sets out three key aims for the next four years and details how these will be achieved.

### **Library Service and Literacy**

- Books, e-books, digital and online.
- Supporting children to be school ready and helping adults to improve their literacy.
- Building people's confidence in reading.
- Nurturing people's love for books.

### **Infrastructure and Communications**

- Improving the Library infrastructure (Buildings and IT).
- Creating welcoming, accessible places that also provide more opportunities for communities to use.
- Thinking of new ways to communicate and engage with residents so they know what is on offer.

### **Supporting our communities and levelling up**

- Making sure all residents have the same access to the support and skills they need to achieve their aspirations, regardless of where they live in the county.
- Improving opportunities for everyone, locally and countywide.
- Encouraging new users and thinking of new ways to attract them.

If you haven't done so yet, please take our online survey and let us know your views on our draft plan. We are keen to hear from as many residents as possible.

The libraries are a key tool in helping us to deliver our Levelling Up agenda, right across Essex.

This is everyone's opportunity to help mould what libraries in Essex will look like in the future and I hope you will take the chance to make your views known so these can be considered ahead of plans being finalised."

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### **New booking System for vans at 9 recycling centres across Essex**

*From Monday 28 February 2022, residents visiting recycling centres in a van (including pick-ups and vehicles towing trailers with more than one axle) will need to book a slot online in advance.*

Essex County Council are trialling a booking system for vans to help manage waiting times, reduce congestion, and improve the customer experience at recycling centres. The changes are in response to feedback from residents that they have been experiencing long queues and delays when visiting the sites.

The booking system is only applicable to the recycling centres that accept vans, pick-ups and large trailers. These are:

- Braintree Recycling Centre
- Brentwood Recycling Centre
- Chelmsford Recycling Centre
- Clacton Recycling Centre
- Colchester Recycling Centre
- Harlow Recycling Centre
- Maldon Recycling Centre
- Pitsea Recycling Centre
- Saffron Walden Recycling Centre

Vans, pick-ups and large trailers are **not accepted** at any other sites, **except for blue badge holders**.

Residents will be able to book their slots in advance via a link on the [Love Essex website](#). If you are visiting in a car or as a pedestrian, you do not need to book a slot. Blue badge holders are also not required to book their slot in advance.

Cllr Malcolm Buckley, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling, said: "Vans and large trailers take up a lot of space at recycling centres and often take a long time to unload. This can lead to long queues and waiting times to access sites. This is why we are trialling a booking system for these types of vehicles so we can better manage service demand and reduce queuing at peak times. Residents will continue to be encouraged to switch off their engines when waiting to access the recycling centres. We will monitor the trial to measure success and can make amendments as necessary."

For full details and FAQs, please visit the [Love Essex website](#).

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### **Message from Boundary Commission**

Following our announcement in December of the locations and dates for the public hearings during the second consultation phase of the current review of constituencies, I am pleased to advise that the booking system is now open, with details of the specific venue for each location where hearings will be taking place.

Those wishing to make an oral representation at a public hearing are strongly encouraged to book a timed slot in advance. To book, [visit the dedicated public hearings page on our website](#) and click on your chosen hearing. You will then be invited to register via the booking platform Eventbrite. [A step by step guide for booking via Eventbrite](#) is published on our public hearings webpage. The only speaking slots automatically reserved are on the morning of the first day of the first hearing in each region, for the centrally-designated official spokesperson of each of the qualifying political parties (in England, Conservative, Green, Labour, Liberal Democrat) to present each party's views on our proposals across the whole of that region.

While Covid remains a concern, we plan to take proportionate steps - in line with official guidance - to minimise the risk of transmission, while still allowing these statutory 'in person' hearings to take place. You can find further details in our published [Guide to the public](#)

[hearings](#), which should also answer most other questions you may have. Should you not wish or be able to attend a hearing in person, however, please be assured that in our subsequent analysis of views, to consider whether and to what extent to revise our proposals, we treat oral and written representations with equal weight.

We currently propose to publish the representations received during the first consultation period on our website at [www.bcereviews.org.uk](http://www.bcereviews.org.uk) on 7 February. Please note, however, this is to allow people a good opportunity to read and consider their views on these representations before the consultation on them starts on 22 February: because the length of the consultation period is fixed by law, we will not be able to accept or consider any comments received prior to this latter date.

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Highway Code changes reflect Essex County Council's Safer, Greener, Healthier active travel campaign

People walking and cycling in Essex now have priority travel on roads and junctions after important changes to the Highway Code came into force on Saturday 29th January.

The changes are outlined in full by the Safer Essex Roads Partnership, a countywide partnership which includes Essex County Council, Essex Police and Borough, City and District councils in Essex, here: <https://saferessexroads.org/the-highway-code-eight-changes-you-need-to-know/>.

Cllr Lee Scott, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, said: "Safety of all road-users is our number one priority. Essex County Council fully endorses these changes to the Highway Code as they fit in with our Safer, Greener, Healthier campaign to make it easier and safer for people to walk or cycle in Essex.

"These changes are not anti-car, cars are an important method of transport in Essex. We must however, support residents to make active travel choices, which will lead to a healthier population, reducing pressure on the NHS and, at the same time, reducing emissions and helping clean up the environment."

As a short guide, the changes to the Highway Code for pedestrians include:

- When people are crossing or waiting to cross at a junction, other traffic should give way.
- If people have started crossing and traffic wants to turn into the road, the people crossing have priority and the traffic should give way.
- People driving, riding a motorcycle or cycling must give way to people on a zebra crossing and people walking and cycling on a parallel crossing.

For cyclists, the changes to the Highway Code include:

- When turning into or out of a side road, people cycling should give way to people walking who are crossing or waiting to cross.
- Not passing people walking, riding a horse or driving a horse-drawn vehicle closely or at high speed, particularly from behind.
- Cyclists can now ride in the centre of their lane on quiet roads, in slower-moving traffic and at the approach to junctions or road narrowings.
- Riders can now keep at least 0.5 metres (just over 1.5 feet) away from the kerb edge (and further where it is safer) when riding on busy roads with vehicles moving faster than them.

A further important point contained in the changes to the code is the advice to people getting out of parked cars to use the 'Dutch reach' method of opening car doors.

This means drivers or passengers in a vehicle should open the door using their hand on the opposite side to the door they are opening - such as using their left hand to open a door on their right-hand side.

This will make them turn their head to look over their shoulder behind them. They are then less likely to cause injury to people on the pavement or people cycling or riding a motorcycle passing on the road.

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### More support for adults experiencing financial hardship

Up to 3,900 of the county's most vulnerable adults will be receiving letters in the coming days that include a £200 voucher from Essex County Council (ECC) to help with energy costs and food.

This is a new voucher scheme funded by ECC's Household Support Fund (HSF), a fund set up with a one-off £9.4m grant from the Department for Work and Pensions in October 2021.

In November, the county council announced how this £9.4m would be allocated. This included allocations for free school meals during the holidays, support for rough sleepers and support for residents who need help with food and utility bills.

With the cost of living continuing to rise nationally, this new voucher scheme will allow those who may be struggling to use the vouchers to feed themselves and their families, and keep warm this winter.

The vouchers, which can be redeemed at any Post Office have been posted out this week to up to 3,900 adults in Essex, who have known care and support needs.

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Cllr John Spence said: "With the cost of living continuing to rise, we must support those most vulnerable in our community.

"Only this week, we have seen the energy price cap increase and people are worried.

"We hope that this one off payment - which is completely separate from the government support schemes announced this week- will help some of those struggling in the interim and relieve some of the worry.

"This is just one of many schemes we are delivering to help our residents who are struggling financially and we will continue to do all we can to be there for them when they need us."

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance, Cllr Louise McKinlay said: "The last few years have been hard and we know many people are feeling the strain at this time.

"The Household Support Fund enables us to help those in need this winter. It has kept and continues to keep people warm, put food on the table, support those most vulnerable and hopefully alleviate some of the pressure and stress for those who are struggling.

"I would urge anyone who feels they would benefit from some help to see if they are eligible for support and look at our website to see what funding is available and how to access it."

Information of what additional support is available can be found here: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/money-debt-and-benefits/emergency-money-and-food>

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Save money on solar panels through group buying scheme Solar Together

Solar Together offers a convenient way for residents to power their homes with renewable energy.

Essex residents who own their own home or have permission from the landlord to install a solar PV system can register now for Solar Together. Small and medium-sized businesses can also apply for the group buying scheme.

This Essex County Council backed scheme helps buyers through the process of purchasing high-quality solar panels, offering lower prices than the open market and pairing up residents with trusted suppliers. Solar Together Essex helps residents to save money on both installation and future energy bills.

Battery storage is also available under the scheme. This saves unused energy generated by solar panels, meaning that people can use energy whenever they want, rather than just during the day, further cutting their energy bills.

Choosing a supplier for solar energy can be quite a daunting process. The Solar Together scheme has been designed to make the process simple for residents

- Residents register their interest online from 7 February 2022. To register simply provide information about the roof such as size and orientation
- A supplier auction will be held on 15 March 2022 when approved solar suppliers will bid for the work. The more people that register, the better the deal should be for each household
- From 4 April residents will be contacted with a personal recommendation, costs and specification for solar panel installation
- Residents have until 13 May 2022 to decide whether to accept the recommendation and there is no obligation to continue
- If residents accept the recommendation, then a survey and installation date are agreed

This is the third year that the scheme has run with the 2021 auction achieving a discount of 37% on average market prices for solar PV installations.

Hannah from Chelmsford purchased ten solar panels and battery storage as part of Solar Together last year. She said: "Our installation was painless; I was delighted that even on a dull day electricity was produced and our electricity bill reduced by two thirds in the first month. I would highly recommend Solar Together!"

Cllr Peter Schwier, Climate Czar, Essex County Council said: "With rising energy costs and environmental concerns many of us are considering investing in solar energy for our homes. By using the Solar Together group-buying scheme you can be assured that you'll receive a high-quality product and service and, thanks to the power of group-buying, a great price."

For more information or to register interest in the scheme visit:

<https://solartogether.co.uk/essex/home>



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Please see below the link where all of the information can be found in regards to the new VAS process/application guide.

<https://www.essexhighways.org/applications/apply-to-install-a-vas-or-sid-illuminated-sign>

Once the signs have been purchased by the Parish Councils they can locate the signs wherever they deem suitable.

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There are an estimated 150,000 unpaid carers in Essex who play a vital role in supporting people across the county to live independently within their own homes and communities.

Whilst rewarding, caring can also be demanding. Children, young people and adults can face many challenges. Maintaining school attendance, employment, social activities and friendships can be hard and that can impact carers' own physical, emotional and financial wellbeing.

Essex County Council (ECC) has today (Monday 14th February 2022) launched its proposed Essex Carers All Age Strategy 2022-26 Commitments. These commitments have been produced with carers themselves and the many voluntary and community sector organisations that support them. We are now asking the many more carers across Essex their views about them.

#### **Our commitments to carers:**

- We will ensure carers can easily access the information, advice, guidance and support when they need it, early into their caring role.
- We will develop professional practice and processes to improve identification of, and support to carers.
- We will improve transitions for carers as they move through specific phases or life events in their caring role.
- We will ensure carers have access to good quality support including short breaks.
- We work to ensure carers' needs and rights will be understood and recognised across Essex communities.
- We recognise that carers will be the experts that influence, shape and be involved in the decisions that are intended to improve their support and wellbeing.

Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, Cllr John Spence said: "Unpaid carers are heroes in our communities, often putting their lives on hold to support their loved ones.

"It can be a rewarding task but does not come without its challenges. We want to make sure we are there for these individuals and support them when they need it.

"We have been listening to carers from across the country to understand how we can improve on what we already do and what will make a difference to them in their caring role. Following this engagement, we have been able to co-produce with them our six commitments to carers which we are now asking the wider care community to feedback on."

ECC is reaching out directly to carers of all ages to engage on these commitments. Communities in the county are also welcomed to have their say by taking part in the [online survey](#) between Monday 14th February and 13th March 2022.

The draft commitments and online survey can be found here: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/rci/essex-carers-all-age-strategy-2022-26-consultation/>

Feedback received will be used to help shape the final 2022-26 Essex Carers All-Age Strategy due to be launched in April 2022.

If you require the survey in an alternative format, please contact [essexcarers@essex.gov.uk](mailto:essexcarers@essex.gov.uk).

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Essex Residents are encouraged to have their say on the new health and wellbeing priorities for Essex

A new joint health and wellbeing strategy setting out the key priorities that will enable residents of all ages to live healthier lives has been drawn up for Essex.

The draft Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026 (JHWS) is based on insight and evidence identified through the county's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

It sets out key areas where there is an opportunity for Essex Health and Wellbeing Board partners to achieve real impact through local initiatives and action.

The board has today (Thursday 17th February 2022) [launched a consultation](#) on the JHWS and is asking for residents' views on these priorities before Friday 25th March.

Cllr John Spence, ECC Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, said: "This consultation is extremely important and I would encourage everyone to take part. It is critical that we understand the needs and wishes of our residents if we, along with all our partners, are to correctly prioritise and shape our approach to health and wellbeing in the coming four years."

The overall ambition of the HWB is to reduce the gap in life expectancy, increase years of healthy life expectancy and reduce the differences in health outcomes across the county's population.

To reach these long-term ambitions, the new strategy identifies five key overarching priority areas for the JHWS. These are:

- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Physical activity and healthy weight
- Supporting long term independence
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Health inequalities and the wider determinants of health

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