



Maplestead Magna Carta

Great Maplestead Parish Council's Award-Winning Newsletter

The Council's statutory duties/discretionary powers...

...and their scope and limitations

Now that the Council has its full complement of Councillors, it is worth re-iterating the extent of its statutory/discretionary powers.

Councillors have a responsibility both to represent parishioners and consider and undertake actions for the benefit of the parish. Although the Council's budget is just a small proportion of householders' Council Tax payments, spending this money most effectively – to the advantage of everyone within the parish – is a fundamental part of its remit.

Who's got the power?

The Council and/or individual Councillors have **no legal powers of enforcement** – their **statutory duties** collectively are limited to:

- raising a precept (the Council's budget)
- holding an annual meeting and 3 others each year
- appointing someone to be responsible for the Council's administration and financial affairs

Any other powers are **discretionary** – so, where the statutory duty for delivering services or making decisions rests with a higher authority, the Council can only **make representations** on behalf of the parish or **comment/object as necessary**.

It can, however, **provide guidance/advice** on the right authority to contact **if individual residents have a complaint** or wish to see action taken on a matter of specific concern or interest to them.

Who's responsible for what?

If you have a complaint, or want action taken on a particular matter, it is always better to **contact the responsible authority directly**. As the one affected, you'll be able to provide the necessary first-hand information that should enable it **to deal with your request appropriately**.

In general terms:

- **Braintree District Council** is the body legally responsible for delivering the services, facilities, amenities and planning decisions that people and businesses in our Parish rely on.
- **Essex County Council** is responsible for, amongst other things, policing, social care provision and highway maintenance.

BDC is therefore your initial point of contact for reporting and dealing with planning matters, recycling, waste collection, dog waste fouling, anti-social behaviour, noise/light nuisance, fly-tipping and so on; **ECC** is your contact for, amongst other things, transport, policing and pothole concerns.

How to make contact:

Braintree District Council can be contacted in various different ways:

- via its website: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/>
- by phone: 01376 552525 between 8.30am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday (not Bank Holidays).
- or on social media between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday (not Bank Holidays), with a response guaranteed within one working day:
 - Facebook: [/braintreedistrictcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/braintreedistrictcouncil)
 - Twitter: [@braintreedc](https://twitter.com/braintreedc)
 - Instagram: [@braintreedc](https://www.instagram.com/braintreedc)

Essex County Council can be contacted:

- via its website: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/> where directions for answering enquiries or reporting on specific subjects can be found
- by phone: 0345 743 0430 between 8.30am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday (not Bank Holidays)
- or online: [general enquiries online form](https://www.essex.gov.uk/general-enquiries)

General matters or other local concerns can also be referred to the parish's **District** and **County** representative, **Cllr. Peter Schwier**, either by e-mailing him at cllr.pschwier@braintree.gov.uk or at cllr.peter.schwier@essex.gov.uk

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Local Bus Service Consultation

Essex County Council's Public Consultation into its strategy for 'Supported Local Bus Services 2024–2028' closed on 5th October.



The Council had concerns about the Consultation's primarily on-line format, which discriminated against all those lacking internet access or technological capability.

This, and the Council's more specific concerns about the adverse effects that withdrawal of the **F315** bus service would have on the community, were contained in its response, available to read at: <https://greatmaplesteadpc.co.uk/assets/document/s/bus-service-consultation-respo>

The proposed **DigiGo** fully-electric, on-demand, app-based replacement seems to be a technology-driven 'green' solution designed primarily to save costs, rather than being an easy-to-use, customer-focussed service meeting residents' actual needs.

The **Government** is giving **ECC** new funding of **£4.89m/year** until 2025 to help it protect rural bus services with low passenger numbers. The Council has offered to be involved in any further discussions with **ECC** on the Consultation's findings.

Playing Field – the next steps...

Work on the main Playing Field Development Programme is now coming to an end, with just a final few elements to be completed.

The **Council** is considering the installation of a new tyre 'scramble' and a re-instatement of some of the original toddler play equipment in the play area.

Following a social media consultation, the proposed installation of a five-a-side football goal in the field near the play area has been agreed, together with some planting of suitable shrubs along the line of the metal boundary fence to 'soften' its lines.

A new **Working Party** is being set up to bring the **Mindfulness/Sensory Garden** plans outlined in the original development proposal to fruition. The garden, located in the south-east corner of the playing field, will offer mental and physical health well-being benefits both to residents and visitors, being a quiet, tranquil, secluded area in which people will be able to relax and socialise.

The design and installation of the garden will be community-led, featuring plants donated by local residents and businesses and hopefully re-cycling some of the old play equipment woodwork.



Practical assistance with designing and constructing the garden, along with any financial or material contributions, would be very welcome. Please let the **Parish Clerk** know how you wish to help.

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Season of the Switch



The **ECC-backed Essex Energy Switch**, a collective energy switching scheme whose suppliers provide 100% renewable energy and can help residents and small businesses to economise by cutting their gas and electricity bills, was re-introduced in September.

Those that register for the scheme could make savings by cutting their energy bills and fixing their tariffs for 12-months. Potential savings will vary depending on personal factors, such as your current tariff, payment method and consumption. The cap on standard variable tariffs has come down by £151 for the last quarter of 2023 but a fixed tariff will offer peace of mind and price stability for the next year, whatever happens in 2024.

Registration – which needs to be done again even if you have registered in previous years – is easy to do either online www.essex.gov.uk/energyswitch or by calling **Big Community Switch** on 0800 048 8439. You will need a recent energy bill to hand.

There is no obligation to switch providers after registering but, if you do, **Essex Energy Switch** will take all the hassle out of changing suppliers.

Essex EV Charge Point Strategy

ECC is putting together a strategy to address its future EV charging infrastructure.

ECC's EV and Charging Lead has confirmed that **Parish Councils** are being encouraged to help plug gaps in the county's EV charging infrastructure and has agreed that a charging provision in the parish would be beneficial both for residents and visitors.

The village will be assessed for **ECC's On-Street Residential Charging Point Fund** eligibility and, should there be no suitable on-street charger locations available, the Playing Field car park may be a preferred alternative.

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Forthcoming Events

The following are some of the upcoming village events (*these at the Village Hall) you may want to note for your diary:

- ✚ **Sun 15th Oct* Harvest Village Walk** – meet at **11.00am**. Cost: **£2.50/person** – dogs & children **free**. Half-way drinks + refreshments
- ✚ **Sat 11th Nov*: Quiz Night** – Doors open **7.00pm** – start **7.30pm**. Entry **£5** per person. Maximum **10 teams, 6 people/team**. Bring your own drinks, glasses and nibbles. Book your entry by **4th November**: phone Dorothy Weight (461 643 or 07528 910 700)
- ✚ **Fri 24th Nov*: Paint & Plonk Night** – Doors open **7.00pm**. Cost: **£30/person** (materials included). A fun paint night with a grand cow! Tickets from M. Meggo (474 285)

This Event is now Sold Out!

- ✚ **Sat 25th Nov: Festive Coffee Morning** – in **St Giles' Church. 10.30am – 12.00pm**. There'll be a raffle, cake stall, Christmas decorations for sale and lots more...
- ✚ **Thurs 7th Dec*: Maple Leaves** present – '**Shanty Folk**' – at **7.00pm**. Come along and enjoy a fun evening of traditional songs and sea shanties with this well-known local group. Audience participation compulsory! Members (**Free**): non-members (**£3**) welcome.
- ✚ **Sat 2nd Dec: New Village Christmas Tree Event** – on the **Church Street triangle**. Welcome in Christmas by dressing and lighting the tree at **6.00pm** – bring baubles! – followed by communal carol singing and mulled wine.

Information about all village activities is on the 'Events' page of the Parish Council website.

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Contacting the Council

Any comments, requests or correspondence should initially be made to the Parish Clerk:

**Ann Crisp, New House, St Giles Close
Great Maplestead, CO9 2RW**
Tel: **01787 460 216** (4-6pm Mon-Thurs)
E-mail: anncrisp@greatmaplesteadpc.co.uk
Website: <https://greatmaplesteadpc.co.uk>