



Maplestead Magna Carta

Great Maplestead Parish Council's Award-Winning Newsletter

Bus Consultation Decision: F315 to be Withdrawn...

...losing a valued amenity

Following Essex County Council's 2023 Public Consultation on its rural bus strategy, a recommendation has been made to withdraw the local F315 bus service from July.



While the consultation showed strong support by residents for local bus services, highlighting the essential role they play in people's lives, in an announcement released

early in January, **ECC** reported that their conclusion was to withdraw the F315 service due to low use.

This decision was arrived at despite apparently giving careful consideration to comments made by respondents to the survey about the adverse impacts that cessation of this service would have on them and others in the community,

In an attempt to mitigate these impacts, **ECC** has suggested replacing F315 with an extension of the existing DART 3 demand-responsive service. **ECC's** view is that this extension will enable bus travel in the area "to be maintained and potentially expanded" and is "considered to be the best way of ensuring the sustainability of the service". It is noted that extending DART 3's coverage will help reduce this service's current high operating costs...

DART 3 works on a telephone or e-mail booking system familiar to users of F315 and fares are the same. However, unlike F315, there is no operating schedule – it is purely demand-responsive.

Although this allows flexibility, DART 3 is not a taxi service and will not operate if there is demand from just one passenger – it requires a number of people wanting to do similar journeys at similar times.

DART 3 operates between 06.00-20.00 Mondays to Saturdays, so regular users for work or school may still be catered for – if there is sufficient demand.

The **Council** is studying a report on the practical problems suffered elsewhere in the country as a result of substituting a scheduled rural bus service with a demand-responsive one. Assurances will be sought from **ECC** that it has proper solutions to such problems before implementing any changes.

More detailed information on the consultation outcomes and conclusions can be found at:

https://cmis.essex.gov.uk/essexcmis5/Decisions/t/abid/78/ctl/ViewCMIS_DecisionDetails/mid/422/Id/9815/Default.aspx

Bin Collection Rules to Change...

Braintree District Council will be introducing a new waste and recycling policy from 1st April, meaning bin-lorries will no longer collect waste that doesn't fit into grey wheelie bins.

This new policy means that 'side waste' left out next to these bins **will not be collected**; what's more, the bins won't be emptied unless their lids are fully shut. In addition, **residents** who continue to put out 'side waste' for collection **could face being fined...**



The ostensible reason for the introduction of this policy is to reduce the amount of non-recyclable rubbish people put out for collection and encourage an increase in recycling. Apparently the tonnage of grey wheelie bin waste collected in **Braintree District** – on average 463kg (½ ton) per household – is significantly higher than in other parts of Essex. Whether this objective will be achieved is moot.

Councillor for the Environment **Tom Cunningham** says the policy: "...will help save energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, positively impact the environment and pave the way for a greener and more sustainable future for generations to come."

Unfortunately, coming so soon after the 4th March launch of **BDC's** controversial green bin surcharge, some people may think that this policy, introduced with no public consultation, is a further monetising of part of the waste collection service previously included within overall Council Tax funding.

The good news however is that, provided your clear recycling sacks contain the correct items, there is **still no restriction** on the number that you can put out for collection.

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Chargepoint Update

Believ, the provider with whom the Council has been discussing the feasibility of installing a 50kW EV rapid charge-point in the Playing Field car park...

...has determined, along with UK Power Networks, that an electricity supply suitable for such an installation is available.

More details in the next issue...



Playing Field – still to come...

Further improvements to the Playing Field's facilities and amenities are still in the pipeline and are scheduled for action during 2024.

Car Park:

Adverse weather conditions over recent months, together with increased use of the car park, have resulted in significant surface deterioration.



Although most of the deepest potholes have now been temporarily filled, it is evident that 'make-do-and-mend' attempts to maintain and repair the surface do not provide a suitable long-term fix.

The Council is currently investigating how to effect a permanent solution, using more durable and sustainable, eco-friendly materials that will bring the surface up to the quality standard of the rest of the Playing Field's improved amenities.

Mindfulness/Sensory Garden:

Following a viewing from BDC's grant-awarding Community Gardens and Open Spaces Fund representatives, work on plans for this additional Playing Field amenity are now set to go ahead.

Dorothy Weight, who is the Council's lead on this initiative, is now looking for volunteers to help with the initial planning and, later, the planting, seating, signage and construction elements needed to bring this community project to fruition.

If you are able to contribute to this project in any way at all, please contact the **Parish Clerk**.

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Budgeting for an Uncertain Future

At its January meeting the Council reviewed various 2024/25 Budget & Precept options.

It was agreed that the Precept (the portion of Council Tax received by the Parish) should only be increased to cover any anticipated inflationary cost rises and maintain its statutory level of reserves.

To help minimise its deficit, an annual Precept increase of **£9.19** – or **less than 18p/week** – per Band D household was proposed and agreed.

It is understood that a proposed **4.9% increase** in Essex CC's budget is set to be approved on 12th February; meanwhile, the BDC budget is showing a **£2m deficit** and is still to be approved.

Latest Planning News

The following application was considered by the Council at its meeting on 17th January:

Application Received:

- ✚ **23/02942/FUL** 6 Toldish Hall Road – Erection of a 3-bedroom dwelling.

The Council's qualified response can be found at: <https://publicaccess.braintree.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple&searchType=Application>. Type or copy the **planning reference** into the 'Search' box and open the files.

The following was also noted, for information:

- ✚ **23/02501/FUL** Rangers Hall, Hosdens Lane – Change of use of **Poll Miles Hall** from residential annexe to independent dwelling.

Application Refused December 2023

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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:

- ✚ **Mon 19th Feb*: 2024 Lent Course**. Start of a **5-week** course themed on **Les Misérables** by Victor Hugo. Further information from Reverend Beverley Vincent (460 273)
- ✚ **Thurs 29th Feb*: Gardeners' Question Time**, a light-hearted Q&A with a local gardening guru to prepare for the **Autumn Show**. Starts **7.00pm**. There'll be wine, tea, coffee, nibbles and a raffle. **Admission £1**. More details from Carol Brownlie (461 527)
- ✚ **Thurs 7th Mar*: The Maple Leaves** present – '**The Face of China**' – at **7.00pm**. Guest Speaker **Paula Short** will be giving an illustrated talk on this fascinating country. Members (**Free**): non-members (**£3**) welcome.
- ✚ **Sat 16th Mar*: The Maple Leaves** present their '**Big Breakfast**', from **10.00am-1.00pm**. For prices see posters and social media nearer the time - everybody welcome. Raffle proceeds to the Foodbank. More details from Carol Brownlie (461 527)
- ✚ **Mon 1st Apr*: Easter Village Walk**. Meet at **11.00am** in car park. Cost: **£2.50/person**. Dogs & children **free**. Half-way drinks + refreshments

Further social events are currently being planned for this year. More information will be on **Maplestead Mates** and on the 'Events' page of the **Parish Council website** nearer the time.

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Contacting the Council

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

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