

Chairman's Report – September 2025

Areas of Responsibility

Footpaths

❖ Report:

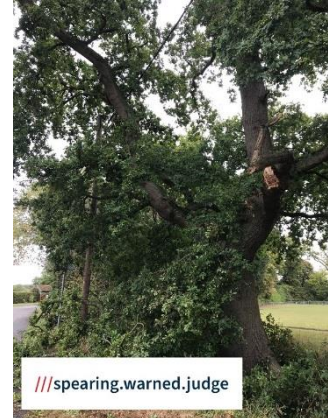
- Tony Hume is continuing to monitor overgrowth and dealing with those parts of the network where maintenance is most needed.
- As from the beginning of this month a number of hedges have been trimmed/flailed, re-instating walkable width to some footpaths.
- The loss of a branch and the potentially unsafe condition of a tree on the Monks Lodge Road boundary of the Playing Field, constituting a possible danger to power lines, was reported to **ECC** on 4th September.

Reference Number: 2993904

Issue: Vegetation Problems

Location: Monks Lodge Road

Current status: awaiting inspection



❖ Action Plan

- Track and report on any resolution of the above
- Carry on with footpath maintenance as required.

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Communications

1. Website/Facebook

❖ Report:

- Since the last meeting the website's **News** page has been updated with information about:
 - **DaRT3** – Information about the proposed changes to this bus service, with links to the consultation, which ends on 27th October (see **Attachment 1**)
 - **Bags of Taste** – Details of a free ingredients offer available to financially vulnerable residents, enabling them to prepare healthy meals, funded by **BDC's Cost of Living Fund**
 - **Cost of Living Survey** – BDC's consultation to help shape future services and initiatives to better meet community needs
- Links to the **Maplestead Magna Carta** continue to be posted on both the **Council** and **Maplestead Mates** Facebook pages, for widest local coverage.

❖ Action Plan:

- Subject to the Council's agreement to the costs of the suggested '.gov.uk' change, proceed with its implementation in 2025.
- The Facebook page will continue to share relevant posts with Maplestead Mates in order for its information to reach the widest possible local audience.

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2. E-newsletter (Maplestead Magna Carta) [Agenda Item 12]

❖ Action Plan:

- **Issue 64** is scheduled for publication **w/c 29th September 2025** (tbc).
- Editorial content for this issue is suggested to include:
 - Bus Service Consultation
 - Cost of Living Survey
 - Playing Field path repairs
 - Bags of Taste
 - Planning News
 - Forthcoming events
- Links to an online version will be posted on the website and also be published on the **Council & Maplestead Mates** Facebook pages.

Local Bus Service Consultation

Essex County Council (ECC) is reviewing its support for local bus services and is asking residents to share their views via a **Public Consultation** that runs until **Monday 27th October**, focussing on services that are currently supported by Essex taxpayers and mainly operate either in rural areas or on evenings and Sundays – times when buses are less commercially viable.

Options being consulted on include:

- Continuing the services as they are now
- Redesigning the services to reflect how they are used
- Returning some of the services to commercial operation

The two proposals for changes that will affect the local area are:

Proposal 1

To replace the current **DaRT3** on-demand service with a timetabled service that will provide links to community hospitals in Sudbury and Halstead.

- **One return journey one day a week**, covering the areas:
Alphamstone, Ashen, Belchamp Otten, Belchamp St Paul, Belchamp Walter, Birdbrook, Borley, Foxearth, **Gestingthorpe**, Great Henny, **Great Maplestead**, Lamarsh, **Little Maplestead**, Little Yeldham, Middleton, Pentlow, Stambourne, Tilbury Juxta Clare, Toppesfield, Twinstead, Wickham St Paul
- **Five return daytime journeys per week**, covering the areas:
Bulmer, Bulmer Tye, Bures Hamlet, Colne Engaine, Greenstead Green, Halstead Town (Passengers unable to access conventional services), **Pebmarsh**, Ridgewell, White Colne (areas not served by service 88)

Proposal 2

To replace **DaRT3** with a **Digital Demand Responsive Transport (D-DRT)** flexible public transport service operating in real-time, responding to booking requests by passengers, within a defined geographical area and time window per day (e.g. 7.00am–10.00pm). Vehicles would go to pick-up and drop-off locations confirmed as part of each booking request, enabling journeys to be shared by multiple passengers who are travelling to similar locations at similar times.

D-DRT is primarily booked via an app, which enables passengers to:

- Plan, book and pay for journeys via their smartphone
- Receive real-time updates on vehicle arrival and drop off times
- Share trips dynamically with other passengers to optimise journeys
- Seamlessly connect with commercial bus and train services via transport interchanges or urban areas

A phone line would still be available for those without smartphone access, or who prefer not to book digitally via an app.

D-DRT is supposedly best suited to rural areas where fixed route services are neither sustainable nor able to meet diverse travel needs efficiently.

Residents' views are important in deciding the future of the bus service. The consultation link is: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/iptu/braintree/>
An announcement of the outcome will be made later this year.