

Chairman’s Report – September 2023

General

Levelling-Up

A couple of meetings of the Braintree District **Community Reference Group** for the **Levelling-Up** project have now been held – one in Sible Hedingham on 15th August, attended by a representative from Great Maplestead, and another in Ridgewell on 12th September.

This initiative seems, in essence, to be a **BDC** fact-finding mission at the moment. A pre-meeting **Briefing Document** (full version available on request), including an **ECC Investment Mapping** update, was issued before the second **CRG** meeting. Interestingly the section on transport contains information that appears to conflict with the bus service withdrawal proposals in **ECC’s ‘Supported Local Bus Services’** consultation:

| Investment Map - Delivery | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|----------------------|
| Themes/Activity | Description | Aligned outcome/output & area | Activity phase | Target Delivery Date |
| Transport | | | | |
| • Digigo | A fully electric shared public transport service which offers on-demand or pre-bookable travel <u>in parts of Essex</u> through Travel Essex app. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving local transport connectivity and accessibility Service is available in Black Notley, Great Notley, Dunmow, suburban & rural areas south east of Braintree town centre | Delivery | Ongoing |
| • Braintree Community Transport | Braintree Community Transport is operated through Braintree District Council, and runs a social car scheme, minibus hire and a dial-a-ride scheme. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removing transport as a barrier Ensuring residents have access to services and opportunities | Delivery | Ongoing |
| • Cycling Strategy | To make cycling and walking in the Braintree District safer, more convenient and desirable. This is for all ages and abilities, whether for work, school or leisure. We want to create a better connected network of high quality cycling and walking routes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out our policy to support cycling. It presents a plan of action to deliver greater numbers of cycling trips, with a target of doubling the amount of cycle trips in the District by 2030. | Delivery | Ongoing |
| • Bus Service Improvement Plan | An improved bus network in parts of Essex | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing an improved bus network in our levelling up areas | Delivery | Ongoing |
| • Electric Vehicle Charge point Strategy | Our new Essex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy is an important first step in helping to improve access to EV charging points in the county | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver ‘the Right Charger in the Right Place’. By 2030, residents, businesses, and visitors to Essex, where travel is necessary, will be able to use electric vehicles and be assured there is an accessible, reliable, easy-to-use, safe, and fairly priced charging network | Consultation and adoption of Phase 1 Strategy | Ongoing |
| • Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan | Provision of high quality LTN 1/20 compliant walking and cycling routes across the country. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving health and wellbeing, implementing infrastructure for opportunity, as well as building sustainable communities and achieving equality through diversity and inclusion | At consultation | Ongoing |
| • Braintree Future Transport Strategy | Created jointly with Braintree District Council, the proposed Strategy focusses on Braintree town, looking at how people travel, the transport challenges and opportunities in the town, and sets out a vision and objectives to help guide future developments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Braintree to have a high-quality and innovative transport system that responds to the challenges of climate change and offers enhanced connectivity, accessibility and sustainable growth. | Being finalised | On-going |

A watching brief will be kept to see how (or if) the project develops from hereon.

Essex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy

As per the graphic above, this **Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy** sets out how **ECC** will work with **local authorities** and partners to place charging points in key county locations to maximise use – putting the “*The Right Charger in the Right Place*”.

The strategy looks at an initial 2-3 year timeframe (up to 2025, so well within the period of this Council’s term of office) to specifically address the charging infrastructure for EVs

Since our last meeting two EV Charger suppliers – **Instavolt** and **Allego**, who have already installed chargers in **local council-owned locations** – have been contacted regarding a potential installation in Great Maplestead. Both replied that this village is not the type of location they would currently invest in, mainly due to **a lack of facilities and the low volume of traffic passing through the area**. Their business appears to be commercially-based, mainly favouring locations that have a high density of people and cars or a High Street nearby that attracts a large number of customers.

Katie Pudney – the **EV & Charging Lead** (!) at **ECC** – has confirmed that, as part of the strategy, **Parish Councils** will be encouraged to utilise their assets to accommodate charging points. More specifically, she agrees that having an EV charging provision in Great Maplestead **would be beneficial for both residents and visitors**.

She has therefore asked Martin Hale at EV Charger supplier **Qwello** – with whom **ECC** are currently partnered to deliver a number of charging points across the county – to assess the village as one of the locations for its current **On-Street Residential Charging Point Fund** project and, if there are no suitable on-street options, to consider the playing field car park as the preferred alternative.

A funding request has also been made by GMPC to the **Energy Saving Trust's On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS)**. Unfortunately, the 23/24 scheme hasn't been launched yet but the **EST** have recorded our expression of interest and will be in touch once the scheme opens to applications.

In 2024/25 **ECC** will be submitting a bid for funding to the **Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI)** fund. It has provisionally allocated **£8.3m of capital funding** for charging points, which presents **ECC** with an opportunity to plug (!) any gaps in the network that might arise as a result of the private sector preferring to install in more lucrative locations.

ECC is also looking at other alternatives, including on-street infrastructure and ways to enable residents, who do not have access to off-street parking, to charge EVs using their own electricity supply.

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Areas of Responsibility

Footpaths

❖ Report:

- The annual maintenance grant received as part of our Service Level Agreement with **ECC** has been uplifted for 2023/4 by over 60% (from £396 to **£646**).
- We have to date spent **£150** of this grant on the unsatisfactory first footpath cut, undertaken the contractor in mid-June – access problems being cited as the reason for their inability to complete the agreed schedule.
- A visit and assessment of the work required for our footpath maintenance was made on 23rd August by a potential new contractor for 2023/4.
- A revised maintenance schedule contract, which will be signed by the RFO, has been drawn up to include the maintenance schedule timings (not previously specified), what the contractor is expected to do (see below) and an agreed per metre charging rate (previously a per visit price) to allow flexibility should only partial maintenance work be necessary.
- The revised contract requires that the contractor quotes not just for mowing/strimming the path surfaces (the statutory minimum cut that is covered by ECC's grant) but also for the clearing/cutting of any bordering vegetation/ hedges that may be required for access and to keep the paths open and walkable.

❖ Action Plan:

- Interim checks and maintenance will continue to be carried out on an *ad hoc* basis to monitor path conditions/rectify minor problems.

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Communications

1. Website/Facebook

❖ Report:

- The **Home** and **News** pages of the website have been updated with information and details about:
 - **ECC's Active Travel in Essex** consultation (closes on **29th September**)
 - **ECC's Local Bus Service** consultation, (closes on **5th October**)
 - **Essex Energy Switch** – for cheaper energy bills
- Facebook, along with a WhatsApp link, has been effectively utilised to inform residents about the **Bus Service** consultation and a reminder of the deadline will be posted after the PC meeting.
- Information on the **Parish Councillor** page of the website has been updated, along with the responsibilities section and new e-mail links. Documents, such as the **Community & Emergency Information** leaflets have similarly been updated and re-linked.
- The **2023 Village Hall Hire Charges** have also been updated and re-linked.
- Weekly **Neighbourhood Watch** newsletter updates have been maintained.
- The Council's Facebook page profile picture continues to be updated monthly.

❖ Action Plan:

- The Facebook page will continue to share relevant posts with Maplestead Mates in order for its information to reach the widest possible local audience.

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

❖ Action Plan:

- **Issue 52** is scheduled for publication **w/c 9th October 2023** (tbc).
- Editorial content for this issue is suggested to include:
 - Playing Field: the next stages
 - Footpath maintenance update
 - EV Chargepoint update
 - Warm Haven re-opening(?)
 - Essex Energy Switch
 - Winter Criminal Activity (NW)
 - PC Powers
 - Forthcoming events

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