

## County Councillor's Report November 2018

### ***Investment means Essex County Council is set fair for winter weather on the road network***

Essex Highways' Winter service has officially started, with gritter drivers on standby, a new salt barn and more localised forecasting ready for any severe weather.

The salt barn, capable of holding around 500 tonnes of salt at Halstead, will save gritter drivers time travelling back and forward to Ardleigh, near Colchester, to fill up. As well as saving money, this means an even more reliable gritting service on routes around Halstead.

The council will also be taking a more sophisticated approach to decision making on when to grit roads, using locally-based forecasting.

Here are the top ten facts and figures about winter on Essex's roads:

- Our gritters cover 2,000 miles of key routes, including A and B roads plus at least one route serving villages or parishes with 50+ households.
- In all we have 57 gritting routes - You can see them online.
- We also treat access roads to ambulance, fire and police stations; bus routes with four buses or more a day running for five days of the week; and various sites of national strategic significance, such as refineries etc.
- These roads take 80% of traffic in Essex and make up 40% of the whole network.
- We can grit all our routes within three hours, using 62 gritters and 2 mini-gritters.
- We have agreements with a number of local farmers and other contractors, who can clear roads we don't cover if there is heavy snow
- Gritters went out 108 times last winter, using 27,000 tonnes of salt, compared to a recent average winter of 60 times.
- Local salt bins have been topped up for people to treat local roads and pavements themselves. We have also delivered salt to Town and Parish councils and others through our Salt Bag Partnership.
- We also work with District/City/Borough councils, who help clear busy pavements in town centres, allowing our teams to focus on their road gritting.
- You can help with the clearing too, provided you follow a few common-sense guidelines (see online).
- Councillor Kevin Bentley, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, said: "It is easy to decide to grit all the main roads when the temperature is very cold, but that can also lead to a waste of valuable gritting resources if we end up gritting roads when we don't actually need to in certain locations".

It is a balance. We don't want to leave our winter road network slippery, nor do we want to waste tonnes of salt if they're not actually going to freeze.

So, for the first time this year, we will be using what we term as 'route-based forecasting' to augment the temperature measures at our eight local weather stations. Climatologists have been mapping each road on our salting network, taking into account the height and gradient of a road, shade from trees or buildings, wind exposure and proximity to the sea, rivers or hills. This means that, alongside decisions taken to grit across the five general areas in Essex, we can make better informed decisions to grit or not to grit when the temperature is marginal. This

might mean, for example, that we may just grit individual roads in an area. In the future we may even move to gritting smaller stretches along individual routes.

It is a great example of how innovative approaches can save us money while continuing to keep the travelling public safe.

### ***Remembering the end of the First World War***

Join the Essex Record Office and Friends of Historic Essex to mark 100 years since the Armistice with an afternoon of displays and short talks on Essex people and places during and after the war.

On 10 November 1918, the last night of the First World War, Essex nurse Sister Kate Luard wrote from the Western Front to her family in Birch near Colchester:

"It is quite impossible for a war-soaked brain like mine to think in terms of peace; war has come to be natural – peace unnatural."

Kate had served as a military nurse throughout the war, and her poignant letter home written on the last night of the war will form part of an afternoon of displays and talks at the Essex Record Office (ERO) on Saturday 10th November.

The afternoon will include an opportunity to see original documents and photographs from the First World War, such as:

- A selection of letters from Essex nurse Sister Kate Luard, sent home to Essex from the Western Front;
- The photo album of William Oldhamstead of West Ham, who spent much of the war as a German Prisoner of War, and who annotated his photographs with the fates of his friends who were wounded and killed;
- Hear recollections of First World War veteran Alf Webb, recorded in the early 1990s; and
- See moving and often humorous sketches made on the Western Front by Gerald Rickword of Colchester.

Visitors will also be able to see and handle real objects from the First World War thanks to the Western Front Association.

Following the displays, there will be three short talks:

- Essex Nurse on the Front Line: Sister Kate Luard's letters home – by Tim Luard, Kate's great-nephew;
- Vanquished Huns and Blithering Bolshies: reverberations of the Great War in Essex, 1918-1921 – by Paul Rusiecki, author of *The Impact of Catastrophe: The people of Essex and the First World War (1914-1920)*; and
- More than names: researching Chelmsford's war dead – by Andy Begent, author of Chelmsford War Memorial Website.

This remembrance event takes place on **Saturday 10th November, 12.00noon-3.30pm at the Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, CM2 6YT.**

Tickets are just £5, and all proceeds will go towards helping to preserve our county's history for future generations. Please book in advance.

For more information about the local stories which will be highlighted on the day, please contact [hannahjane.salisbury@essex.gov.uk](mailto:hannahjane.salisbury@essex.gov.uk)

## ***Essex County Council's response to the Chancellor's budget speech***

**Cllr David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council, said:**

"It's clear the Chancellor has listened to the voices of local government. For this we are grateful. Only last week I wrote to our Essex MPs to enlist their support in lobbying for adequate funding for the services which our residents need.

What was striking was the balance the Chancellor struck between short-term help, particularly the extra £650 million for social care and the 'in year bonus' payments for schools, and a longer term approach to planning sustainable public services from next year through a five-year plan. This is an approach we in Essex have been demanding for some time".

Of course we don't yet know to what extent he has listened – the detail of how much Essex will receive from the additional funding he announced for social care or potholes won't be known until later in the week at the very earliest. That's when we expect announcements on the detail from the relevant government department, for example Health and Social Care or the Department for Transport.

We do know that Local Government has been far and away the most efficient part of the public sector, and Essex has a model county council in making efficiencies of £750 million since 2010. We also know that the demands on our services, particularly help and support for vulnerable younger and older people, are not going to go away. We are also not immune to factors like inflation which affects the County Council's spending power in the same way it affects ordinary household budgets.

Whatever the detail holds in store for us in Essex, we will continue to innovate, embrace new ways of working and become ever-more efficient."

### ***Council's flagship property development unveiled***

Goldlay Square, a 32 unit development in Chelmsford, is part of a wider £42 million project to help tackle Essex's housing shortage. The development was the site of ECC's former library headquarters before it became surplus to requirements in 2015. It is now an exceptional residential development that offers much needed housing. The development has recently been shortlisted in the Inside Housing Development Awards 2018 for the 'Best Development (under 70 units) Award. Essex Housing was set up to help tackle the housing shortage by redeveloping surplus buildings and land at risk of lying empty and drifting into disrepair. The council recognises the importance housing plays in enabling a broad range of positive outcomes for the residents of Essex. Working with local councils and other public sector bodies like the NHS, ECC is spending £42 million to speed up the supply of much-needed housing.

The innovative approach by Essex Housing is attracting significant interest nationally. It is already bringing forward a total of 605 homes on a range of sites across the county, 266 of which already have planning permission secured. The in-house developer has recently started work on 26 new homes at Moulsham Lodge in Chelmsford and has just completed 6 affordable units which will be sold to a registered provider, in Norton Road, Brentwood.

Meanwhile, feasibility studies are complete or underway for another 27 potential development sites.

**Simon Walsh, November 2018**