

Answers to Written Questions

Councillors are permitted to ask written questions of the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or Chairmen of Committees and have the questions they have asked and the answered they have received published online.

Date	Asked By	Asked To	Question
21/01/2022	Cllr Chris Pond	Cllr Lee Scott	Could he please make a statement as to progress in designating school streets and give a timetable for their introduction

Answer

Thank you for your question. Active travel is important for our many of our residents, and particularly for schoolchildren, not only for the benefits that more exercise can bring, but to reduce the congestion on our streets, in particular around our schools and the resultant congestion and emissions which impacts on the schools' neighbouring communities which is why School Streets are so important. We are working with Sustrans and Living Streets to progress Schools Streets. They will be designed in conjunction with parents, children, schools and residents including the steering group members as appropriate. There are 10 overall, each of which will look and feel different reflecting local priorities and circumstances.

What our work to date has shown us is that we need to design individual approaches for each school setting: what works in London with areas of high density and lower car ownership levels will not work in Essex. Even within Essex, what works in a rural setting may not work in an urban setting and even within urban settings, what works for an area with a cluster of schools close to the town centre may not work in an area where there is only one school on a cul- de- sac.

What is common across all our approaches however is that we want to design School Streets which support behaviour change rather than enforcement and fines as our first approach. We need the support of residents, schools and parents to make any new approaches work and this takes time to achieve.

Due to the collaborative nature of these schemes, delivery may take longer because of the consultative nature of the process but we are keeping DfT and others updated with our progress and we are focused on designing schemes which work.

If you would like to visit <https://www.essexhighways.org/active-travel-fund> you can find information about each of the individual areas.

Date	Asked By	Asked To	Question
18/01/2022	Cllr Dave Harris	Cllr John Spence	How can all County Councillors assist you to promote the Vaccine principle to combat COVID? Also how can District and Borough Councillors assist in a similar way? Would a joint letter to the press, signed by all councillors in Essex, assist?

Answer

Many thanks for your questions, and I appreciate the desire to help promote the importance of the vaccination programme.

In response I would suggest the following:

1. Lead by example – always be helpful if you can demonstrate that you have had the vaccine yourself;
2. If you know of any individuals who, through individual influence might be persuaded to have the vaccine, then please do your best. We know that those remaining, reluctant, unvaccinated people react best to one-to-one persuasion;
3. Share the message with all relevant networks and bodies – vast majority of those in intensive care are unvaccinated;
4. Listen – listen to the concerns of other people and then see if we can find a way to overcome those concerns. If more help is needed, please refer them to the Essex Wellbeing Service, which has information and support – by phoning 0300 303 9988, or by following this link:
<https://www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk/news/covid-19-vaccination-what-you-need-know>
5. While there is no single-Essex-wide newspaper, if local councillors in a particular area want to write a joint letter to their local paper, then please do.
6. Finally, it will always be useful if local councillors can remain updated on where the nearest vaccination centres are along with their hours of operation.

Date	Asked By	Asked To	Question
20/01/2022	Cllr Paul Gadd	Cllr Lee Scott	<p>Re lack of Sustainable Transport in Uttlesford</p> <p>I'm writing to ask about Essex County Council's continued neglect of sustainable transport in Uttlesford in light of ECC's recent bus funding applications and the continued lack of resource devoted to cycling.</p> <p>As you know, since I joined this Council I've been concerned about the extremely poor provision of sustainable transport options in Essex as a whole and in Uttlesford in particular, and, in my opinion, the rhetoric of ECC's 20 point plan not being remotely matched by resources. The background to this question comes from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ECC's rural mobility funding applications - £1.5m for Central Essex and £1.1m for South Braintree but nothing for Uttlesford; <li>2. ECC's October 2021 bus improvement plan – specific large-scale investment in Basildon, Clacton and Harlow and nothing in Uttlesford. References to improving market towns and rural services but no firm proposals for Uttlesford; <li>3. the historic and continued lack of any investment by ECC in cycling infrastructure in Uttlesford, and the apparent absence of any intention to change this. From responses to Fol requests and other queries, ECC has confirmed that in the last 7 years, and possibly for ever, they have invested no money in cycling in Uttlesford, and with, I believe, only one cycling officer at ECC, there continues to be no sign of this changing, or of ECC formulating any form of coherent cycling strategy in Uttlesford which might deliver any increased infrastructure. <li>4. The Greater Cambridge Partnership has recently published a sustainable transport strategy with detailed proposals for greatly increased bus provision extending into north Uttlesford – Cambridge rather than Essex seems to be our best chance of getting better sustainable transport in Uttlesford <li>5. In late 2020, ECC received £7.358m from central Govt in Covid funding for sustainable transport improvements. My understanding is that Uttlesford District Council were not even invited to bid for any of this funding, and they appear to be the only council not invited. <li>6. Point 7 of this Council's 20 point plan commits to delivering a “step change in sustainable transport” in Essex over the next 4 years.

Can I therefore ask about ECC's sustainable transport plans for Uttlesford district (and for ease I've split the question into separate sub-issues):

1. Why Uttlesford District Council was not invited to bid for any of the £7.358m Covid funding, and whether it was indeed the only Essex district council not invited?
2. Whether ECC does indeed have only one cycling officer, and what if any proposals ECC has to increase cycling resource within Essex to deliver its commitment to sustainable transport?
3. What ECC intends to do to improve cycling facilities within Essex generally, and Uttlesford specifically, over the next 4 years?
4. When bidding will be invited for D-DRT funding (para 501 of the Bus Improvement Plan) and the extent and manner proposed for, and consultation in respect of, its prospective application in Uttlesford?
5. In relation to the £746k the Bus Improvement Plan identifies as having been spent on DRT in Uttlesford in recent years (para 134), can you tell me roughly what this has been spent on?
6. When ECC will publish detailed proposals for the "Reach" and "Thrive" strategies outlined in the Bus Improvement Plan?

Answer

(Q 1) All districts were invited to submit proposals for ATF2 17th July 2020 in an email from Andrew Cook to all Chief Execs. Proposals were then shortlisted using a prioritisation tool based on DfT's criteria such as propensity to cycle and benefit cost ratios. Uttlesford submitted 1 proposal in Great Dunmow which was not shortlisted. This question was raised and answered on several occasions by the previous County Councillor and we consider this matter to be fully and comprehensively addressed. This funding was not related to Covid.

(Q 2) ECC has one officer who is solely dedicated to the support and development of cycling in Essex. However, it is important to note that ECC has a team of 20 sustainable transport experts, all of whom support active travel. Furthermore, we have a network of cycle design champions across ECC, Ringway Jacobs and Jacobs and, as part of our term contract, we are also able to 'reach back' for additional support. That said, ECC is looking to increase its dedicated expertise in this area and are currently recruiting a walking and cycling officer funded through the DfT's capability fund. Additional recruiting beyond this will depend on funding. We are reliant on external funding from DfT (as is the case with many capital projects). In addition, the DfT have been clear that future funding for cycling

will prioritise those districts with an LCWIP.

(Q 3) It is true to say that to date, LCWIPs have only been developed in five towns (Chelmsford, Colchester, Braintree, Harlow, and Basildon). This is because we needed to follow central government advice and focus our projects in areas where there could be the biggest impact in terms of addressing problems around congestion and air quality and where return on investment would be the greatest to demonstrate to DfT the scale of our ambition in the timescale available. National Government's Gear Change document is explicit in its wording, stating that where money has not been spent it will be clawed back, meaning we must balance our ambition with what we can deliver. As part of ATF3, we hope to be able to begin work on developing additional LCWIPs in rural Braintree, Epping Forest, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford.

(Q 3) In addition, we would like to develop a County-Wide LCWIP which would improve planning for cycling and walking connectivity across the county. Essex is 70% rural, and we want to better link clusters of villages with towns and employment centres. We want to build on the lessons learned from the LCWIPs developed to date to shape our approach going forward including in Uttlesford where we want to improve links to South Cambridgeshire and key employment centre.

(Q 3) For ATF 3, which focuses on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), all districts without an existing LCWIP, were asked if they were interested in bidding for development funding to create one. Uttlesford expressed their interest and ECC submitted a bid containing this to the DfT. As of 31st January 2022, we have not yet had the results of this bid.

(Q 3) ECC wants sustainable active travel to be at the heart of its approach to transport policy and planning in the future however the changes and investment required to achieve this cannot happen overnight. Our approach is Avoid Shift Improve, an approach environmental sustainability which aims to increase efficiency by modifying people's behaviour. We are embedding this in our approach to the whole network e.g., including improved provision for walking and cycling as part of the new Army & Navy junction design rather than simply focus on car users or limit our focus to standalone cycling and walking routes separate to major infrastructure investment.

(Q 4) Uttlesford is included in the first two pilot schemes for D-DRT. The roll out of further schemes is currently dependent on DfT funding and the detailed arrangements will be developed once the scale of that funding is known.

(Q 5) Information about ECC's rural mobility funding applications - £1.5m for Central Essex and £1.1m for South Braintree is available on the Essex Highways website using the following link <https://www.essexhighways.org/highway-schemes-and-developments/bids-and-funding/rural-mobility-fund>. This details the funding applied for and the letters of support including one from Uttlesford District Council. Around half of the central Essex pilot will be in Uttlesford – so around £746,500 of investment which is the DRT referred to in your question which will launch later this year.

(Q 6) Our Bus Service Improvement Plan's Thrive and Reach schemes would apply to Uttlesford. These schemes are dependent on DfT funding, and the detailed arrangements will be developed once the scale of that funding is known.

ECC are also rewriting our Local Transport Plan which gives ECC and districts the policy framework to put active travel front and centre. I hope that this comprehensive answer reassures you that needs of Uttlesford and the specific solutions that rural areas require are part of ECC's sustainable travel plans and are being progressed.

Date	Asked By	Asked To	Question
18/01/2022	Cllr Dave Harris	Cllr Lee Scott	Within my Division there are a mix of LED and older Yellow bulb lights Has Lighting dept a detailed list (Numbers) of lamps upgraded to LED and similar that are left to be upgraded within next few years. Is there a planned date to have all completed?

Answer

We expect most lanterns to be upgraded to LED in Colchester by late summer 2022. The exceptions will be those where the structural integrity of the existing unit will not allow the installation of the new LED lanterns or access issues prevent instillation. Phase 4, which started its rollout in May 2021 and is the final phase of our LED programme. The programme has only just started in the Colchester area, so we do not have a list at this moment in time.

Date	Asked By	Asked To	Question
18/01/2022	Cllr Dave Harris	Cllr Lee Scott	Levelling up agenda is a concept that is celebrated by ECC Could ECC leadership team find ways to use this to pump prime schemes to ensure areas such as Monkwick and Shrub End have investments making footpaths and cycleways such as Colchester LHP scheme "Monkwick Cycleway" a reality

Answer

Thank you for your support for Levelling Up. You will see from our Levelling Up White paper that we have targeted specific cohorts and areas across Essex where we feel we could do more (with partners) to support our residents to achieve their potential. Well-connected sustainable transport corridors where people can walk and cycle to work and school, or simply to exercise are an important part of how we make neighbourhoods an enjoyable place for our residents as you have recognised in your question.

It is not intended however, that Levelling Up resources are used for large capital schemes such as the cycleways. This is not to say that we will not look for funding to resource this (and other schemes) where we can. Bids to external funders such as DfT through Active Travel would be a more appropriate route for a cycleway to be progressed.

We are currently waiting to hear whether we have been successful in the third round of government's Active Travel Fund which included proposals to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) in more areas across Essex including Colchester. We have also already committed more funding to the Local Highways Panels across Essex to do more in their local areas.

Date	Asked By	Asked To	Question
31/01/2022	Cllr Paul Gadd	Cllr Lee Scott	Cambridgeshire County Council are taking steps to increase the implementation of 20mph schemes in view of their safety benefits, whilst Essex Highways still seem to be very resistant to them. I'm attaching a link to the latest CCC proposals - does Essex Highways have any plans to do anything similar or to take any other action to increase the implementation of 20mph schemes in Essex?

Answer

Essex County Council is not resistant to the implementation of 20mph limits and there is publicly available guidance with regards to how these are delivered both in our Speed Management Strategy strategy_speed_management_strategy.pdf (essexhighways.org) and in the guidance that has been developed for Local Highways Panels 02_eclhpmembersguidespeedtma.pdf (essexhighways.org). The Speed Management Strategy is currently being reviewed with a view to reducing speeds across our network to support active travel so that we take the needs of all road users into account. We are already developing School Streets as part of our Active Travel programme and work through Local Highways Panels to bring forward schemes to reduce speeds which local members feel would be of benefit to residents.

Date	Asked By	Asked To	Question
06/02/2022	Cllr Paul Gadd	Cllr Lee Scott	<p>I want to clarify the roll-over of unspent LHP funds.</p> <p>For this year 2021/22, the Uttlesford LHP had a budget of £427,950, and schemes were submitted for the full amount. At the last Uttlesford LHP meeting, on 17 January 2022, the report on completed schemes showed that only £50,000 of schemes had then been completed, with further progress reported on relatively few other schemes.</p> <p>Our LHP officer has informed me that she believes that the unspent monies for funded but uncompleted schemes will not be carried over to 2022/23, which would obviously be grossly unfair.</p> <p>At the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 January 2022, ECC finance officers confirmed that the full amounts of underspent LHP budgets from 2021/22 would be carried over to 2022/23, although the CPSC papers said that ECC is expecting only £300,000 of slippage from 2021/22 to 2022/23, which is clearly less than the total underspend from the Uttlesford LHP alone currently.</p>

Can you therefore please confirm that the full amount of any underspend on this year's LHP budget for any Essex district will be carried over into 2022/23 (and further if necessary).

Answer

As you have highlighted, this issue was raised at Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee. Officers are preparing a full response to provide an overall picture for LHP monies to provide assurance that no budgets are being lost. This response is due to be sent to members of the Committee and you, as a member of the board will receive this response which should answer this question.