



Essex County Council

Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Joint Committee

14:00	Friday, 13 November 2020	Online Meeting
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The meeting will be open to the public via telephone or online. Details about this are on the next page. Please do not attend County Hall as no one connected with this meeting will be present.

For information about the meeting please ask for:

Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer

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Essex County Council and Committees Information

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

In accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, this meeting will be held via online video conferencing.

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to any items on the agenda unless the Committee has resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting as a result of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

How to take part in/watch the meeting:

Participants: (Officers and Members) will have received a personal email with their login details for the meeting. Contact the Democratic Services Officer if you have not received your login.

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You will need the Zoom app which is available from your app store or from www.zoom.us. The details you need to join the meeting will be published as a Meeting Document, on the Meeting Details page of the Council's website (scroll to the bottom of the page) at least two days prior to the meeting date. The document will be called "Public Access Details".

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Please note that an audio recording may be made of the meeting – at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded.

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3	Finance Update To receive an update from Finance Business Partner, ECC. Report to follow	
4	High Level Risk Assessment To receive a report from Steve Andrews ECTU Manager	8 - 8

Agenda item 1

Committee: Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Joint Committee

Enquiries to: Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer

Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

Recommendations:

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

Membership

(Quorum: 4)

Supt. Steve Ditchburn (Essex Police)
Mr Dave Bill (Essex Fire & Rescue Service)
Councillor Susan Barker
Councillor Mark Durham
Councillor Rob Gledhill
Councillor Paul Honeywood
Councillor Godfrey Isaacs
Councillor Michael Lilley
Councillor Keith Parker
Councillor Wendy Schmitt
Councillor Jannetta Sosin
Councillor Mike Webb

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Joint Committee, held as an online video conference on Friday, 12 June 2020

Present:

Cllr Susan Barker	Essex County Council
Cllr Colin Day	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Mark Durham	Maldon District Council
Cllr Rob Gledhill	Thurrock Council
Cllr Paul Honeywood	Tendring District Council
Cllr Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point District Council
Cllr Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Jannetta Sosin	Chelmsford City Council
Cllr Mike Webb	Rochford District Council
Moira Bruin	Essex Fire & Rescue Service
Cl Terry Balding	Essex Police

Also present:

Cllr Mike Steptoe	Essex County Council
Steve Andrews	Essex County Council
Adrian Coggins	Essex County Council
Tim Clarke	Tendring District Council
Andrea MacAlister	Essex Fire & Rescue Service
Jane Gardner	Office of the Police Fire & Crime Commissioner
Gemma Bint	Essex County Council
Matthew Waldie	Essex County Council

- 1 **Welcome and election of the Chairman**
The Committee Clerk welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited nominations for Chairman. Cllr Barker was proposed and seconded, and, there being no other nominations, was voted unanimously as Chairman.
- 2 **Election of Vice Chairman**
The Chairman proposed Cllr Godfrey Isaacs and this was seconded. There were no other nominations and members voted unanimously in favour of Cllr Isaacs as Vice Chairman.
- 3 **Apologies**
Apologies had been received from Cllr Wendy Schmitt (Braintree DC).
- 4 **Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 5 **Minutes**
The Committee minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019 were approved as a correct record.

6 Finance Update

The Members noted the finance report circulated with the agenda.

1. **2019/20 outturn position.** Members noted a £64,748 surplus on net expenditure to 31 March 2020. This represented a positive net variance of £50,822, mostly due again to an underspend on legal costs under supplies and services, as the low number of unauthorised encampments had led to fewer cases going to court
2. **Budget for 2020/2021 and future years.** The actual surplus was almost £40,000 over the budgeted figure, but the budgeted surplus for 2020/21 was £22, showing deficit figures in subsequent years, based on a 1% annual membership increase.
3. **Membership fees.** These had been agreed for 2020/2021. It was suggested that the 2021/2022 rate should be considered by the Committee at a later date.
4. **Balance Sheet – Reserves.** It was noted that the present level of reserves, at around £140,000, had reached a satisfactory level for the ongoing operation of the Unit.

It was proposed, seconded and resolved that the Committee receive and note these figures, but that they should determine the level of membership fees at the next committee meeting, when they had a clearer picture of the overall situation.

7 Membership status

Mr Andrews reported no change in the membership of the Joint Committee, with all but three authorities (Epping Forest, Harlow and Southend) signed up.

An update was requested on the situation regarding the Injunction that had been sought by Thurrock (which could affect the perceived need for the work of ECTU). A temporary injunction had been obtained, which had been used effectively on several occasions, and a full injunction should be forthcoming, although the current Covid-19 situation was delaying matters.

It was noted that Harlow's injunction was about to expire, so the Leader and Mr Coggins would shortly be meeting with them, to encourage them to join ECTU.

8 High level risk assessment

Mr Andrews confirmed that there had been no changes to the risk assessment.

9 Operations performance update - key issues

The Committee received a verbal update from Mr Andrews.

There has been minimal works carried out in terms of supporting health issues and supporting Children into education and Fire Safety. This is primarily because these activities would normally require a face to face visits in the enclosed environment of the caravans, hence with the current lock down, we have been unable to provide these support services. We are still supporting some known families/issues over the phone where possible, and taking some new cases on the same basis, and are sending out some general messages via WhatsApp, but this has limited reach/is not comprehensive.

Unauthorised Encampments. After the normally quiet winter period, the year started very slowly, with only a couple of encampments throughout March and April. Numbers began to pick up in May and there have now been about 15 reported.

The response of the Unit and the Police under the present conditions has been modified by advice issued by central government; Essex will monitor this and act appropriately, should this advice change. Mr Coggins has liaised with Essex Police and they have issued a joint statement regarding the approach being taken. This had already been circulated to the districts, but Mr Coggins agreed to send it out again, and invited Members to send him the details of any particular recipients they thought would benefit from it.

CI Balding confirmed that COVID-19 did feature in the Police's decision-making process, but they would issue Section 61 orders where appropriate. He added that they had already held a training day and intended to hold another.

10

Date of next meeting

To be confirmed after the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2:35 pm

Chairman

BUSINESS RISK ASSESSMENT

RISK ASSESSMENT COMPLETED

DATE

Reviewed and updated November 2018

FUNCTION / SERVICE / TEAM formal commitment

PROJECT / PROGRAMME (if applic Joint Committee high level risks)

Risk No.	Details of Risk Event	Cause / Triggers	Impact / Consequences	Review period	Current Assessment of Risk			Risk Owner	Mitigation Approach	Mitigating Actions / Controls	Review period	Control Owner	Controlled Assessment of Risk			
					Current controls in place								With ALL controls in place			
					Impact	Likelihood	Risk Rating						Impact	Likelihood	Risk Rating	
1	Unable to deliver on partner outcomes.	Demand for service outstrips resource including business support, and outreach.	Partners withdraw from service		4	4	16	SA	Treat	Ensure additional resource is funded/recruited if req		SA	3	1	3	
										Prioritise and reduce service levels in liaison with partners						SA
2	Insufficient funding to deliver service	High demand on chargeable resource legal and external agencies	Part or all of the service will stop delivering		6	2	12	SA	Treat	Ensure resource available to manage encampments and where possible negotiate departures		Partners	4	2	8	
										Access reserve where necessary						SA
										Seek additional member contribution to offset increased costs where necessary						SA
										Secure new partners						SA
3	ECTU perceived as not delivering expected service by stakeholders, lack of robust controls by ECTU.	Politicians / members of the public do not understand the service provided by ECTU and powers available to us.	Reputation loss, pressure for partners to break away. Service is no longer viable		5	3	15	SA	Treat	Inform members of service/regular comms and unit and cultural awareness training		SA	4	1	4	
										Ensure SPOCs are informed to help manage expectations of stakeholders						SA
										Comms strategy/press releases for wider stakeholders						SA
										Potential development of service for private landowners						SA
										Ensure robust administration of powers via process/audit						SA
4	Negative public / member opinion of the Gypsy/Traveller Community based on the publicity/actions of the minority, is applied to the community as a whole	Negative behaviour of of small number of Traveller families receiving high profile attention. The majority of the Traveller population who are normal law abiding residents, are not considered.	Increase tensions, Travelling families treated unfairly, encourages negative behaviours		5	3	15	SA	Treat	Education of Members, public on the true picture and culture		SA	3	3	9	
										Good news stories in the media						SA
										Improved web site/information resource for general access						SA
										Address ill informed / derogatory / racist comments / communications quickly, honestly and robustly						SA
5	Insufficient partner buy in/funding to deliver service	Partners choose not to renew continue with their membership of the unit from April 2019	Service levels reduce or unit ceases to be viable		6	3	18	SA	Treat	Ensure commitment to sign up to a new 3 year agreement prior to expiry of existing agreement in March 2019		SA	3	1	3	
										Reduce resource/service levels to match any change in partner buy in/participation						SA
6	Unable to deliver fully on partner outcomes.	Impact of COVID 19 restrictions prevents the direct contact with the community to deliver the full service requirements	Community do not receive the levels of support required. Partners dissatisfied with service /withdraws		6	4	24	SA	Treat	Where possible deliver at least part of the service remotely		SA	6	2	12	
										Ensure partners understanding of the limitations/restrictions cause by COVID and acceptance of the reduced levels/alternative ways of delivery						SA
																SA

Operational Report – November 2020

Due to the initial lockdown, and subsequent restrictions, this has significantly impacted on our ability to deliver the usual services which require close contact/home visits. This report summarises some of the activities where we have been able to deliver remotely. There is no statistical data – with the exception of Unauthorised encampments - as the work does not reflect the normal operations and targets. The intention is to give an overall flavour of what *is* happening during the COVID 19 restrictions.

Outreach including Health, Education and Fire Services

Education

We have continued to remotely work with/support families with school and transport applications, including mid term applications, and ensuring September intake, and awareness of start dates/uniform requirements etc. We have also worked closely with schools and the families in overcoming the fears of the full time return to school in September/October, which there was some wide spread reluctance to initially.

Supporting/Referrals to alternative education scheme, further education and college

Supported schools and parents with access to the free school meal vouchers during lockdown.

We have started work with a local preschool re engaging young Traveller people, aged 11-16 to actively work in/help out the pre school classes which will benefit those people in experiencing the work environment, and the children at the pre school who enjoy and respond well to older children.

Health and Welfare

We have continued to remotely support some GTs with health conditions get the correct support and benefits (if needed) as well as their carers' and families and generally getting access to health services.

We have experienced a lot more engagement from GT men, who have been unable to get work during the lockdown/restrictions and needed support.

We are now actively working with MARAC - Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - to help support GT victims of domestic violence.

We continue to work with/support other agencies in working with the GT community, including health workers, Essex Family Wellbeing, Children Missing Education and Social Worker etc.

Supported with Domestic Abuse cases x 4

Made a number of food bank referrals

Carried out training/presentation session via teams for safeguarding nurses meeting via teams,

COVID related

Our officers were part of a big team at ECC who worked together to get a Testing bus onto Oak lane site and test 79 residents for COVID and helped ensure that information was relayed to the local school.

Texting/Whatsapp'ing GT families to encourage/ensure that they still use the appropriate health services if needed.



The Wellbeing Bus for improving access to the community

This project is still ongoing, and we have been working with multi agencies in the preparation of the bid for the necessary funding. Once submitted, it could take 3 to 6 month before the outcome is known. Hopefully this will tie in with some form of normality post COVID.



Case studies

“Supported with Essex CC social care case, supporting parent to undergo parenting assessment, helping with reading through and explaining questions, being present for all Teams and WhatsApp sessions with the social worker to successfully complete the assessment. I have supported with linking up with relevant support in out of County area parent is now living in.”

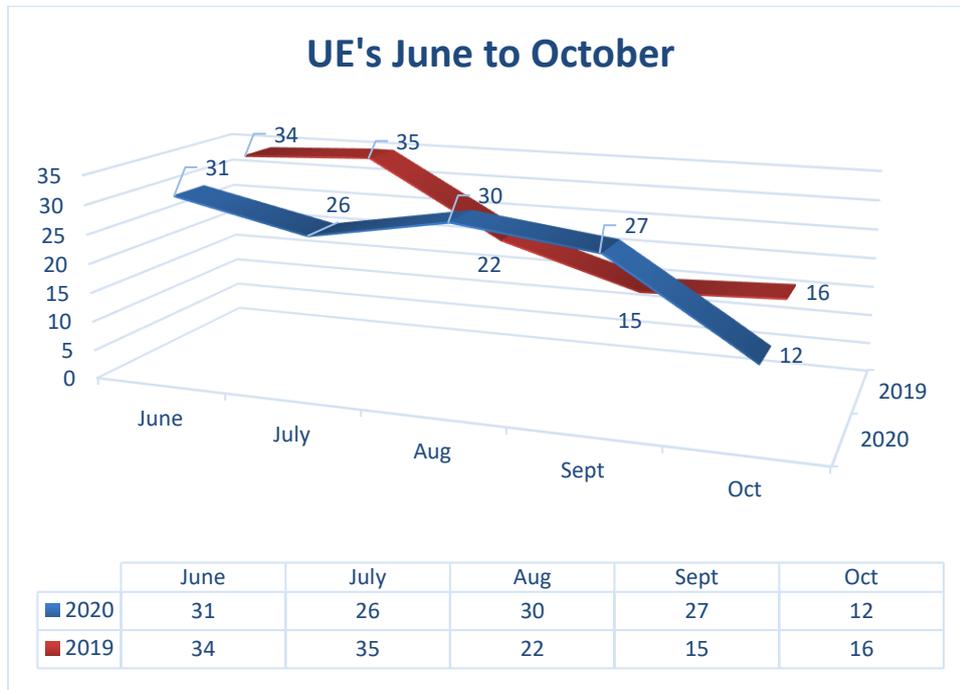
“Supported family re housing (inadequate accommodation,) but through this contact, became aware of young person in the household who had mental health issues. I built up a rapport with her and discussed college application, supported with her admission to course (she has been out of education for 5 years). I also referred her to EWMHS for support and will be supporting with accessing support sessions through the college. The young person has said that she is really looking forward to going back to college again after half term, she is quite isolated at home.”

Fire

We have been unable to complete home fire safety visits due to the need to enter individual caravans/a very enclosed environment, hence with lockdown / restrictions, and the community’s fears over COVID our officers are not going onto private sites for any visits.

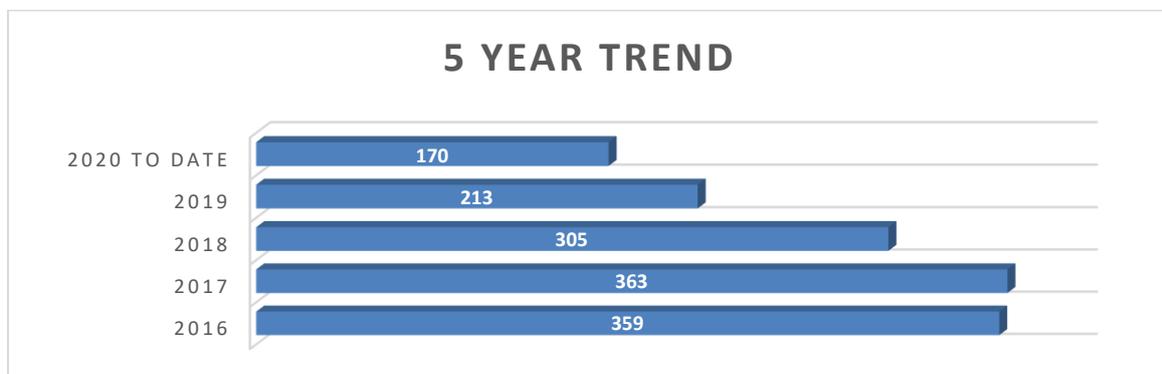
Unauthorised encampments

Encampments from June 2020 to October 2020



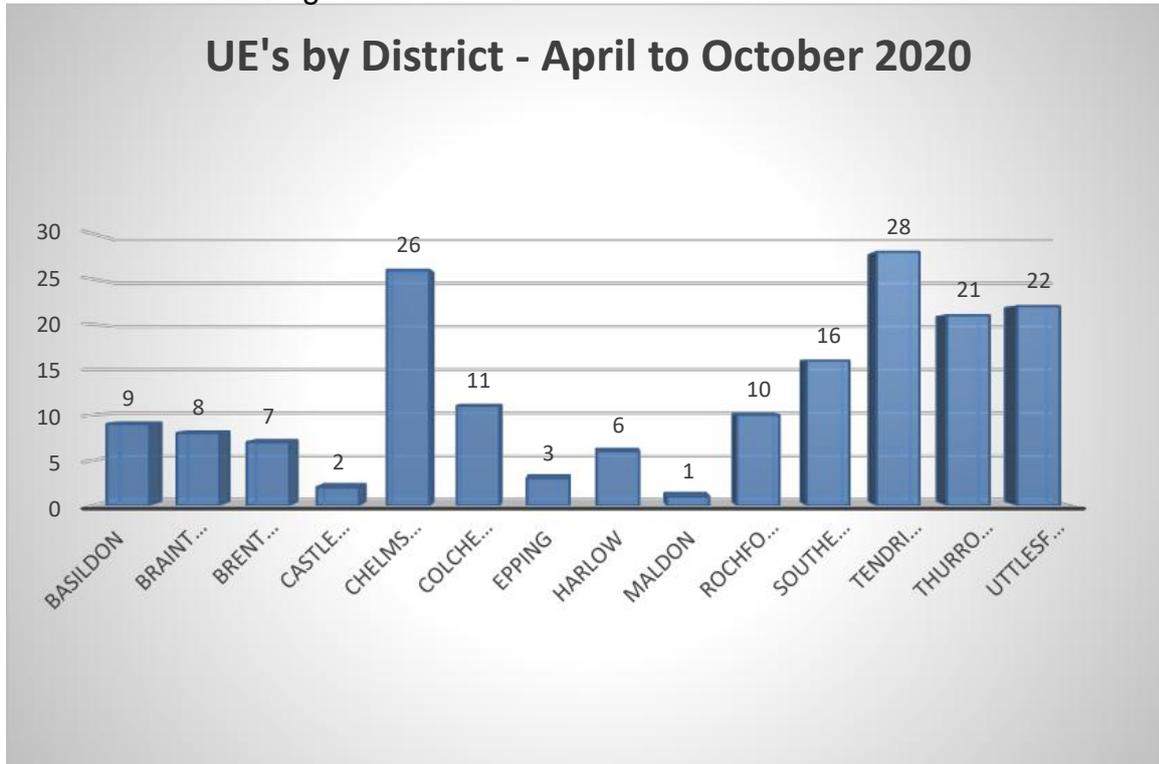
There was a slower start to the summer period following the lock down restricting movement etc, and June/July were slightly lower compare to the same period last year, but thing picked up in August / September with reduced restrictions, and exceeded last year's numbers.

The restrictions earlier this year would have impacted on the overall numbers, so the 5 year trend is showing that 2020 is likely to show a continued decline in the number of encampments, whereas in reality, it would probably have finished at similar levels to 2019.

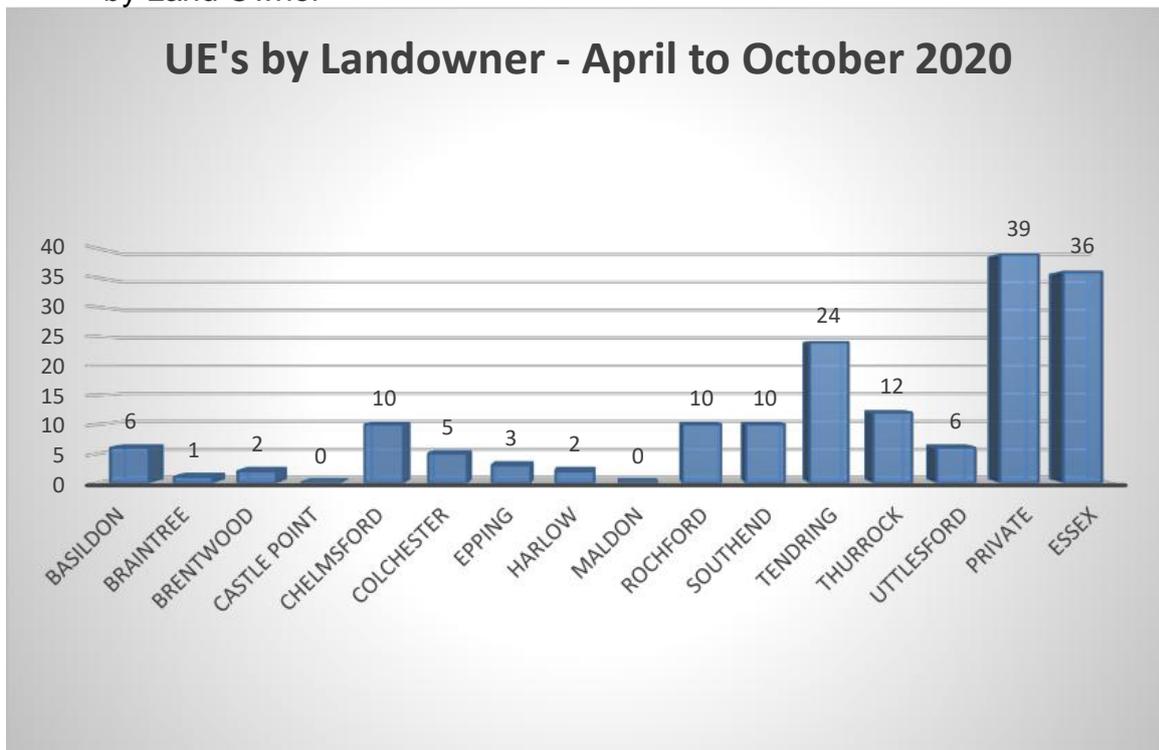


The following charts show UE activity: -

- by district which will include Highways & Private encampments under the district heading



- by Land Owner





Injunctions

Basildon – was the interim injunction ever extended to the full injunction?

Harlow - withdrew the extension application. They have experienced a small number of encampments since, but not the feared influx

Thurrock - are still on the interim injunction. Is there an intention to extend to the full injunction?

It would appear that, following legal challenge of the Bromley injunction, the days of blanket injunctions on persons unknown many become a thing of the past.

Government Policy

Reference was previously made by Priti Patel that there would be some movement/announcement re the consultation/proposal to make trespass a criminal offence, but to date there has been nothing forthcoming.

Unauthorised Encampments - Performance

Objective	sub	Measure	Target	Timescale	Outcome	Comments
UE visited within 1 working day		%	97%	May 19 to Oct 19	98%	
Encampments resolved through	Negotiated/Other	%	40%		58%	
	Courts	%	60%		34%	
Totals	Section 77/8 Part 55 Section 61 Negotiated/other	48 0 17 83	Data Only			
s77's complete within 10 working days		%	100%		100%	
s77's complete within 7 working days		%	90%		98%	
% of encampments where ECTU are involved		%	NA		45%	
Number of encampments	Partner	103	NA			
	Non-partner	6	NA			
	Private	34	NA			

