

### **The Essex Crowd launches**

An exciting local crowd-funding platform which helps great ideas become fantastic realities was officially launched last week.

The Essex Crowd offers residents the opportunity to pitch their ideas for projects to make Essex an even better place to live and work and get the backing of their friends, neighbours, local businesses and anyone else who likes their idea who can then pledge to support the scheme through a donation.

As well as funding available through the site Essex County Council has created a new £500K fund which will put an extra £5,000 into the coffers of any ideas which will help make a difference locally.

Speaking at the launch event, which took place at Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford, on Monday, 25 September, Essex County Council Leader Cllr David Finch said:

“The Essex Crowd offers a great way to bring people together behind projects and to help good things happen, all we need to see is the committed support from the community, and for good ideas to be put forward.

“Good ideas can come from anywhere and – when an idea captures the imagination of the wider community – great things can happen. That’s why Essex County Council has committed to pledge up to £5,000 per project to support idea’s that will make a difference locally.”

The launch event was also a chance for attendees to hear from a project panel which shared its crowdfunding experiences from idea pitching, to the first pledges right through to the community promotion.

[Find out more about crowdfunding with The Essex Crowd.](#)

### **Essex smokers urged to sign up to Stoptober**

The percentage of people who smoke in Essex is historically at its lowest at 14 percent, however this still equates to over 160,000 smokers in our county. This October, Essex County Council’s Public Health Team, is encouraging Essex smokers to give up tobacco as part of the national Stoptober challenge.

This is the sixth year of the challenge which encourages smokers to stop for 28 days, offering support and encouragement every step of the way.

*So why quit?*

Research shows that after 2 to 12 weeks of quitting, your circulation improves. After 3 to 9 months, coughs, wheezing and breathing problems improve as lung function increases by up to 10% and after 10 years the risk of lung cancer falls to half that of a smoker. Risk of heart attack falls to the same as someone who has never smoked.

You can also save a lot of money by quitting. Public Health England estimate that a 20-a-day smoker can save up to £60 a week, £255 a month and £3,060 year by stopping smoking.

Director of Public Health for Essex, Mike Gogarty, said: “We offer an excellent stop smoking service, with 70 percent of people who come to us for support, going on to quit. If you have been thinking about quitting, Stoptober is a great time to start your smoke free life.

“The benefits of quitting speak for themselves and the improvements it can make to your health are invaluable. I would urge anyone that smokes to sign up today by visiting [www.smokefree.nhs.uk/stoptober](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk/stoptober) or contacting our local stop smoking service.”

In 2016-17 ECC supported nearly 5,000 people to quit and approximately 3,500 went on to give up smoking tobacco through our stop smoking service. For information on local support please take a look at <https://www.essexlifestyleservice.org.uk/stop-smoking/> or call 0300 303 9988.

### **Landowners and householders asked to tidy up near roads ahead of winter**

As the weather turns colder, anyone with a garden or land bordering the road is being asked to make sure that ditches are cleared and overhanging trees and hedges are cut back.

Cllr Ian Grundy, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, said: “Ditches are the responsibility of landowners, even if they are next to the road. Blocked ditches cause flooding which in winter can turn into highly dangerous ice on the road so please do clear them now to avoid putting driver and pedestrians in unnecessary danger.”

During storm Aileen earlier this month, highways crews were contacted about 21 separate incidents where trees blocked roads in Essex.

Cllr Grundy added: “Landowners also have responsibility for any trees near the road. These should be regularly checked and cut to prevent large branches or the whole tree blowing down and blocking the road. People walking along the pavement or verge shouldn’t have to avoid overgrown trees or hedges.

“I’m sure everyone will want to act responsibly and take care of their own boundaries, to keep all of us safer this winter.”

The Council has the power to issue enforcement notices to landowners with blocked ditches which flood the highway or with branches and vegetation found to be obstructing the highway, compelling the owner to carry out any necessary work.

Pavements should be entirely free of plant growth up to a height of 8ft (2.5m). The road should be clear to a height of 17ft (5.1m) and 1.8ft (0.5m) from the edge of the road towards your land. The Council recommends the use of fully qualified and insured contractors to undertake any necessary work.

People can report highway flooding problems directly to Essex County Council via its website or by calling 0345 6037 631. Visit [www.essex.gov.uk/highways](http://www.essex.gov.uk/highways) to report highway flooding online.

To find out more about flooding prevention in Essex please visit [www.essex.gov.uk/flooding](http://www.essex.gov.uk/flooding) or watch our [short video](#).

### **Mobile library services to fit people's lives - consultation set for launch**

With seven of its fleet of nine mobile libraries coming to the end of their working lives, Essex County Council is asking residents for their views on how library services to locations outside of town centres should be delivered.

Over the past seven years, use of mobile libraries has declined by nearly 50%.

The council has no plans to scrap mobile libraries entirely. Instead it is looking at a range of ways to reach people in more isolated places, including mobile libraries and encouraging more people to get involved through volunteering.

This involves helping support the creation of community libraries, staffed by volunteers, in local halls, shops or pubs and extending the Home Library Service, which delivers books to people in their own homes and helps combat social isolation.

The council wants to hear what people think of how it proposes to redraw routes and to share their own ideas for bringing libraries to more remote places.

Councillor Sue Barker, Cabinet Member for Libraries, said: "We know how much people value their mobile library service. But we also know that in recent years, fewer and fewer people have been taking advantage of it. The consultation begins at 9am on Tuesday 19 September and lasts for seven weeks. To have your say, [complete the survey online](#) or complete a paper survey available from a mobile library or in your local library.

## **More Essex homes to be protected from flooding**

Essex residents who have suffered the heartbreak of a flooded home can now apply for extra funding to help prevent it happening again.

Essex County Council has received a £100,000 boost from the Environment Agency to protect Essex homes from flooding. This is in addition to £145,000 already in the pot, bringing the total now available to £245,000.

The council's Essex Flood and Water Management team has run the Property Level Protection (PLP) scheme successfully since 2015.

This scheme offers a £5,000 grant to homeowners whose homes have flooded previously, with the money tailored to individual homes to make them more resilient to flooding.

Successful applicants have their properties surveyed and receive a consultation with the flood p

They recommend necessary products such as waterproof airbricks, flood doors, flood barriers, waterproof brickwork liner, pumps and more. If the cost is in excess of £5,000 the homeowner is asked to contribute.

In the last financial year (2016/17) the scheme protected 71 homes from flooding. This year (2017/18) it's expected to provide protection for at least another 100 homes.

As well as the £100,000 from the Environment Agency, the scheme has already received £145,000 of external funding, given to us last year (2016/17) from the Environment Agency and Anglian Water, and is expected to secure a further £100,000 from the Environment Agency later this year.

This scheme is a practical solution to flooding that benefits residents across the county in both urban and rural areas.

This is because, unlike large scale flood prevention schemes, it's cost-effective where only single properties have been flooded.

Residents who have suffered internal property flooding and have not since protected their homes can visit [flood.essex.gov.uk/get-a-flood-grant/property-level-protection-grant-for-homes/apply-for-a-plp-grant/](http://flood.essex.gov.uk/get-a-flood-grant/property-level-protection-grant-for-homes/apply-for-a-plp-grant/), watch our [video](#), or call 0844 798 1261 to find out more about grants available.

Simon Walsh

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