

REPORT ON ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MATTERS MAY/JUNE 2019
FOR PARISH COUNCILS – CLLR PENNY CHNANNER

NEWS FROM TRADING STANDARDS

Rogue Doorstep Trading in the Green Energy Sector

Officers from the Duty Team at Trading Standards relatively recently attended two similar doorstep trading incidents after complaints were received about vulnerable residents being targeted by renewable energy companies. In both cases the consumer had solar panels and had been contacted by companies selling additional equipment and maintenance services. The traders visited the consumers at home resulting in the residents agreeing to contracts that they did not need or want. Officers were able to cancel those contracts and request that the companies refrain from contacting the consumers again in the future.

By cancelling the agreements the residents were saved a total of £6450.

Please look out for your neighbours, friends and family - report anything suspicious to Essex Police on 101 or the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 03454 040506

If you need a trader go only on strict recommendation and always consider using Buy With Confidence, the only trader approval scheme where traders are vetted and approved by Trading Standards.

Safety Update

A small team of highly specialised Trading Standards officers work in partnership with the UK Border Force at Stansted airport, monitoring products coming into the UK, recently seized 1000 unsafe travel adaptors.

These were being imported through Stansted Airport for eventual use in the European market. The adaptors were stopped as they were deemed extremely dangerous in that they allowed access to live parts.

They were submitted for testing and further dangerous faults were identified in particular when examined internally the adaptor wasn't earthed despite looking like it should have been. The test house reported back that "this was a very, very dangerous product".

The items were purchased and imported from China at a cost of 17p per charger!

Be scam aware

Essex County Council Trading Standards are encouraging residents and their families to become Scam aware. Increasingly people are falling victim to a variety of

scams, particularly the elderly and vulnerable. Common scams include mass marketing/postal scams, telephone investment frauds, doorstep/rogue trading scams, impersonation of banks and on-line scams.

Awareness is the best protection against scams. Essex Trading Standards is promoting Friends Against Scams, a National Trading Standards initiative, which aims to protect and prevent people becoming victims and empowers communities to "Take a Stand Against Scams". Anybody can join Friends Against Scams and make a difference.

If you, or someone you know, have been the victim of a scam, report it to Trading Standards. Further advice is available from the Citizens Advice Service or from Action Fraud.

Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding

Essex County Council in partnership with Maldon District Council, Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, and Epping Forest District Council has been successful in getting a grant of £180,000 for Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding.

The grant will help provide an outreach service in each of the districts helping to get rough sleepers in from the streets and also to provide more accommodation in night shelters and the private rental sector.

The funding comes as part of central government's work to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it completely by 2027.

Get back to nature with the Spirit of Essex festival

The Spirit of Essex Festival, which runs throughout June features a packed programme of outdoor activities and events designed to inspire more of us to explore and enjoy the diverse heritage, culture, nature and habitats that Essex has to offer.

From yoga, to outdoor theatre performances and Forest Schools, there is something for everyone!

To find out more about the festival and view the full programme of events, visit Spirit of Essex festival.

Are you ready to join the 30:30 Essex challenge?

We're asking everyone in Essex to do 30 minutes of daily physical activity for 30 days throughout June for the 30 30 Essex Challenge.

There are no distances to run, no targets to beat and no calories to burn. This is 30 minutes of activity, your way.

Planet Essex Festival is coming

A brand-new festival showcasing everything great about the environment is coming to Essex this summer. The Planet Essex Festival will host a wide range of talks, demonstrations, workshops and stallholders. There will also be a repair café and an outdoor cinema.

So why not visit and celebrate everything eco on Saturday 22 June at Cressing Temple Barns?

Solar panel scheme a success

More than 300 Essex residents have taken advantage of the Solar Together Essex scheme to boost the renewable energy capacity in the county.

After saving an average of £1,300 on the cost of their panels, it is projected that people's electricity bills will be reduced by an average of £500 each year. This equates to a saving of 300 tonnes of carbon each year or 58 passenger vehicles taken off the road.

Batteries are not general waste

Hazardous items such as batteries and small electricals must not be disposed of in your household rubbish bin or in the general rubbish bins at recycling centres; these items pose a serious risk to the health of workers who handle waste up close.

There are containers specifically for batteries and small electricals at recycling centres. If unsure, please speak to a member of site staff. Also, batteries can be recycled in boxes in any of the libraries, and some libraries even have recycling bins for small electricals.

Home Library Service volunteering

Would you like to make a real difference to people's lives ? We're looking for volunteers to help deliver our Home Library Service, bringing the library to people who can't get there owing to age, disability or caring responsibilities.

You'll be their link to the library delivering a selection of books, audio books and DVDs and sharing information on other relevant services in the community.

If you've a passion for reading that you want to share or would just like to meet new people and make friends, then take a look at this great opportunity to support your community. Details can be found on the web site.

Space Chase, Summer Reading Challenge

The Reading Agency and libraries are excited to introduce Space Chase, Summer Reading Challenge 2019; an out-of-this-world adventure inspired by the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing.

Children are being asked to read six books to help our super space family, the Rockets, track down books nabbed by mischievous aliens! As they read library books, they will solve clues and collect special stickers to complete their mission folder. After reading their books they earn their Space Chase certificate and medal. Can they find the aliens in time to save the day?

The challenge runs from Saturday 20 July to Monday 2 September in all Essex libraries. Children can sign up for this mission anytime during this period and preparations are already underway to make sure this year's activity is a real blast!