

Bus Network Consultation 2025

Overview

Introduction

Essex County Council (ECC) is reviewing its support for 46 local bus services. We want your help to ensure that our future bus network is ready to meet new levels of passenger demand and is providing value for money. ECC is therefore carrying out this public consultation regarding these local bus services.

This consultation will commence Monday 04 August and close on Monday 27 October 2025 @2359.

As set out in the accompanying questionnaire, ECC is undertaking a review of local bus services which are paid for by Essex taxpayers. **It does not cover services/journeys operated commercially by transport providers.** This review covers all 12 districts in Essex with the view of assessing whether to continue providing the service.

Background

We know that buses are important to many people. For example, they help people reach employment, education, visit friends and to get to health appointments. The majority of the bus network in Essex (around 85%) is run commercially. The remaining 15% of services are not commercially viable and the transport providers will therefore not run them.

As Essex's local transport authority, when no commercial service is provided, the County Council has a duty to consider whether one is needed, and if, in the Council's view it is, then to provide it.

How the Council decides whether a service is needed and what services it will support are set out in its Local Bus Service Priority Policy, which can be found on www.essexhighways.org/bus-strategy. The Local Bus Service Priority Policy now forms part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan so has been extended from 2020 to 2026.

ECC has a strong record for supporting local bus services and ECC remains committed to supporting an effective and efficient bus service network offering value for money to the taxpayer in the services it provides.

However, the strong financial pressures on all local government funding means that ECC must look very carefully at how it will provide all its services to make sure that the limited funding available is focused where it will be of most benefit to the public.

The services provided under this policy are paid for by Essex taxpayers. The supported network mainly operates in rural areas, and at less popular times for travel, such as in the evenings and on Sundays. At present ECC spends around £10m of taxpayer's money on these services each year. The local bus service priority policy includes a value for money measure to ensure that taxpayers are not funding services that are not used much or have a high cost. This measure is currently valued at £5 per passenger journey. If the cost to the taxpayer is over £5 per journey made, then ECC will review the service.

The value for money measure was suspended during Covid-19 because of changing government advice on travel during the various lockdowns and then because ECC wanted to allow services time to recover. Patronage has indeed been increasing. But there are several services which were either struggling to attract passengers even before Covid-19 or where passengers have not returned. ECC is not proposing to re-introduce the £5 measure immediately because there is still some growth in patronage. However, there are several services which are substantially over the £5 measure – in fact they are costing taxpayers more than £10 cost per passenger journey to support.

These services are detailed later in this document alongside details of any changes or proposals.

What are we Consulting on?

We are consulting on:

- Continuing services as they are now.
- Redesigning services to better reflect how they are used (for example the days of operation; routes; the number of journeys and/or the timetable); or
- Returning some services to commercial operation.

We would expect to make an announcement on the outcome of the consultation later this year. This means we will be using the most up to date passenger data available in any final decisions.

The outcome of the consultation may differ from the proposed changes specifically listed in the consultation tables following analysis of the response from the public.

Why your views matter?

In order for us to consider your views, we are seeking your responses on these proposals. ECC will collate all the responses from the survey and summarise them as part of our report. This report will be used to help decide whether the proposal should be implemented. We will not identify individual people and your name will not be mentioned in any reports we write for this purpose. You do not have to take part if you don't want to - this is a voluntary activity.

Together, we can create a transportation network that is efficient, accessible, and tailored to the diverse needs of passengers. Thank you for your valuable contribution in helping us shape the future of public transport.

Please note the following consultation only covers ECC supported services as specified in the tables on the following survey pages.

Services that have grown.

There are 16 services in this section. These services are being reviewed with consideration to either continue as they are; a re-design (for example: reducing frequency of days or times of operation, changing routes or replacing with an alternative service).

Please view the full list of services in this category in the table below.

If you do not wish to comment on these services, continue to the next page

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Change
2 / 2A	Clacton	Mistley	Monday to Saturday	Tendring	Konectbuses	No Change
7	Hockley	Rayleigh	Monday to Saturday evening	Rochford	First Essex Buses	Remove all journeys apart from the 2200, 2215 and 2300. Retime the 2200 journey to start at 2130
7 / 7A	Bishop's Stortford	Stansted Airport	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Stephensons of Essex	Adjust timing of 7A journey at 1330 to depart at 1400. The later 7A journeys will depart later by 30 minutes. Some early morning and late departures will also be removed. The 0849 departure from Stansted airport will also be removed.
10	Shotgate / Wickford	Basildon	Monday to Saturday	Basildon	Central Connect	Remove Saturday departure at 0805 and also the 100 and 1737 departures from Wickford, from Basildon the 1645 and 1822 journeys will be removed.
14	Harlow	Pinnacles	Monday to Saturday	Harlow	First Essex Buses	Remove Saturday service and the Monday to Friday departure at 1825

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Change
17 / 17A	Debden	Loughton	Monday to Saturday	Epping Forest	Central Connect	Revised timetable Monday to Saturday
48	Temple Grove	Pleshey	Monday to Friday	Chelmsford	Central Connect	Remove journeys at 0835 and 1555
59/590/319 320/321	Haverhill	Saffron Walden / Newport	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Stephensons of Essex	Only retain section 106 funded journeys
85 / 92	Colchester	Tollesbury / Layer Breton	Wednesday Only	Colchester / Maldon	First Essex Buses	Service will become one return journey and renumbered as 85 and will not serve Tollesbury
90	Maldon	Witham	Monday to Saturday	Braintree / Maldon	Stephensons of Essex	No change
94 / 94A / 94B	South Woodham Ferrers	Basildon	Monday to Saturday	Basildon / Chelmsford	NIBS Buses	Remove Monday to Friday journeys on 94 from Asda @0600, 0637 and 0721. Remove Monday to Friday journeys on 94A from SW Ferrers Railway Station @0624, 0708 and 0747. Remove Monday to Friday journeys on 94A from Asda @0612, 0650, 0734. Remove Saturday only journey 94A from Asda @1802 from The Swan @1833
102	Harwich	Colchester	Monday to Saturday evening	Tendring / Colchester	First Essex Buses	No Change
316 / 318	Stansted Airport	Saffron Walden	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Stephensons of Essex	No Change
D1 / D2	Maldon	Bradwell on Sea	Monday to Saturday	Maldon	Konectbuses	No Change
SB28	Stisted	Braintree Freeport	Wednesday Only	Braintree	Braintree Community Transport	No Change

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Change
DigiGo	Flexible service anywhere A to B within operational Zone	Flexible service anywhere A to B within operational Zone	Monday to Sunday	Braintree / Chelmsford / Uttlesford	DigiGo	Two changes are proposed, which relate to times and areas of operation.

Questions regarding DigiGo are separated out and can be found below the main set of questions.

Services which are lower use.

There are 16 services in this section. These services are being reviewed with consideration to either continue as they are; a re-design (for example: reducing frequency of days or times of operation, changing routes or replacing with an alternative service).

Please view the full list of services in this category in the table below.

If you do not wish to comment on these services, continue to the next page

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Changes
15	Marks Tey	Marks Tey	Monday to Friday	Colchester	First Essex Buses	Revised timetable to ensure connections with train departures at Marks Tey
16	Weathersfield	Chelmsford	Monday to Saturday	Braintree / Chelmsford / Uttlesford	Konectbuses	No Change
17 / 18	Great Dunmow	Chelmsford	Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday	Chelmsford / Uttlesford	J W Lodge	No Change
28	Harlow	Harlow	Monday to Saturday evening	Harlow	Central Connect	Revised timetable to remove Saturday only Journeys
45	South Woodham Ferrers	Bradwell on Sea	Monday to Friday	Chelmsford / Maldon	NIBS Buses	Reversal of all four timetabled journeys. The 0900 journey will operate from Bradwell on Sea and other journeys will follow suit.
50B	Colchester	Colchester	Monday Only	Colchester	First Essex Buses	Revised timetable and service will be Peldon – Colchester

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Changes
63	Rayleigh	Great Wakering / Landwick	Wednesday and Friday Only	Rochford	First Essex Buses	Remove 0900, 1200 & 1425 journeys. The 1025 departure will be moved to 1000, Days of operation will be increased
69	Colchester	East Mersea	Tuesday Only	Colchester	First Essex Buses	Revised timetable and route East Mersea – Shrub End
99	Chelmsford	Woodham Walter	Monday to Friday	Chelmsford / Maldon	Konectbuses	Remove Monday and Thursday operational days and remove 1115 & 1730 journeys.
305 / 315 / 325	Bishop's Stortford	Stansted Airport	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Central Connect	Remove services 315 & 325
313 / 314	Great Dunmow	Saffron Walden	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Stephensons of Essex	No Change
322 / 323 / 324	Bishop's Stortford	Great Dunmow	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Central Connect	No Change
407 / 417	Harlow	Harlow	Monday to Saturday	Harlow	First Essex Buses	Remove Saturday services on both 407 / 417
DaRT 3	Braintree	Braintree	Monday to Saturday	Braintree	Flagfinders	Replace with timetabled services, or a digital DRT service
DaRT 299	Uttlesford	Braintree	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford / Braintree	Flagfinders	Replace with timetabled services, or a digital DRT service

Questions regarding DaRT 3 & DaRT 299 are separated out and can be found below the main set of questions.

Services which were formerly commercial and were supported for a time limited period after Covid to allow for their recovery.

There are 9 services listed below, and these services were formally operated on a commercial basis but which the Council has supported since the pandemic.

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Changes
31 / 332	Chelmsford	Burnham on Crouch	Sunday and Public Holidays	Chelmsford / Maldon	First Essex Buses	N/A
336	Chelmsford	South Woodham Ferrers	Saturday Only	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
351	Chelmsford	Brentwood	Saturday Only	Brentwood / Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
B2	Basildon	Laindon	Sunday and Public Holidays	Basildon	First Essex Buses	N/A
C3	Chelmsford	North Melbourne	Monday to Saturday evenings	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
C3	Chelmsford	North Melbourne	Sunday and public holidays	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
C8	Chelmsford	Beaulieu Park	Chelmsford	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
C11	Chelmsford	Beaulieu Park	Chelmsford	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
C11	Chelmsford	Beaulieu Park	Chelmsford	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A

Survey

We would like to hear your views on the services listed above. We have allowed 2 sets of questions to allow you to comment on 2 Services. If you wish to comment on more than 2, please use a separate piece of paper:

Please write the Service Number, District and the Table Header, you wish to answer the survey for. Please answer all required questions.

Service Number:

District:

Table:

Question 1

Do you agree with the proposed changes to your service? *(Required)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 2

What would be the impact of the proposed change to your service? *(Required)*

☐ I could not make my journey

☐ I could still make my journey, but it would be less convenient

☐ I could still make my journey

Question 3

If your service has no proposed change the box below allows space for you to suggest of how to reduce the cost and/or increase the usage of the service, should you wish to do so. If you have no suggestions, please leave the box empty.

Service Number:

District:

Table:

Question 1

Do you agree with the proposed changes to your service? *(Required)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 2

What would be the impact of the proposed change to your service? *(Required)*

☐ I could not make my journey

☐ I could still make my journey, but it would be less convenient

☐ I could still make my journey

Question 3

If your service has no proposed change the box below allows space for you to suggest of how to reduce the cost and/or increase the usage of the service, should you wish to do so. If you have no suggestions, please leave the box empty.

Questions for DigiGo, DaRT 3 and DaRT 299

Service Number:

District:

Question 1

Do you agree with the proposed changes to your services? *(Required)*

- ☐ I only agree with proposal 1
- ☐ I only agree with proposal 2
- ☐ I agree with both proposals
- ☐ I disagree with both proposals

Question 2

What would be the impact of the proposed change to your service? *(Required)*

- ☐ I could not make my journey
- ☐ I could still make my journey, but it would be less convenient
- ☐ I could still make my journey

Service Number:

District:

Question 1

Do you agree with the proposed changes to your services? *(Required)*

- ☐ I only agree with proposal 1
- ☐ I only agree with proposal 2
- ☐ I agree with both proposals
- ☐ I disagree with both proposals

Question 2

What would be the impact of the proposed change to your service? *(Required)*

- ☐ I could not make my journey
- ☐ I could still make my journey, but it would be less convenient
- ☐ I could still make my journey

About You

The following questions will help us to:

- Identify and assess any disadvantage within our communities and plan improvements to our policies and services.
- Check that any consultation or engagement exercise has reached a representative section of the community so that all views are fairly represented.
- Demonstrate that Essex County Council is complying with its Public Sector Equality Duty – to prevent discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between all residents.

Your answers will be kept completely confidential and won't be collated with any information that makes you identifiable.

It is voluntary to disclose this information. If you choose not to answer these questions, it will not affect your participation.

To which gender identity do you most identify?

- ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Non-Binary ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe (please state):

Which age group do you belong to? (Please select one that applies)

- ☐ Under 16 (requires consent from parent) ☐ 16-17 ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65-74 ☐ 75+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a health condition, disability, or impairment?
Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ No Impairment ☐ Hearing Impairment/deaf ☐ Visual Impairment/blind
- ☐ Deafblind ☐ Mental health needs ☐ Physical Impairment
- ☐ Learning difficulties/disabilities ☐ Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ☐ Prefer not to say ☐ Other, please specify:

To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?

White:

- ☐ English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- ☐ Irish
- ☐ Gypsy/Irish Traveller
- ☐ Other, please describe

Asian/Asian British:

- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Pakistani
- ☐ Bangladeshi
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Other, please describe

Mixed/Multiple:

- ☐ White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ White and Black African
- ☐ White and Asian
- ☐ Other, please describe

Black/African/Caribbean:

- ☐ African
- ☐ Caribbean
- ☐ Other, please describe

Other Ethnic Group:

- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Other, please describe

Prefer not to answer the question ☐

Do you have a religion or belief? (Please select one that applies)

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| ☐ No Religion | ☐ Buddhist | ☐ Christian | ☐ Hindu |
| ☐ Jewish | ☐ Muslim | ☐ Sikh | ☐ Prefer not to say |
| ☐ Other, please specify: | | | |

I live in, please select all that apply

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ A household with an income of £17,100 a year or less | ☐ Rural North Braintree |
| ☐ An area of high deprivation | ☐ Colchester Town Housing Estate |
| ☐ A rural or isolate area | ☐ Harlow |
| ☐ A coastal Area | ☐ Jaywick |
| ☐ None apply | ☐ Harwich |
| ☐ Prefer not to say | ☐ Basildon Town Housing Estate |
| | ☐ Canvey Island |

Once you have completed the Consultation please send to the following address:

**Essex County Council
IPTU Consultation
Floor 2 Zone 2
County Hall
CHELMSFORD
CM1 2QH**

Please return postal surveys to the above address so they are received no later than **Friday 11 October 2025**.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation