



LRA's Loughton News

17 January 2025

In this issue, [we give a further report on recent government proposals](#) on restructuring local government, how it could look locally, and what will happen next. We also report on [proposed changes to how planning committees consider and approve developments and planning applications](#).

Also in this issue are reports on how LRA has [helped local residents and green spaces](#).

The police have appealed for more information on a [fatal collision](#) and [dangerous driving on the M11](#).

In Council news, the Town Council is asking for nominations for this year's Citizenship Awards, and the District Council is proposing [replacing the single use clear plastic recycling sacks with a blue lidded wheeled bin](#)

And, in case you tried LRA's Christmas Quiz for 2024 [here are details of the winner, and of course, the answers](#).

You can contact us by emailing contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk to raise an issue, give your views, or offer help.

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LRA News

Local Government Restructure and Elections

We reported last time that [the government had proposed significant changes](#) to how local government operates at what is currently the District and County levels. The proposals cover all of England.

The key change is the creation of unitary authorities to cover perhaps about 500,000

people each, replacing existing district and county councils. This would mean that Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council would cease to exist. Essex would then be served by between two and five 'unitary authorities' that cover a yet to be determined area of Essex.

There would also be a Combined County Authority covering all of Essex with an elected Mayor. The Mayor would also take on the responsibilities of the existing Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

The County Council discussed this at a council meeting on 10 January ([the full briefing is here](#)), and has now written to the government to request inclusion on the government's Priority Programme. [More](#)

If the government agrees (which appears likely), details of how the new structure would operate and how the transition from old to new would be worked out. The immediate impact would be that County elections planned for May 2025 and possibly 2026 would be set aside. Existing Cllrs would remain in place in their existing county divisions and district wards until new elections are held (with the boundary changes that created two county council divisions to cover Loughton from May 2025 being put on hold). Postponement has generally been a feature when local government reorganisation is taking place, as it was, for example with abolition of the Greater London Council (1985) and the abolition of Buckinghamshire County Council (2021)

For Loughton, the existing Town Council would continue. The proposal only briefly mentions parish and town councils with *'we will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice'* however what this means in practice remains to be seen.

The existing Epping Forest District Council would be folded into a much larger unitary authority, presumably combined with nearby areas. The District Council currently serves around 135,000 people, so the new authority would be much larger though the number of Cllrs would undoubtedly be reduced.

Much detail remains unknown, including any changes to how the new bodies will be funded; a reorganisation could result in saving money, however this would be insignificant compared to the well-known scale of underfunding for local government.

LRA thinks there is also a risk of a democratic deficit with larger unitary authorities not being responsive to local needs, especially around approving local developments and planning applications.

Restoring Peace and Quiet for a Family in Oakwood Hill Estate

One of the most pressing concerns LRA Cllr Chidi Nweke has encountered recently came from residents in the Oakwood Hill Estate who had endured nearly three years of disruptive noise from a nearby business.

Frustrated by the District Council's lack of action, the residents reached out to Chidi for assistance. Together with LRA Cllr Ian Allgood, they visited their home and immediately recognised the severity of the issue - the noise was emanating from a cooling system that was significantly affecting their quality of life. Notably, this cooling system was installed without obtaining the necessary permissions.

Chidi knew that this situation required persistence and a creative approach. Engaging constructively with Council officers, he advocated for the residents' needs, emphasising the detrimental impact the noise was having on their daily lives. The family were forced to sleep in their sitting rooms just to escape the constant disturbance.

After several discussions and follow-ups, Chidi is thrilled to report that he successfully persuaded the District Council officers from the Noise Team and then the Tenancy and Estate Team to take a firmer stance against the business in order to mitigate the intrusive noise. This included the relocation of their cooling units.

Thanks to Chidi's determination and commitment to action, the residents can now enjoy the peace and quiet they deserve in their homes.



Revitalising Our Green Spaces

During one of LRA Cllr Chidi Nweke's regular walkabouts in his ward, he noticed a situation that needed addressing. There were broken jockey rails around the green space in Alderton Hall Lane, opposite Alderton Primary School.



The situation made the area look not only unsightly but also felt neglected, with several sections of the rails laying on the ground. He promptly reported this to the District Council and requested repairs.

Although it took some time for the job to be completed (mostly because the officers had trouble identifying the exact location of the damaged rails) he didn't give up. He continually followed up until the issue was resolved.

Now he is delighted to say that all the broken sections of the jockey railings have been repaired, restoring not just the beauty of our green space but also providing a safe environment for our children and families to enjoy.



Rubbish Cleared

A resident noticed that the Traps Hill recycling bank had overflowed and rubbish had been piled up around the bins making a mess.

The [District Council's website](#) isn't clear on how to get these problems fixed, but it was suggested the resident report it to the Council's website. This was done, and it was cleared within two days.



If you see such things, [please help the Council by reporting it.](#)

LRA's 2024 Christmas Quiz

A bumper entry to this year's quiz – and almost half went into the hat as all-correct answers. First out, and our winners, were Charlotte and David Prosser, who will receive a £20 book token. Thank you to everyone who entered – and a Happy New Year to you all. [The answers are here.](#)



Remembering Those from LRA

We sadly report that former LRA Town Cllr from 1996-2004 Judith Woodman and former Loughton Life Roding ward distributor Ken Bishop both died recently.

Planning and Licensing

[Read more on our website](#) about Planning and Licensing, the role of the LRA Plans Group (LRAPG), how to get more information and how to comment to the Town Council and the District Council, and to the LRA Plans Group – please have your say.

Decisions on Planning

The Government has published a consultation paper aimed at modernising planning committees to facilitate better decision-making in the planning system, with planning committees to be reformed to take away decision making powers from elected members.

The paper proposes three main reforms:

1. A national scheme of delegation to standardise the criteria over when a planning application can go to a planning committee. The Government considers minor applications are routine and should be left to “skilled” planning officers. Three potential solutions have been mooted:

- Delegate decisions to officers for applications that comply with the development plan
- Delegate all applications to officers by default, with exceptions for specific circumstances such as departures from the development plan; and
- Set a prescriptive list of application types that must be considered by committees, providing greater clarity and consistency.

2. The creation of smaller, targeted planning committees specifically for strategic development.

3. Mandatory training for planning committee members.

LRAPG considers the consultation paper is naïve; not all local authorities have multi major developments to contend with and the most contentious schemes can be small schemes such as householder applications where neighbours can be impacted. To lose the right to have these applications determined by elected members where all parties have the opportunity to make their case, would be a backward step.


The mandatory training is not contentious – most councils provide training for members before they sit on their planning committees.

Roads, Parking and Travel

Planned Road Closures

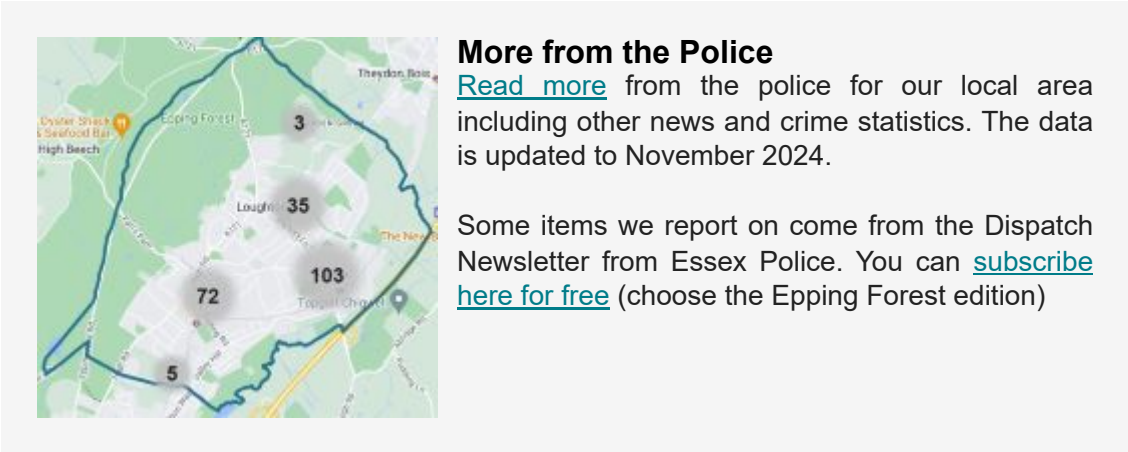
- Ladyfields - the road will be closed until 28 January between Borders Lane and Ladyfields Close for antenna removal. [More](#)

[Check here for the latest updates](#), and for other planned roadworks including ones that involve only temporary traffic lights.

A photograph showing a red rectangular sign with the words 'ROAD CLOSED' in white capital letters. The sign is mounted on a black metal A-frame stand. To the left of the stand is an orange and white traffic cone. The scene is outdoors on a paved road, with trees and a red vehicle visible in the background.

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- A photograph of a red rectangular sign with white text that reads "ROAD CLOSED". The sign is mounted on a black metal A-frame stand. To the left of the stand is an orange traffic cone with a reflective white band. To the right of the stand is a yellow sandbag. The scene is outdoors on a paved road, with a red fire truck visible in the background.

Police, Fire and Crime



[Read more](#) from the police for our local area including other news and crime statistics. The data is updated to November 2024.

The police have appealed for any information, CCTV, dash cam or other footage in

relation to this incident, which [you can report here](#), or call 101 (quote incident 171 of 24 December).

Cars Racing on the M11

Officers investigating dangerous driving on the M11 are appealing for witnesses or anyone with dashcam footage to come forward, after they were called at around 1.30pm on Sunday 29 December to reports of multiple high-end cars swerving across lanes and driving in a reckless manner.

The vehicles were seen to hold up traffic by blocking all lanes, with their hazard lights on, and it is suspected this behaviour was undertaken to allow racing on the carriageway ahead.

This driving was first witnessed on the M11 Northbound near Junction 6, near Theydon Bois, and later in the Harlow area.

The police have appealed for any information in relation to this incident, which [you can report here](#), or call 101 (quote incident 494 of 29 December).



Uninsured Vehicles Taken Off Roads

In 2024 police seized 4,365 uninsured cars, vans and motorcycles from Essex roads, averaging more than 360 vehicles seized each month.

November 2024 saw a peak in seized uninsured vehicles when 463 were seized in an effort to target drivers who were illegally driving their vehicle, putting others at risk. [More](#)

Council News

Citizenship Awards

Do you know someone worthy of recognition for their community work or bravery?

The Town Council is looking to celebrate those special individuals in our town who go the extra mile for their fellow citizens. This may be through long service for a voluntary organisation or local charity, good neighbourliness, running a campaign to improve community facilities or cohesion, or by an act of courage or bravery.

Any Loughton resident or a Loughton employer, educational institution, group or society may submit a nomination but please do not let the nominee know at this stage. The closing date for nominations is 31 January. [More and Nomination Forms](#) (Word document).

Proposed Changes to Recycling Collections

Currently recycling is collected on a fortnightly basis via single use plastic sacks, with glass collected separately via a blue box container. This method of collection means residents use more than 9 million single use plastic sacks per year which cost a minimum of £405,000 per year. £28,512 is also spent on replacement blue box containers for glass per year.

The District Council is now considering replacing the single use clear plastic recycling sacks with a blue lidded wheeled bin to reduce ongoing costs and provide more efficient service delivery. ([Read the full report here](#), from p16). This follows a pilot that has been running in several roads in Theydon Bois, as well as use by additional households who have requested wheeled bins for recycling. It is now estimated that 5% of properties in the district now recycle via a blue lidded wheeled bin.

If the Council decide to go ahead, deliveries of wheeled bins and an information leaflet to households will commence in June. Some exemptions would be allowed if space and access is limited in specific cases ([More](#), p40).

Love Essex Funding Applications

Each year, [LoveEssex](#) provide funding to organisations, individuals, and schools in Essex with innovative projects aimed at reducing household waste. For 2025, the focus is on reuse and repair initiatives, for example:

- repair cafés
- refill shops
- textiles and toy redistribution groups
- bike, furniture, and electronics repair organisations
- clothes swap events

When applying you will be asked to provide a brief description of your project and a detailed breakdown of how you plan to spend the micro-grant. Applications close 9 February. [More](#)



What's On

The District Council has published details of all activities, events, exhibitions and workshops from the Community Development and Wellbeing team. There's something for everyone, from meeting new people and learning a new skill at Let's Get Together to keeping active with walking

football. [More](#) (PDF)

Local News

Local Library Events

[You can see upcoming events at Loughton and Debden libraries here](#). More about the libraries at [Loughton](#) and [Debden](#).

The Winter Reading Challenge is currently on, aimed at children aged 0 to 12. Complete six of the twelve challenges in a Winter Reading Challenge booklet, collecting stickers as you go. Get a prize when you finish and enter the big prize draw to win some extra special ones. [More](#)

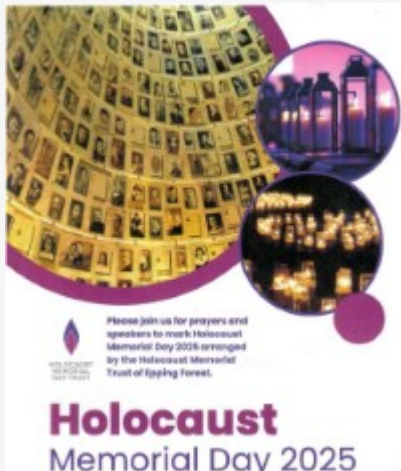


More from Libraries

Essex Libraries are doing their bit for the environment. They:

- distribute and collect recycling bags, batteries and small electrical items
- provide 'inkbins' to recycle ink cartridges,
- collect old laptops to be refurbished for those in need.

In partnership with Active Essex, they lend out sports and leisure equipment, so that you don't need to buy them. [More](#)



Holocaust Memorial Day

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has organised an event with prayers and speakers outside Loughton Library on Traps Hill on Sunday 26 January from 1pm. All are welcome.

New After School Club

There is a new After School Club at the Oakwood Hill Community Centre starting next week on Monday 20 January. For 5-9 years old, with siblings welcome.

Booking required. [More](#) and email flourishingps92v13@gmail.com to book.

AI Here?

A recent [government announcement](#) on Artificial Intelligence (AI) included a reference to a private company, Nscale, that has "signed a contract to build the largest UK sovereign AI data centre in Loughton by 2026". [Nscale's own press release](#) says that the "site is scheduled to be live in Q4 2026. [...] This single site will create 500 jobs during construction and a further 250 jobs over a three year period to run and operate the facility."

No plans or planning applications have been submitted to the District Council, although [it has been reported](#) it will be on Langston Road. The only data centre application we are aware of is [a planning application that was granted permission](#) last year for the Alandale Scaffolding site on Langston Road.

Health and Wellbeing

Health Services Under Pressure

NHS services in Hertfordshire and west Essex remain under extreme pressure as they look after surging numbers of very unwell people, with winter viruses spreading

fast.

You can help the NHS by making sure your vaccinations are up to date, staying at home and taking care if you or your family get the norovirus bug or flu, and get early help if you or a loved one are very unwell. Contact [NHS 111 online](#) or by phone for urgent help or if you're unsure what to do. [More](#)

Epping Forest

Forest Focus - December 2024

Some items here come from Forest Focus. The edition for [December](#) has lots more interesting articles. You can [subscribe here for free](#).



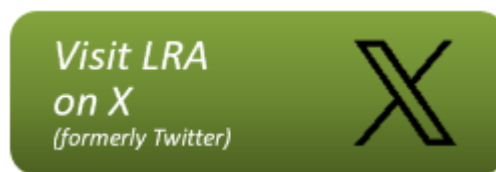
Thank you for supporting LRA.

These regular news emails are issued every 3-4 weeks, with some news special emails issued from time to time. The next news email is planned to be issued on Friday 14 February.

Get more from LRA and keep up with what's happening between issues of Loughton News



All our past issues of Loughton News emails, Loughton Life, and more



The latest news and items of interest. You don't need to be registered for either

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