

Date: 25th July 2015
Our Ref:
Your Ref:

Dear Parent / Carer,

Proposed changes to school bus services in Uttlesford

Following letters sent in September and November 2015 about the proposed changes to public bus services to schools in Uttlesford, Essex County Council are pleased to be in a position to confirm how changes will affect students and parents from September 2016. There has been an unfortunate and unavoidable delay in this decision being made and Essex County Council would like to apologise for this and thank you for your patience and understanding.

In October and November 2015 a public consultation on proposed changes to secondary education transport to Joyce Frankland Academy in Newport and Saffron Walden High School set out proposals to have the majority of the services provided by a commercial bus operator, without Council funded support from April 2016. The proposals made clear that ECC would buy tickets for students entitled under Council policy to free travel on the commercial services where needed. We later wrote to you to indicate that the proposals were now intended to come into effect from September 2016.

I can confirm that the proposed revision will now go ahead from September 2016. As a result the services listed below will be provided by Stephenson's of Essex without direct support from the council.

Why have the County Council commercialised these services?

The services provided to Joyce Frankland Academy in Newport and Saffron Walden High School are unusual for Essex: in almost all other areas of Essex school services provided for non-entitled students are provided commercially. This change will align the service provided with other areas of the county.

In addition as you are probably aware all local government budgets are under severe pressure due to changes in the way that central Government funds local authorities. As a result of the change there will be an annual saving of over £500k a year. This will help to reduce the pressure on the County Council to withdraw support for other bus services across the County.

What does this mean for your child's transport?

- Students entitled to free transport will continue to do so. Essex County Council will buy passes on the bus from Stephenson's of Essex for them or make alternative arrangements where these are necessary. Parents of entitled students will receive a separate letter from the Passenger Transport department this week with more details.
- Students whose parents pay for transport will continue to be able to do so. The fares have been reviewed by the operator:
- The prices are set by zone (see the map at the end of this letter). A number of payment options are available as shown in the table below:

	Annual Cost (8 Direct Debit Payments)	Annual Cost (3 x Termly Passes)	Daily Return Fare (Cash on Bus)
Local Zone	£775	£790	£4.60
Zone A	£875	£890	£5.20
Zone B	£975	£990	£5.80

- Essex County Council has not increased fares on the local bus services for the last 6 years: the new prices are in line with commercial prices. The council recognises for some passengers this is a substantial increase in cost. Therefore, in partnership with Stephenson's of Essex, the increase in cost to align them with commercial fares will be reduced for the first academic year 2016-17.
- The price for students on current services 1, 11, 94, 118, 302, 313, 417, 418, 419, 444, 445, 446 and 446B is shown in the table below.

Prices for academic year 2016 – 2017 only

	Annual Cost (8 Direct Debit Payments)	Annual Cost (3 x Termly Passes)	Daily Return Fare (Cash on Bus)
Local	£548.00	£563.00	£3.60
Zone A	£598.00	£613.00	£3.90
Zone B	£648.00	£663.00	£4.20

- Tickets will be available for sale from **Tuesday August 2 2016**. To purchase a ticket from this date please go to www.stephensonsofessex.com.
- If you wish to pay Stephenson's of Essex by direct debit, you can do so via the above website but only before **Monday 15 August 2016**. Please note that due to the rules surrounding Direct Debit payments this deadline cannot be extended, and after this date the only available option will be termly tickets.
- In a small number of cases the student may have to change from one bus to another. Initial analysis indicates this will only affect 20 students who live in Duddenhoe, Cornish Hall End and Catmere End / Strethall / Littlebury Green. A mini bus will provide a feeder service onto the main school transport. If your child is entitled to free transport they will receive a separate letter from Passenger Transport with further information.
- All students who currently use school transport will still be able to get to school using the new commercial network although the bus number, time and route may change. The current and proposed new numbers are shown in the table below and the timetable will be available on the web site from **Tuesday 2 August**:
www.stephensonsofessex.com

Old Service number	New Service Number
1	441
11	446
51	451
52/53	453
94	414
118	438
302	301
313	413
417	417
418	418
419	419
444/445	444
446/446B	446

To find out more information including the cost of a ticket (if you currently pay) and the new timetables please go to www.stephensonsofessex.com.

Yours sincerely,

Passenger Transport
 Essex County Council
 Email: Passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk
 W: www.essex.gov.uk

Map showing the zonal areas for the Uttlesford school services

