

## Voters go to the polls

VOTERS will head to the polls next month for the first elections since the pandemic hit.

Residents will go to the polls on May 6 when a number of elections are taking place including for Colchester borough and Essex county councils.

Electoral Commission data shows at the last local council elections in 2019, 135,600 people in the area were eligible to vote, with 43,700 of them returning valid ballot papers, a turnout of 32.2 per cent.

That was in line with the England average for council elections of 32.3 per cent.

In Tendring, voter turnout was down in 2019, with 33,600 of people returning valid ballot papers out of the 107,300 people eligible to vote, a turnout of 31.3 per cent.

## Restaurant hours bid

A RESTAURANT chain has revealed its planned opening hours for its new eatery.

Loungers UK Limited has applied to Colchester Council to vary one of the conditions in place for the redevelopment of the town's former Co-op, in Long Wyre Street.

The firm wants to increase the opening hours for the restaurant so they are from 8am to 11.30pm Monday to Thursday, from 8am to midnight Friday and Saturday and from 8am to 11pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Colchester Council will have the final say on the plans.

## Presentation to meeting

A PROPOSAL is set to be put forward for mineral extraction on land south of Maldon Road, Colchester.

The work, if approved, will be a short-term extension to Stanway Quarry.

Alan Everard, head of strategic planning for Tarmac Quarry, will be giving a presentation at Stanway Parish Council's meeting on April 29 starting at 7pm. Members of the public are invited to attend and can contact the parish clerk at [clerk@stanwaypc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@stanwaypc.org.uk) or call 07759837111.

Car owner says it had been seized by police before it was caught on

# Fined for driving in bus lane... but it wasn't me!

By GEORGE KING

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A DISGRUNTLED man has been fined after his car was caught in a bus lane after being seized by police officers half an hour earlier.

Graham Hayles, 65, of Manningtree, lent his Peugeot to his son Gareth Hayles, 42, of Harwich, to take a friend to hospital.

As he passed through Hythe Hill, Colchester, Gareth was pulled over by police officers and he was found to be using the vehicle without the correct insurance.

Gareth had assumed because he has fully comprehensive insurance and is over the age of 25, he was able to drive any car.

As a result of the stop, officers seized Gareth's dad's car.

"I did not read the small print on my insurance and so I put my hands up," said Gareth. "But the way the police handled it was just



■ Fine - the letter shows Graham's car going through the bus lane

all wrong. I said my dad would pick the car up by they said no."

Just under two weeks later Graham received a fine for £60 which had been issued after his vehicle was caught driving through the Hythe Station Road bus lane on the same night Gareth had been pulled over by the police.

I have told Essex County Council I was not in the car and nor was my son when it went through the bus lane

The bus lane camera clocked his vehicle 27 minutes after it had been seized by police at 10pm.

Graham's Peugeot was taken to the nearby LJ Transportation compound and has since been crushed after he refused to pay the charges to release it.

Having also refused to pay the fine, the penalty has increased and he has been threatened with court action.

Graham said: "Whoever drove it to the compound that night has

taken a short cut and gone through the bus lane but I am the one having to pay the ticket.

"I have told Essex County Council I was not in the car and nor was my son but they keep saying I have to pay. It is not fair."

The *Gazette* asked Essex Police to comment on whether any of their officers drove the car through the bus lane but after a week, it said it could not.

LJ Transportation has also failed to respond to any of our calls or reply to messages and emails over that time.

An Essex Highways spokesman said: "Because driving through a bus gate is a civil offence the driver is irrelevant for these purposes.

"It is always the registered vehicle keeper who is liable to pay the fixed penalty.

"If the vehicle keeper has an issue with whoever was driving, they may pursue the matter."

## PUPILS' HAVE DESIGNS ON FAME AS OCTOPUS SET TO JOIN ART TRAIL



■ Arty - Lexden Springs students with Olly the octopus and octopus mascot CJ Picture: STEVE BRADING

CREATIVE students have become the first to finish a unique sculpture which will form part of an anniversary art trail.

Pupils at Lexden Springs, Colchester, were tasked with painting an octopus for the forthcoming Octopus Ahoy! event.

The large-scale art trail will celebrate 400 years since the Mayflower ship embarked on a voyage from Harwich to the New World and the 150 years of Clacton.

The celebrations will start from June 25 and see more than 100 2ft by 2ft octopus sculptures placed across Essex.

Students from Lexden Springs handed over their colourful creation, called Olly the Octopus, to mascot CJ.

It will be returned to the school after the celebrations have concluded.

Simon Key, design technology instructor at Lexden Springs, said: "Everyone is looking forward to taking their family and friends to see our sculpture proudly displayed on the art trail. It's very exciting."



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