

Welcome to Chelmsford

Chelmsford Borough Council provides a wide range of services to its residents and businesses, and is committed to putting customers at the heart of its work. While we cannot cover all the services the Council provides in this short podcast, the aim of this new service is to give you an overview of what Chelmsford Borough Council does, how we can help you and how to get more information. The Council's long-term vision is for Chelmsford to become the economic, cultural, leisure and retail heart of Essex. With a rich heritage, beautiful, award-winning green spaces, first-class sporting, leisure and arts facilities, shopping, dining and vibrant nightlife, there is definitely something for everyone.

The first service featured is Housing Services. The Council provides housing for those in need, including people at risk of being made homeless. Applicants who apply for subsidised housing are assessed, then ranked, by their level of need, before being put on the housing register, which is used by housing associations such as Chelmer Housing Partnership to place people in housing need. Please note that there is a shortage of social housing in the area and therefore waiting lists are long. If you are threatened with homelessness, you should contact the Housing Advice Service who will work with you to try and stop you becoming homeless. If we cannot stop you from becoming homeless, we will help find alternative accommodation, usually in the private sector. The Council also gives advice to people who are in housing need but are unlikely to be eligible for social housing, such as how to access alternative accommodation and identify potential financial assistance. Finally, the Private Sector Housing team gives advice on a number of areas including landlord responsibilities, shared rented houses, overcrowding, gas safety and damp. For more information, please visit the Council's website at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/housing or call 01245 606336.

The second service is the Council Tax and Benefits Service. Council Tax is a domestic property tax collected by Local Authorities, which is Chelmsford Borough Council if you are living or operating a business in this area. Council Tax helps to pay for local services such as schools, police, fire services and roads as well as services provided by the Council. The amount you are charged depends on the value of your property; generally, the bigger the property, the more tax will be charged. Every household has to pay Council Tax, but you can get a reduction if there is just one person living at your property, if there are people

who are exempt from paying, or if you are on a low income. The Council will send you a bill once a year and you can pay in a number of different ways, including by monthly direct debit, card payment over the telephone or online, by cash at various local shops, or by cheque. For more information on payment options or reducing your Council Tax, please go to www.chelmsford.gov.uk/counciltax or call 01245 606780.

The third service is Refuse and Recycling Services. The Council is responsible for collecting waste from every household in the borough, and is committed to improving recycling rates and reducing waste. Residents are expected to play their part, by leaving out their rubbish on the correct day, and sorting their refuse so it can be easily recycled. The Council provides a black wheelie bin for all non-recyclable refuse, which is collected weekly, and a brown wheelie bin, which is collected fortnightly, for garden waste. Recyclable materials, such as glass, tins, plastic, paper and cardboard are collected either fortnightly or monthly, and should be put out in the correct container on your specified recycling collection day. For more information, or to find out your refuse and/or recycling collection days, please visit www.chelmsford.gov.uk/refuse or call 01245 615800.

The Council also offers many recreational services. It runs four sports centres offering a huge range of facilities, including an ice rink, swimming pools, athletics facilities, a climbing wall, fitness classes, sports halls and gym equipment. The Council also runs two theatres, which show a huge variety of performances, including plays and musicals, films, dance and live music, and it puts on special events throughout the year, such as the Three Foot People Festival for children under five, and Essex Street Diversions, a free festival of street theatre. Visitors can also discover the history of the town at Chelmsford Museum, or visit Hylands House, an eighteenth century listed building that has been restored and opened to the public. The Council also owns over 1,500 acres of parkland across the borough, and provides sports pitches, children's play areas, allotments and parks, many of which are award winning and accredited by national organisations. To find out more about any of these services, please visit www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lcps or call 01245 606606.

It is important to understand that Chelmsford Borough Council does not provide all the services in the area. Many services, including social services, transport, education and libraries are provided by Essex County Council, while health services are provided by the

National Health Service. If you are unsure about who to contact, there is a website that provides a gateway to all public services in one place – www.direct.gov.uk.

This podcast has provided information on some of the most important Council services, but there are many others that we provide too, such as burial and cremations, licensing, food safety and dealing with emergencies. The Council can provide you with printed material in other languages on request, or can provide an interpreter to help you communicate with Council staff, either on the phone or in person. If you need more information, you can check out our website at www.chelmsford.gov.uk, call our main switchboard number on 01245 606606, or visit us at either the Civic Centre in Duke Street, Chelmsford, or at the South Woodham Ferrers Community Information Centre, where staff will be able to assist you. We hope you have found this information useful.