

## Pupils' top marks in Cambridge University research project



All 12 students at Burnt Mill Academy passed the 2,000-word assignment at Cambridge University's Brilliant Club

A GROUP of teenagers who were selected to take part in a Cambridge University research project received top marks.

Twelve Year 9 students at Burnt Mill Academ, in Harlow were selected to take part in the Brilliant Club,

a charity project by Cambridge University.

The aim is to increase the number of young people from under-represented backgrounds attending highly selective universities.

Having completed a 2,000-word re-

search project with a PHD tutor, students were given a university-style grading, and attended a graduation ceremony at the university.

Five pupils achieved a first in their assignments.

Assistant head teacher Erkan

Ustura, Brilliant Club lead, said: "All of our students did fantastically well."

"It is hoped this experience will spur them on to applying to highly selective universities - like Cambridge - in future."

## TV show focuses on murder probe

A NEW BBC Two documentary series follows Essex Police as they investigate a murder.

*Murder 24/7* follows three investigations which happened in the county from the moment the crimes happened to the arrest and conclusion at court.

Viewers will follow Essex Police's Major Crime team detectives as they piece together the clues in each case to lead them to the suspects.

This is the first time that Essex Police has opened its doors to the public, allowing unprecedented access to a team of filmmakers from production company Expectation Factual.

Chief Constable BJ Harrington said: "We know our detectives here in Essex are among the finest in the world and that's why we took the opportunity to showcase just some of their work through this BBC documentary."

"What this programme really captures is that while our detectives will lead the investigation and the hunt for suspects, it really is a force-wide effort to support victims, solve crime, hunt offenders and bring them to justice."

*Murder 24/7: Essex* will air at 9pm on BBC Two from Monday to Wednesday and on March 2 and 3.

# No council tax until you're 21

### Youngsters who have been in care will be exempt

By Piers Meyler

YOUNG people leaving care in Essex will be exempt from paying any council tax to Essex County Council and fire and police services until they reach the age of 21.

However it will be up to other authorities - including city, borough and district councils - to decide on their own council tax exemption policies.

The county council's cabinet voted to give young people living in Essex who have previously been in care a discount of 100 per cent on their council tax until they turn 21.

The proposals are in line with the Government's recently published *Keep on Caring* document, which encourages local authorities to consider the role of a corporate parent through "the lens of what any reasonable parent does to give their child the best start in life".

A report to council leader Cllr David Finch read: "As responsible corporate parents, the coun-



Young care leavers will not have to pay

cil wishes to assist care leavers to work toward managing independent living in a positive and supportive way.

"The report showed that the pace of escalation of debt by local authorities could be frightening for care leavers - what can start out for many care leavers as failing slightly behind can very quickly escalate to a court summons and enforcement action being taken."

The council is currently re-

sponsible for more than 800 care leavers up to the age of 21.

The report added: "A number of care leavers are already exempt from paying council tax by virtue of being in education or receive an existing discount by virtue of their income levels."

"It is proposed to encourage billing authorities to adopt such a scheme."

"We would only bear this cost of reduction after all discounts/cost reductions and exemptions have been applied."

"The cost of this is estimated to be £75,000 per year, although clearly the cost will depend on many factors and it is not possible to know the exact cost."

"This reduction would only apply to county council care leavers aged under 21 who are resident in the council area."

Roger Hirst, Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioner, said he would introduce a similar scheme for the part of the council bill he is responsible for.

He said: "We will be supporting it. The benefits will massively outweigh any potential costs."

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