

## Increase in demand for foodbanks

AMID the coronavirus pandemic a foodbank has seen its monthly usage almost double from this time last year.

Epping Forest Foodbank gave out 1,630 in April 2019; this year the number swelled to 3,190 – a 95 per cent rise.

Independent Loughton councillor, Stephen Murray, said: “Like lots of other volunteers, one of the most important local organisations I am able to help out at is the Epping Forest Foodbank.

“It is still here to help local residents put food on the table for their families, operating from its unit on the Langston Road industrial estate and the Hope Centre at St Mary’s Church Loughton.

“It is now running a doorstep delivery service and responding to electronic referrals from the many foodbank referral agencies across the Epping Forest area.

“Like lots of district councillors I am really pleased that our local food bank is here to help at this time.”

## New school comes in ready-built blocks from the Midlands



The creation of the new building for Sir Frederick Gibberd College, in Harlow, has been captured on timelapse video.

Photo: Caledonian Modular

A brand-new school built almost entirely in a factory has risen from the rubble while the country has been in lockdown.

The creation of the new building for Sir Frederick Gibberd College, in Harlow, has been captured on timelapse video over the last 12 weeks, as the modular building has been delivered to site in sections.

Building contractor, Caledonian Modular has worked within government guidelines during the coronavirus pandemic to keep the project moving. Now, the 198 individual modules are in place in Tendring Road, having been built in a factory in the Midlands and arrived complete with concrete flooring, internal fit out and external cladding.

Lucia Glynn, BMAT head of operations, said: “It looks fantastic! Working with the Department for Education and Caledonian, we are still hopeful for our 2021 opening. Our thanks go to all involved for continuing to push on through what continue to be very difficult circumstances. “The new building we have created is fit for 21st century learning. It has been very interesting for us to watch the modules brought onto site like Lego and turned into a building.”

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# Safety first before schools can open

Assessment must be passed before children return

By Lewis Berrill

SCHOOLS will have to pass a health and safety assessment before re-opening, more than two months after they were closed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Essex County Council (ECC) is backing the government’s proposed phased re-opening of schools – beginning with Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 – in early June.

However, council officials have revealed schools will have to pass a health and safety assessment for they are able to offer “a full-time service”.

Cllr Ray Gooding, ECC cabinet Member for education, said: “I want to reassure parents, carers and communities that our primary concern is the safety of all children, their families and staff.

“The support and guidance we are giving to all settings puts safety at the forefront.

“Reopening is a complicated exercise and we are helping settings to come up with their own solutions. This means settings



Some could be going back to school in June Photo: Pixabay

will have their own approaches that work best for them, their children and their local communities.

He added: “We are clear that each setting’s health and safety risk assessment should drive their decision making. This will mean that not all settings will be able to offer a full-time service initially.

“Some may re-open later in June. Things will be gradual, phased, and small scale to begin

with, and potentially until the end of term.

Plans are underway to limit class sizes, minimising contact between pupils, and timetables will be amended to avoid mixing between groups.

“I understand how uncertain this time is for parents and carers, and that following the government’s announcement about re-opening of education and childcare settings, parents will still have a lot of questions and concerns,” Cllr Gooding continued.

“Finally, I want to pay tribute to the fantastic and tireless work of all education and childcare staff over the last few months, preparing for closure, supporting children with home learning, keeping settings open for those who needed it most, and working towards re-opening.

“The dedication and commitment they have shown during this time is inspiring and my thanks goes to each and every one of them.”

Parents will be contacted by schools with details of the arrangements in the coming weeks.