

Frequently Asked Questions – Bookings

How do I contact Spokesafe

Spokesafe respond to email booking requests through all waking hours of the day, and aim to respond to booking requests as quickly as possible. The email is Hello@spokesafe.com
They also operate a 24/7 helpline where you can speak to a member of the team if you are in an immediate emergency. This is 020 3488 0060.

What do I do if I want to extend my booking during my hire? Please contact Spokesafe at least one hour before your hire period ends to check whether the bike is available for extension. If it is Spokesafe will extend your booking and add the extra charges. If it isn't you need to return the bike by the booked end of your hire period. Failure to return the bike on time will incur a penalty charge of £20

What if I arrive back later than the booking hire end? If you return the bike late without extending your booking or advising Spokesafe that you are going to be late a £30 penalty will be applied

What do I do if I arrive to pick up my bike and there is a mechanical or structural problem ie flat tyre/brakes don't work, unnotified breakage? Please call Spokesafe to report the issue. If the issue stops you using the bike Spokesafe will check whether another suitable bike is available. Spokesafe will notify the Council so that the problem can be resolved. If no alternative bike can be provided your booking will be reimbursed

What if I need to cancel? You can cancel at any time however refunds will not be processed for cancellations on the day of a booking. You will be refunded so long as you cancel at least the day before your booking is due.

If I use less hours than I have booked will I get a refund?

No refunds are provided for early returns. A range of bookable hours is provided and it is the user's responsibility to select the most appropriate time length.

What times can I access the eCargo Bikes? The earliest you can pick a bike up is 7am and the bike must be returned by 10pm

What is the longest time I can hire an eBike/eCargo bike for and can I keep it overnight?

Bikes can be hired on a daily basis and must be returned by 10pm. If you would like to hire an ebike/ecargo bike for more than one day or to keep it overnight please contact ecargobikelibrary@colchester.gov.uk to discuss. Please ensure you do this at least 3 working days in advance of your requested dates.

What if I don't need the rain covers and child seats for my hire?

You can remove the extra bench from the Bakfiets long and the raincover from the Bakfiets and Riese & Muller 75 if you don't need these. Please leave them on the shelves in the cupboard and ensure you return them to the bike at the end of your hire ready for the next person.

Why do I need to add a deposit?

We ask for a deposit to be paid ahead of booking to ensure good behaviour and fair treatment of our vehicle and associated items and timely return.

What are my deposit options and what is it for?

All members have to pay a £50 deposit. The Member has the option to pay this upfront (and have it returned if they leave the scheme) or to pay a returnable deposit each time they book the bike. The returnable deposit is not paid into a bank account, but is temporarily held on Spokesafe's payment platform and will automatically be released back into your account after your booking is completed and you have returned the bike on time and undamaged. This is usually within 7 days. If you have multiple bookings in one week Spokesafe may be able to return the deposit at an earlier date.

It is important that members check for damage before they take a bike out on hire and report it to Spokesafe. Spokesafe and the Council will investigate any damage and liaise with the Member who took the bike out prior to the report or discovery of damage to determine how the damage occurred and whether repairs or replacements are required and what this will cost.

Damage will be defined as over and above reasonable everyday wear and tear and be something that requires replacement parts or the attention of a Bicycle mechanic.

If the £50 is insufficient to pay for any damage then the Member will be invoiced for the outstanding amount. Membership will be suspended until the balance is paid. A live £50 deposit must always be available so any member who has lost their deposit will need to pay for a new one.

Frequently Asked Questions – The Bikes

When do I use the gears and when do I use electric assist?

Always use your gears first, only add in more electric assist if your gears aren't sufficient. For general level surfaces you can use Eco or Tour mode. You only really need Sport or Turbo if you are going up hills or have a particularly heavy load. Riding in Sport or Turbo mode all the time wears the battery, motor and the bikes chain and cassette.

How far can I ride on a single charge?

This depends on which bike you are using and how you use it but you can expect a range of 15-60 miles. Making best use of the gears and different assist levels will maximise your range – for example trying to stay in lower assist modes and only using the 'turbo' modes for pulling away or hills. The cargo bikes are easy to ride so in most cases you should be able to do this.

Remember to only use the eBike within the range of the battery and your own capabilities. Please try and avoid running the battery to completely flat as this can damage the battery. As this is dependent on what mode of electrical assist is used, the weight of the load carried and the local terrain, members are advised to check the displayed maximum range shown on the cycle computer display for each power assist mode and limit their journeys accordingly.

The computer on each bike will dynamically change the range estimation depending on how you're riding it so don't be surprised to see a drop or increase in range even after you have set off.

As a best case scenario in minimal assist mode, you should be able to get approximately a maximum 40 mile round trip. If a heavy load is being carried this may be limited to a maximum 20 mile round trip. The map gives a guide on distances from Colchester though this is as the crow flies not based on the road network.

How should I secure the bike when I have it out on hire.

Always secure to an immovable object when parked and stored. Use both locks and the frame lock overnight, and at least 2 locks when out and about.

What if I have a breakdown during my hire?

Please contact Spokesafe immediately. They will pass on the issue to members of the Colchester City Council Transport & Sustainability team for assistance as soon as possible. Please note that Spokesafe may ask you to email across photo/video footage to help diagnose the issue. Spokesafe will also need to know your exact location.

If you leave the bike and abandon your trip you must leave it secured to an immovable object with all of the locks attached. If the breakdown is due to a mechanical failure the Council will recover it without charge. If the failure is due to misuse or inappropriate riding of the bike the £50 deposit will cover the recovery of the bike. Causes of the mechanical failure will be concluded once the bike is recovered, the deposit for that hire will be retained until the causes are determined.

What do I do if I have an accident with another person/vehicle during my hire?

Notify the police as you would do with any accident and notify Spokesafe as well including your precise location. Exchange details with the other party, take photos and try and gain witness details.

Spokesafe will pass the information on to Colchester City Council including your contact details. The Council does not cover Personal accident and third party liability, these are your responsibility. If the bike is damaged and cannot be ridden please secure it to a nearby immovable object using all three locks and the Council will contact you to discuss recovery and next steps in relation to the bike.

What if the bike is stolen while I have it on hire?

Notify the police and obtain a crime number and notify Spokesafe who will inform the council. Keep evidence of any broken locks etc and photos of where it was parked. Spokesafe or the Council will contact you for more information and to assist with getting you home.

Distances from Colchester City Centre as the crow flies

