

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EAST ESSEX AREA FORUM HELD AT  
THE VENTURE CENTRE LAWFORD 1 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**Membership**

**County Councillors:**

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| * A Brown Vice Chairman | * J G Jowers          |
| K Bentley               | J R Lucas             |
| L Barton                | * S Mayzes            |
| R Callender             | * L Mead              |
| S Candy                 | * M Skeels            |
| C Griffiths             | * M J Page (Chairman) |
| * Mrs M D Fisher        | * D C F Robinson      |
| * Mrs T M A Higgins     | Ms A Turrell          |
|                         | * Ms J A Young        |

\* present

Partner Organisations:-

**Tendring District Council**

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Neil Stock      | Leader          |
| John Hawkins    | Chief Executive |
| * Cllr N Turner |                 |
| Cllr P Halliday |                 |

**Colchester Borough Council**

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Ian Vipond,    | Executive Director |
| Cllr Tim Young |                    |

**Essex Police**

Jason Gwillim Superintendent Essex Police

**Essex Fire & Rescue**

**Essex County Council Cabinet Members**

**Essex County Council Officers:**

- \* Jane Gardner, Area Co-ordinator for East Essex
- \* Kate Fox, Committee Assistant
- \* Janet Mills, Committee Officer
- \* Geoff Harris, East Area Highways Manager

**Parish & Town Councils**

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| * Lee Lay-Flurrie Manningtree TC | * B. Rolfe Lawford PC            |
| * T Dury Gt. Hawkesley PC        | * Dr. J Parker Myland PC         |
| * D Falconer Layer-de la Haye PC | * Jane Chinnery, Myland PC       |
| * A Hughes Layer-de la Haye PC   | * Edmund Chinnery                |
| * David Winet Langham PC PC      | * Cllr R Bucke Frinton on Sea TC |
| * Ian Christondonides Frating PC | * Cllr L Belgrove Alresford PC   |
| * Cllr J Glirss West Bergholt Pc | * Dr. T. Rogers                  |

**Tendring E.A.L.C (Essex Association of Local Councils)**

Robert Taylor

**Other Bodies Represented**

**18. Appointment of Chairman**

The Committee Officer asked the Forum to note that Councillor M Page had been appointed as the Chairman of the Forum at full Council held on 16 July 2009. With this duly noted the Chairman took the Chair.

**19. Welcome and Introductions, Members Officers and Invited Representatives of Partner Organisations**

The Chairman welcomed those present and set out a summary of the business for the meeting.

**20. Forum Membership**

The Membership as set out on the agenda was noted by the Forum.

**21. Appointment of Vice Chairman**

The appointment of Councillor Anne Brown as Vice Chairman of the Forum was noted.

**22. Apologies**

The Committee Officer reported apologies and substitution notices as follows:

Apology	Substitution
Cllr N. Stocks Tendering District Council	Cllr Peter Halliday
Cllr A Turrell Essex County Council	
Cllr Lyn Barton Essex County Council	
John Hawkins	Leanne Thornton

**23. Declarations of Interest**

None recorded

**24. Minutes**

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 18 March 2009 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**25. Public Questions**

The Chairman invited questions from the public on matters within the Terms of Reference of the Forum and not related to substantive agenda items. The following question and responses were made:

- Anne Hughes, Layer-de la-Haye Parish Council raised a concern regarding an application for funding from the Community Initiative Fund.

(i) The lack of feedback upon their application for funding to repair the local tennis courts, from youth Community Initiative Fund (CIF) scheme. The Forum was advised that a number of young people had been involved in making the bid for funds to repair the courts. These courts which were also regularly used surrounding villages. There was particular concern that these young people had now become disillusioned because the Parish had not been advised that the available funding had already been allocated before their submission was made.

Councillor John Jowers, Cabinet Member for Localism and Planning, advised the Forum that applications for the additional one off round of CIF funding had been over subscribed. There would be another opportunity to submit the bid via the CIF this year. Besides this, the Area Forum would receive funds for local projects and the 3 Districts would be receiving additional funds for major projects, the bid to repair the courts could now be presented to these bodies. There was also the Parish Grant Scheme. The Forum was reminded that an independent panel that would be judging the CIF bids.

- Linda Belgrove, Arlesford Parish Council raised the matter of introducing 20 mile per hour speed limits outside of schools.

(i) The Forum was advised that there had been excellent support from the schools and parents for a local initiative. Whilst it was understood that the actual speed limit might not be changed, by placing caution and 20 mile per hour advisory signs might be enough to slow the traffic during school opening and closing times. Would it be possible to introduce such a scheme?

Mr. Geoff Harris East Area Highways Manager informed the Forum that he was aware of the Arlesford PC request to introduce such a scheme. Regrettably introduction of advisory signs did not necessarily reduce the speed of drivers. Schemes which had already been introduced in Suffolk were currently being evaluated.

Councillor Robert Chambers Chairman of the Essex Police Authority advised the Forum of his support for the scheme. Experience had shown that there was better enforcement where the scheme had been introduced in conjunction with a Community Speed Watch Scheme.

- A Member from a local Parish Council raised the matter related to the Freedom of Information Act.

(i) Three Parish Councils had received requests for information from one applicant who was opposed to a planning consent. Concerns were raised for the following reasons:

- The time and effort involved in order to comply with such requests.
- There were no set guidelines for Parish Councils on how to deal with such requests
- Whether computers used by Councillors for a mixture of private matters and business matters could be confiscated under the new rules. If this was the case then it might deter people from taking up public office.

Ian Vipond, Executive Director Colchester Borough Council, advised the Forum that guidelines upon the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) were available to Local Authorities, these could be made available to Parish Councils. With regard to confiscation of computers, there were limitations in the Act that prevented personal computers being confiscated where no criminal act had been suspected.

- A Member from Frating Parish Council raised a question regarding wind turbines.
  - (i) Whether there were guidelines by which planning applications could be judged.

Councillor John Jowers, Cabinet Member for Localism and Planning, advised the Forum that there had been a mixed response from the public about the installation of turbines and updated the Forum as to where wind turbines had already been sited. To ensure that installations did not become problematic in the future, applications needed to be strategically focussed and well justified before being accepted. It was likely these types of applications would be dealt with by the Independent Planning Commission rather than by the Local Authorities in future.

## **26. Making Communities Safer**

The Chairman welcomed and introduced the following panel members. Each panel member was given the opportunity to present their information

### **Councillor Robert Chambers, Chairman of the Essex Police Authority**

Councillor Chambers gave a presentation which outlined the structure and some of the key aims of the Police Authority.

The following key aims were explained to the Forum:

- (i) More visible policing – 600 extra policemen would be employed over the next 3 years. This had cost some £27 million which would be found through existing resources.
- (ii) Returning calls from the public within a reasonable time – better responses to non-emergency phone queries from the public.
- (iii) To reduce anti-social behaviour

The Forum was reminded that Essex was one of the safest places to live, never the less the Police took a tough stance against any person that committed a crime within the Essex boundaries. The Police public statement '*if you commit a crime in Essex, bring your toothbrush as you will go to goal*' was widely known.

### **Samantha Grant Head of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Unit, Essex County Council**

Samantha Grant gave a presentation which outlined the crime and disorder reduction partnership and the Essex Works Pledges. The pledges were as follows:

- To make Essex the Safest place to live in England by 2012/13

- To deliver ten local operations to reduce crime and anti-social in identified areas with Essex Police and partners during the years 2009/10.

The Forum was advised of the following operations which were currently on going to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour locally.

- An operation in Harwich being undertaken by a range of partners which would identify community concerns.
- Safer Colchester Pilot to address local issues, built on best practice was being undertaken by a multiagency team.
- Colchester SOS bus had been implemented. This had resulted in a considerable reduction in the numbers of people attending the local Accident and Emergency department.
- Tendering Family Intervention Project which had resulted in reducing the impact of anti-social behaviour on local people.

### **Jason Gwillim Superintendent Essex Police –Eastern Division**

Superintendent Gwillim gave a presentation that outlined the Essex Police Force key objectives and gave recent crime rate statistics.

The Forum was advised there were 10 key objectives the following five were mentioned in brief detail:

- Confidence in policing. It was a prime objective to continue to build public confidence in the policing of Essex.
- Delivering the police pledge to be one of the safest places to live in Britain by 2012/2013
- Crime and anti-social behaviour reduction. The target was a 5% year on year in crime reduction. In some areas this was already being met. With regard to anti-social behaviour, the SOS Bus which had been a great success in Colchester may well be repeated in Tendering. More work was required in other areas, such as domestic violence, to be able to meet the targets.
- Crime detection. Crime detection rates were 63% detection where crimes involved dwellings 50% detection rate involving violent crime, and a 33% overall detection rate, this overall rate was the highest in the MSF group but there was room for improvement.
- Drug offenders convicted. The Safer Colchester project where the Police were assisted by the community had led to arrests regarding drugs.

The Chairman thanked the presenters and invited questions and comments from Members and the public:

- Councillor N Turner, Tendring District Council, raised concerns about the closure of the Tendring Magistrates Court. It was considered that this would cause transport problems for those needing to attend the new court, leading to failure of offenders to attend.

In response Jason Gwillim advised the Forum that only 10% prosecution led to convictions. It was the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) that determined whether a case would be heard.

Councillor Chambers questioned whether the CPS was an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.

- Councillor Robinson raised a Question regarding whether the additional 600 police officers to be employed over the next 3 years, would all be front line officers

Jason Gwillim reassured the Forum that the newly appointed officers were all to be front line officers. The Forum was also advised that there needed to be a change of culture within the service whereby police officers could be deployed when needed rather than deployed by existing fixed shift patterns; although there was a measure of flexibility, these existing shift patterns were sometimes unhelpful. There was to be a review of the Eastern Division current shift patterns during the autumn.

- Councillor Higgins raised a concern about that there was no positive enforcement against those who parked on pavements

Councillor Chambers informed the Forum that pavement parking had become an increasing problem. Policemen used a common sense approach; so long as there was still room for people to pass by safely the police did not use positive enforcement of the law.

Superintendent Gwillim advised the Forum that obstruction was a police matter. There were a number of ways to tackle this issue which required a team effort

Councillor Page informed the Forum that a joint initiative between EEC the Police, the Town Council and members of disabled and blind clubs in Frinton on Sea was to begin on 16 October. A number of Amber and Red leaflets had been produced; these would be put on offending vehicles. The Amber leaflet would provide a warning to the vehicle owner; the red leaflet would be accompanied by a fine. Councillor Page agreed to update the Forum at a later date with the outcome of the pilot initiative.

- Peter Halliday raised a question regarding the reported reduction in crime in Tendering.
  - (i) Questioned whether there had been a reduction in crime or a reduction in the number of crimes being reported.
  - (ii) Questioned whether less crime had been reported because reporting of crimes went to a centre in Chelmsford rather than to the local station, where local knowledge was available.

Superintendent Gwillim advised the Forum that the reported 3.5% reduction in the crime rate was an accurate reflection of crime reduction in Essex. With regard to reporting crime, there were a number of ways in which the public could contact the police. Work was being undertaken to re-enforce this message to the public.

Councillor Chamber advised the Forum that over the last four years the numbers of reported crimes had actually risen.

Councillor Julie Young commented that all councillors should encourage the public to report crimes.

- Councillor John Parker, Mile End Parish council sited an incident where, two years ago, he had reported seeing a person that had been involved in a serious crime, unfortunately due to lack of Police man power, no Police action had been taken until the next day.

Superintendent Gwillim expressed disappointment regarding the incident that had occurred two years ago however, assured the Forum that this type of police response would not occur today.

- Councillor Mayzes raised the question regarding partnership working
  - (i) Whether partnership working was a burden of costs to the local tax payer, a study had revealed that 66% of residents had doubts about the effectiveness of partnership working with Essex Police.
  - (ii) Questioned whether having a Local Police Commissioner might be a better model

Councillor Chambers advised the Forum that there was likely to be substantial cuts in government funding to the public sector. It was therefore vital to have effective, committed partnership working with common goals and aims to bring about the necessary savings. Work was currently being undertaken in collaboration with Kent Police Force to establish the feasibility of amalgamating the Kent and Essex major incident teams. If this was possible then some £50 million could be saved over the next 5 to 7 years.

With regard to a Police Commissioner, it was considered that having a Police Commissioner was not necessarily the best model.

Superintendent Gwillim expressed concern that 66% of the public showed no confidence in Police partnership working. Work would need to be undertaken to address this situation.

Councillor Julie Young commented that there had been excellent partnership working with the Police this had resulted in a 33% fall in anti-social behaviour in Greenstead.

Councillor Fisher commented upon the excellent partnership working between the Essex Police and Essex County Council which had resulted in an additional 18 officers patrolling and assisting at traffic incidents on the very busy and problematic A12.

- Councillor Tim Young, Colchester Borough Council raised a question regarding positive law enforcement.
  - (i) Questioned whether short term prison sentences were effective, as there seemed to be a high re-offending rate and wondered if Community Service Orders were a better option.
  - (ii) Questioned whether the Probation Service could be invited to attend and address the Forum at a future date.

Councillor Chambers advised the Forum that prison was not always a suitable punishment for some offenders.

Samantha Grant Head of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Unit, advised the Forum that in some circumstances, especially chaotic family circumstance, it was not only the offender but the whole family that required the support of the Family Intervention Services. On some occasions the outcomes could be better than sending the offender to prison.

- Councillor John Glirss, West Bergholt Parish Council raised concern that a car theft captured on CCTV, clearly showing the offenders and the car number plate had not led to a prosecution. Councillor Glirss raised further concern regarding the police handling of the tape, as a second copy had to be provided six weeks later. Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of Police feed back about this and other incidents and the lack of provision of local crime statistics and information.
- Councillor Glirss raised a question regarding whether the Police had sufficient support staffing levels so that Parish Councils could receive appropriate crime statistics and timely feedback information.

Superintendent Gwillim, acknowledged that a 6 week delay in processing the CCTV was not satisfactory. The Forum was advised that this was being investigated. Information regarding the outcome of the investigation would be sent to the Parish Council.

- A Local Member raised a question regarding small hamlets and rural communities
  - (i) Questioned whether more visible policing should be undertaken in these in these areas.

Councillor Chambers advised the Forum that the placing of police officers within communities was being discussed. Currently all hamlets were visited by Police cars rather than policemen of foot patrol.

Superintendent Gwillim, advised the Forum that the Police Force was mindful not to move all its officers to high crime areas.

A Local Member for the Lawford Parish Council raised a questions regarding:

- (i) The theft of playground equipment worth £10,000
- (ii) A problem with the local PCSO contract of employment
- (iii) The loss of a Policeman in Mistly

Superintendent Gwillim, advised the Forum that the contract matter was being addressed. He was not aware with regard to the loss of the Policeman in Mistly, and stated that increasing manpower in the area was currently being investigated.

An independent Member of the Police Authority advised the Forum that there was to be two events to raise public awareness regarding the work of the Crime and Disorder Partnerships. These were to be held on the 8 October at the Colchester



Town Hall and then at the Princes Theatre on the 13 October. It was hoped, that these events would result in building public confidence.

The Chairman thanked the panel members.

## **26. Forum Funding**

The Chairman advised that the East Essex Area Forum had received £50,000 to be used for community projects. Applications for funding were to be received by Monday 5 October 2009. Awards would be announced on Tuesday 3 November 2009.

## **27 Measles Mumps and Rubella Scrutiny**

The Chairman advised the Forum that the scrutiny project undertaken by the Forum Task and Finish Group had received a Highly Commended award at the recent National Scrutiny Awards. The Forum was required to review the outcome of the implantation of the project at a future meeting. The Chairman commended the excellent partnership working and all those involved. In advance of the review the Chairman advised that the project to increase the vaccination rate, in certain areas of Colchester where the rate had been extremely low was being closely monitored, the vaccination rate was now above the national average (74%) in the project areas.

## **28 Date of Next Meeting**

**The Forum noted the date for the next meeting as follows:**

1.30 pm Tuesday 3 November at Colchester Community Stadium.