

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MID ESSEX AREA FORUM HELD AT
MALDON TOWN HALL, ON THURSDAY 24 JUNE 2010 AT 2PM**

Membership

* *Present*

Essex County Council (20)

* J W Pike (Chairman)	N Hume
* J Aldridge	M Hutchon
R L Bass	M C M Lager
* J Baugh	D J Louis
G Butland	P J Martin
* R G Boyce (Vice-Chairman)	* M Mackrory
P Channer	* Mrs M Miller
J Deakin	T C Smith-Hughes
N Edey	R Walters
D M Finch	
Rt Hon Lord Hanningfield	

Partner Organisations

Braintree District Council (2)

Cllr G Butland -

Chris Fleetham -

Chelmsford Borough Council (2)

Councillor Whitehead - Strategic Property & Research Officer -
LSP Lead Officer (Chief Executive's
Nominee)

Lucy Payne - Strategic Property & Research Officer -
LSP Lead Officer (Chief Executive's
Nominee)

Maldon District Council (2)

Mrs A N Warr - Chief Executive

Steven Watson - Chief Executive

Local Councils (3)

* Tony Hayward	- E.A.L.C (Chelmsford)
	E.A.L.C (Maldon)
Cllr Cole	- E.A.L.C (Chelmsford)
Mrs R M Pink	E.A.L.C (Maldon)

Hospitals & Primary Care Trust (2)

Sheila Bremner - Mid Essex Hospitals Services NHS
Trust

Ruth May - Mid Essex Hospitals Services NHS
Trust

Essex Police (2)

Chief Superintendent
Michelle Dunn

Essex Fire Service (1)

John Moulson	- Chelmsford Community Command
Councils for Voluntary Service (3)	
Judy Cuddeford	- Chelmsford CVS
Lorraine Jarvis	- Maldon and District CVS
Paul Murphy	- Maldon and District CVS

Also Present

(in order of signing the attendance book – and as there described)

Samir Pandya, Highways dept, ECC, Trevor Miller, Chelmsford BC, Phil Davies Althorne Parish Council, Angie Balcombe EALC, Chris Rust Maldon DC, Alison Anderson ECC, Janet Cloke, Maldon District 50+ Forum, Steven Savage Maldon Town Council, R M Pink EALC Maldon, Prof L Schnurr Heybridge Parish Council, John Jowers, Cabinet Member for Localism & Planning, Essex County Councillor Colin Riley Essex County Councillor, John W Harrison, Heybridge, John Aldridge Essex County Councillor, Chris Siddall- Braintree District Council (and in attendance as Deputy for Graham Butland), A J Luce, F on Friday/Torch

Officers Attending in Support

Samantha Ball	- Committee Assistant
Graham Hughes	- Committee Officer
Ian Myers	- Committee Officer
John Zammit	- Mid Area Co-ordinator

1. Welcome and Introduction of Members and Officers

The Chairman welcomed Members to Mid Essex Area Forum. The Chairman introduced John Zammit and Graham Hughes, Mid Area Co-ordinator and Committee Officer for the Mid Area Forum respectively to their first meeting.

2. Apologies

The Committee Officer noted that apologies had been received as follows:

Essex County Councillors

Councillor Rodney Bass
Councillor P Channer
Councillor Jude Deakin
Councillor D. Finch
Rt Hon Lord Hanningfield
Councillor M. Hutchon
Councillor MCM Lager
Councillor P J Martin
Councillor T C Smith Hughes
Councillor R. Walters

District Councillors

Councillor R Whitehead

Cabinet member Stephen Castle.

Other Organisations

Chelmsford BC Partnership Co-ordinator.

Representative from Chelmsford Voluntary Services

It was noted that both Councillors Mrs Hutchon and T C Smith Hughes were unable to attend due to health reasons and best wishes were extended for their recovery.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the Forum held on 11 January 2010 and the notes of a meeting of the Forum held on 4 March 2010 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Public Questions

In answer to questions from Mr Savage and Mr Davis it was confirmed that currently the details of the transformation of PCT services were not known but that Essex County Council would expect to be consulted on proposals and would strive to influence the future structure and ensure that existing area funding allocations were not changed.

At the March meeting of the Forum the Area Highways Manager had agreed to investigate whether the County Council could adopt a policy of integrated kerb drains on cycle paths and report back to the Forum. Mr Samir Pandya would follow up on this outstanding matter and report back by email to Mr Harrison.

It was confirmed to Mr Savage that the new internal structure of the Highways Department had yet to be finalised (although contact telephone numbers remained unchanged) and details would be disseminated once the review was completed.

Councillor Siddell of Earls Colne Council was concerned about traffic congestion at the A120/A1020 junction and particularly the access routes out of Coggeshall and questioned the priority being given to resolving the issue. A petition of 2000 names requesting action to reduce the congestion was to be submitted to Braintree District Council. Although this matter was not directly within the remit of Essex County Council the Chairman confirmed that the County Council would try to exert some influence in this area.

Mr. Shrimpton referred to previous Forum discussion on traffic hotspots and whether there was a particular priority in which, money permitting, they would be addressed. Mr Patya confirmed that the Highways department did review traffic survey data and maintained a list of congestion hotspots which formed

the basis for determining traffic management work to be prioritised and completed. The detail was not available at the meeting but the request for information would be referred to Andy Champ, Network Management Engineer for the list of congestion hotspots and would be distributed to Members of the Forum.

6. Policing in Mid-Essex

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Chief Superintendent Michelle Dunn, Divisional Commander, Central Division, Essex Police who had agreed to give an overview of Police performance and issues in the Central Division. The Central division covered Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon and Uttlesford and was the largest Division in Essex by geographic area and population. Chief Superintendent Dunn would restrict her presentation to the areas of Chelmsford, Braintree and Maldon to reflect the Forum's areas of focus.

Chelmsford

Chelmsford had a large night-time economy with more licensed premises than Braintree and Maldon combined. Chief Superintendent Dunn felt that the area was a safe area in which to live which was reflected by the World Health Organisation Safe Community Award recently presented to the District. The principal assessment of performance was measured by the number of crimes per thousand population and Chelmsford had a current recorded rate of 13.3 against the Essex Police force average of 15. In the Chelmsford District recorded crime had fallen by 8.4% in 2008/9 and by 6.1% in 2009/10 with a detection rate of 34.6%.

There was seasonality in recorded crime in the area with an increase in spring and summer and then trailing off in the approach to winter with the lowest levels in January and February.

Last November there had been a significant increase in dwelling burglaries which had led to the establishment of a ring-fenced burglary team to counteract the trend. Dwelling burglary now had reduced to lower levels. Whilst anti-social incidents had decreased by 16%, violent crime was being closely monitored and would remain a key focus. A strong Police licensing team continued to work closely with community partners.

Essex Police had introduced Neighbourhood Resolutions as an alternative to going through the criminal justice process for lower level offences where there is also the support for this alternative from the victim. The scheme had proved to be very popular with 47 successful resolutions so far.

Braintree

Crimes per thousand population in the Braintree area was 10.9 which was lower than in Chelmsford. In the period 2008-10 there had been a 8.3% reduction in recorded crime, which had exceeded the target of 5%, and a 36.9% detection rate. Serious violent crime and robbery were both down.

There was a grey economy for metal theft particularly with regards to lead, copper and catalytic converters. The particular challenge for the Police was that the stolen property is not easily identifiable from other similar legitimate property. The Police were working with the Crown Prosecution Service as it was very difficult to prosecute offenders without being able to establish the property stolen and identify victims.

There remained a continued focus on illegal drug supply and use as it also impacted on other criminal activities such as acquisitive crime and has a detrimental impact on the community.

The Police were convinced about the importance for good interaction with the local schools throughout the Division and were giving regular educational talks in schools with partners on the dangers of alcohol, drugs, road safety etc.

Maldon

Marine security was a unique challenge in Maldon. However Maldon did have the second best overall crime rate in the Essex Division at 9.1 crimes per thousand population with a constant reduction in recorded crime over the last few years, the second best detection rate in the County at 33% and the best reduction in anti-social behaviour in the County last year. As overall crime rates were lower than other areas there was a danger of complacency by residents 'feeling safe' and leaving vehicles and homes unlocked leading to opportunistic crime in the area and the Police were trying to highlight this to residents. There were issues with criminal damage particularly around the narrow streets leading from the High Street.

Conclusion

Chief Superintendent Dunn concluded her presentation by referring to an overall reduction in crime currently in the Division of 1.4% compared to the previous year and there continued to be a strong focus in improving the quality of service to the public and further improving value for money.

Chief Superintendent Dunn acknowledged that Essex Police needed to improve in keeping crime victims informed on the progress of their particular crime investigation. However, there would be continued focus on local policing, stiff targets set for detecting and reducing serious crime and anti social behaviour and eliminating organised crime groups. Clearly the Coalition Government Spending Review in October could affect the budget for Essex Police and Chief Superintendent Dunn offered to return to speak to the Forum once specific budgetary constraints and consequences were known.

Thereafter, the following general issues were raised by those in attendance and indicated in brackets:

- (i) There were reports of varying degrees of success for Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPs) with some meetings not being well publicised, some Groups more active than others and sometimes the Police Representative not turning up for meetings. There was also the suggestion that the format of the NAP meetings be changed to allow attendance by members of the public. (Philip Davies, John Harrison and County Councillor Miller). Chief Superintendent Dunne acknowledged these points and, in the case of specific complaints, would meet with individuals after the meeting to gain more information for follow-up action.
- (ii) Braintree crime hot spots: Whilst acknowledging resource pressures it was queried whether there could be further multi-agency co-operation and more proactive enforcement to deal with crime hot spots. It was confirmed that crime statistics for smaller areas (such as wards) could be provided by District Commanders and was available from the Essex Police web site (County Councillor Baugh).
- (iii) Neighbourhood Resolutions: the process was not national at present but the format had been taken from its use by a couple of Police Forces in Northern England. Community service punishments had worked well although it was acknowledged that ultimately the use of this alternative was dependent on the wishes of the crime victim. Police Officers were increasingly grasping the opportunity to highlight this alternative to crime victims. Use of a Neighbourhood Resolution instead of being taken through the Criminal Justice system had significant cost and time savings however it was only considered for relatively minor level crime. (Tony Parsons, Chris Siddell)
- (iv) Car key crimes were an issue for areas of the Division but generally levels were lower in the Central Division than in the areas bordering metropolitan London. An ongoing Police campaign was educating people not to leave their car keys displayed in highly visible places in their dwellings when the car was not being used. It was difficult for Essex Police to pin point regular hot spots in the division for this particular crime as there was no pattern to the areas being targeted other than they had easy and quick access back onto major trunk roads. Chief Superintendent Dunn confirmed that there had been some success in retrieving stolen vehicles (County Councillor Mackory).
- (v) Reporting crime: every call received by the Police was monitored and included in statistics on response times. Chief Superintendent Dunn advised that the average times taken to answer both emergency and non-emergency calls had improved. It was confirmed that a crime would be recorded by the Central Crime Bureau when a caller reported a crime having taken place (John Harrison)

Chief Superintendent Dunne was thanked for her attendance and presentation by the Chairman. She remained in attendance until the end of the meeting so as to be able to take further individual issues and questions after the meeting.

7. Area Forums Health Scrutiny Plan Review

The Health Inequalities Task and Finish Group would have its inaugural meeting on 14 July 2010 and would start by taking evidence from the local PCT. Further meetings and further involvement with stakeholders was anticipated thereafter with a report back to the Forum in due course.

8. Community Initiatives Fund

The Forum received a report (AFM/07/10) introduced by John Zammit, Area Co-ordinator Mid-Essex, summarising the outcomes from the judging panels in Mid Essex for the fifth round of the Community Initiatives Fund broken down into Braintree, Chelmsford and Maldon areas. County Councillor and Cabinet Member John Jowers advised that due to budgetary constraints a slightly reduced level of funding for the Community Initiatives Fund was expected for the next year. However, he stressed that he felt that the CIF acted as a good route for localism and devolved power and seemed to work well. He confirmed that the CIF area allocations were not prorated for population density, as often rural parish council areas had less access to funding than urban areas, but were distributed according to the merits of each application. After discussion Members **noted** the outcomes of the CIF for 2009. Information on the CIF allocation for the next year was to be finalised and would be distributed to Members in due course.

9. Area Forum budget 2010/11

The Forum received a report (AFM08/10) introduced by John Zammit, Area Co-ordinator, informing Members about the arrangements for allocating the Area Forum Budget for 2010/11. The funding available for the Area Forum for 2010/11 was £50,000. Applications would be invited for consideration from the three Borough/District Councils in the area. After discussion it was **Agreed** that the Area Forum Chairman and Area Co-ordinator implement the application and administration process outlined in the report, consider all proposals received and present recommendations to the Area Forum at its meeting on 11 November 2010.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Forum was advised that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 16 September 2010, at 10 a.m. at Braintree Town Hall.

The Chairman proposed and it was **Agreed** that, after the September meeting of the Forum, all future meetings of the Forum would be held at the Central Baptist Church in Chelmsford.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 3.17pm.

Chairman