

# **Portfolio Report to Full Council**

## **Cllr Alastair Walters- Community Safety**

### **1) Community Safety Partnership**

**Uttlesford is a very safe place to live.**

In spite of a big increase in the number of burglaries which commenced during the course of last year, and affected mainly our towns in the district, Uttlesford continues to have one of the lowest crime rates in Essex and the eastern counties.

The district has a higher proportion of elderly residents than both the national and county average. The elderly of our community are usually the most fearful of crimes. However, in an independent survey of the county last year by Mori, Uttlesford was top of the list with the highest percentage of residents saying they felt safe to go out at night. With the Halifax confirming that Uttlesford was No1 in Great Britain in their Rural Areas Quality of Life Survey for 2014, it is not surprising that reporter Lauren Hall concluded in her ITV coverage of the Halifax Award 'Perhaps that's why this part of the Anglian region is now considered the best of Britain' !

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) involves various agencies working together to reduce crime and disorder and produces a Strategic Assessment, which is reviewed every 12 months. It outlines the main priorities for the partnership and sets out how to achieve them. Key areas identified for 2014/15 continue to be as follows:

- \* Reducing Anti-Social behaviour
- \* Reducing violent crime (including assaults and domestic violence)
- \* Reducing acquisitive crimes (incl. domestic burglaries)
- \* Road safety (speeding issues)

### **CSP Core projects**

Reality Roadshow (for 13 year olds) and Crucial Crew (for 11 year olds) continue to prove to be very popular with staff and pupils. Reality Roadshow, which took place between 27th February and 7th March, once again was a great success, and all 39 schools in the district are booked into Crucial Crew in June.

### **Safer Living Event**

Aimed at the over 55s, Safer Living events have taken place in Takeley, Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Stansted and Thaxted, over the period 11th March to 25th March. They have proved very popular, and are made up of contributions from Fire Service on smoke detectors etc; Essex Police on the variety of scams occurring via post, telephone and computer and the best way to handle them, armchair exercises, lifeline alarms; Papworth Trust about the excellent services they can provide eg gardening, decorating, repairs advice etc; Time Bank about exchanging skills with someone else in the local community.

## **2) Emergency Planning**

Following the wettest winter for 248 years and a prolonged spell of rainfall in the early part of the year, a number of areas in Uttlesford experienced various degrees of localised flooding at the beginning of February. Apart from a few hotspots most of the flooding in the district subsided quickly.

Our Emergency Planning Team coped extremely well over the crisis weekend period, and on the 19th February, a resilience workshop for town and parish councils in the district was held in this chamber to identify areas that could be possibly better managed in light of individual experience. One important need voiced being the provision of sand and long lasting bags convenient for stowing locally in order to be better prepared in the event of future emergency flood warnings.

As a result, a follow up resilience workshop has been arranged for the 15th May at Dunmow with experts in their field providing advice and guidance to parishes on how to cope with future predicted flood conditions.

## **3) Licensing**

The licensing committee has continued to be busy with a number of regular panel hearings either driver related or about licensed premises. The committee recently updated the Council's licensing policy following consultation and public hearings open to the trade. A considerable amount of work is involved, especially in relation to Government consultation papers on proposed changes, received usually with very short notice.

For example, the Government is considering a number of changes to the licensing regime in respect of premises and hackney carriages and private hire trades where the committee has responded to consultation documents. These include the abolition of the requirement for personal licenses, localised setting of licensing fees and a proposal for a general extension of opening hours for the football world cup. I am pleased to report that the Government has announced its response to the first of these consultations and that personal licenses will be retained although they will in future be lifelong licenses and not subject to renewal.

The committee deprecates the short time scales allowed by Government to respond to consultations, or in some cases the failure to consult at all. With regard to the taxi trade, the Government carried out a targeted consultation over the New Year period which local authorities were not invited to respond to. More recently the Deregulation Bill currently before parliament contains 2 significant amendments to Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1978 which causes concern, eg license renewals at 3 year intervals compared to 1 year at present. Cllr Perry as Chairman of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee and I have jointly written to Sir Alan Haselhurst expressing our concerns.

#### **4) Uttlesford policing**

As CI Richard Melton has only very recently carried out presentations of the current crime situation at the North and South Forums, I will summarise as follows:

Crime over the past 10 months has increased by 3.9% with the biggest increase being in burglaries (dwellings) up by 49.7%, vehicle crime up 8.2%, shoplifting up by 9.3%. Most of the burglaries and car crimes have been carried out by gangs of criminals originating outside the district, although there have been a number carried out by a very few local criminals.

The good news is they are being apprehended with intel info from local residents and good work by the CID and our local police.

Serious violent crime is down by 41.2% and assaults down by 15.3%. ASB also well down mainly due to police presence in our towns on Friday/Saturday nights, and an excellent well supported Pub Watch scheme.

#### **Street Pastors**

Street Pastors have completed their first year of operation in Saffron Walden and have been a great success. Hopefully they will be extended to other towns in the district.