

**UTTLESFORD POLICE AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE GROUP held at 7.30 pm at THE GUILDHALL  
THAXTED on 17 JUNE 1997**

Present:- M Le Q Herbert (Chairman for the meeting)  
J Drummond and P G Leeder (Parish/Town Councils), Mrs J Moller and P Trendle (Crime Prevention Panels).

In attendance:- M T Purkiss - Secretary to the Group (Uttlesford District Council) Superintendent I Brown, Chief Inspector R Burman and Inspectors S Humbles, A Jelley and A Rayner (Essex Police)

**I. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs M D Fisher (Essex Police Authority), Councillors R C Smith and R W L Stone (Uttlesford District Council), G J Thompson (Churches), R Board (Education), M Perry (Chambers of Trade and Commerce), Rev C Bishop (Uttlesford Council for Voluntary Service), I McKenzie (Rotary) and C Cooper (Neighbourhood Watch).

**I. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 1997 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**I. WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed members of the Consultative Group and members of the public to the meeting and expressed his pleasure that so many people had turned out.

He advised the Group that Councillor Waterer had reached the age of 70 and accordingly had to retire from the Police Authority. He asked that a letter be sent to Councillor Waterer expressing the Group's thanks for the kind and courteous way in which he had chaired meetings of the Group for the past two years.

He also reported that Councillor Mrs M D Fisher had been appointed as Chairman of the Group and that Councillor D Rice had also been appointed to serve on the Group.

**I. AIR SUPPORT UNIT**

Inspector M Walker addressed the Group on the work of the Air Support Unit. He explained that this had commenced on 2 July 1990 and he outlined the situation leading up to the purchase of a helicopter later this year and the decision to use twin engine machines. He then showed a video illustrating the work and capabilities of the Air Support Unit. In answer to questions regarding value for money he stated that the use of the helicopter enabled the Police to search a vast area in a very quick time and produced significant savings in Police time. It was particularly useful in searching for missing persons, dealing with fire-arm incidents and tracking stolen vehicles. The Chairman thanked Inspector Walker for his presentation.

**I. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman explained that the Police Authority had met earlier in the day and he reported on the main items which had been discussed.

Currently the system of lay visiting to people held in Police custody was carried out by members of the Police Authority. However, the authority had agreed to widen the scheme to include members of the Police and Community Consultative Groups and he asked any members who were interested to contact Superintendent Brown.

He mentioned that a number of consultative groups relied on secretarial and administrative support from local authorities. However, the Home Office had recommended that this function should be centralised and it was intended to introduce a pilot scheme for one year to achieve a more common format.

He also stated that the Police and Community Consultative Group Forum would be held on 24 June 1997 at Police Headquarters in Chelmsford. Presentations would be made on a number of important items including Community Safety, Police Complaints Procedure and membership of consultative groups. Three members of the Group could attend and he asked any Members interested to contact Superintendent Brown.

He referred to the publication of the Police Annual Report and Performance Indicators. Details of performance against these indicators would now be published in local newspapers circulating within the county and 15,000 leaflets would be made available to the public.

He concluded his report by giving brief details of the crime statistics for Essex for the year ending 10 April 1997. Recorded crime had fallen by 1.7% to the lowest annual total for 17 years. However, the detection rate had also fallen but this was due mainly to changes in the recording processes.

## **I. POLICE REPORT**

Superintendent Brown reported that the consultation process on long-term and annual plans had been completed and the plan had been submitted and approved as previously discussed.

He referred to the public disorder incident at the Old Manse at Great Dunmow where three Police Officers had been injured. There was an ongoing dialogue with Social Services to help resolve the problems. He also referred to the rape at Cressing which was the subject of an ongoing enquiry and was having significant manpower implications. He referred to recent initiatives including the "Prove It" scheme, Bogus Caller Alert Scheme and Ringmaster.

He reported on key operational goal targets for the year ending 31 April 1997 for the Division as a whole. The number of assaults had increased by 1.2%. However, the detection rate was 81%. House burglaries were down by 8.5% and the detection rate was 23.5%. Non dwelling burglaries were also down by 8.2% with a detection rate of 30%. There had been a fall of 18.2% in the number of thefts of motor vehicles and thefts from motor vehicles were also down by 21%. The overall fall in crime figures was 7.3%. Superintendent Brown was pleased with the overall results and said that the overall detection rate in the division remained constant. He explained that the fall in the number of burglaries was due mainly to the arrest of a number of prolific burglars and to high profile crime prevention initiatives.

Inspector Rayner then reported on the road accident statistics for April/May 1997. Road casualties were down by 7.65% in the Braintree Division and there were also substantial falls in a number of categories within Uttlesford. There had, however, been two recent fatalities in the Uttlesford area.

## **I. QUESTION TIME**

Members of the public asked a number of questions regarding alleged speeding in Thaxted. A member of the public asked why most speed traps were undertaken outside the peak rush hour times. Superintendent Brown explained that if these were carried out during peak hours it could cause traffic congestion. Also, these were the times when Police Officers were often dealing with accidents or monitoring the situation on the motorway.

Members of the public reiterated that speed was a problem in Thaxted and it was considered that there was a high danger of a fatality occurring. It was also stated that complaints had been made in the past. It was suggested that speed cameras should be installed. Inspector Rayner stated that these could only be installed if there was a history of speed related accidents. He added that the Police would respond to complaints but there had only been a few complaints in the past relating to Thaxted. The Chairman urged the Police to give further consideration to this matter. Superintendent Brown said that he would ask the Traffic Division to set up data collection points to monitor the level of vehicles breaking the speed limit on the approach roads to Thaxted.

Mr Leeder said that the Parish Council had recently met with Inspector Bowman and representatives of the Highway Authority to discuss speeding in the village and work was in hand to improve the speed limit signs on

the approaches to Thaxted. Superintendent Brown would obtain copies of the data collected during this process to assist in his investigation. He stated that there were 121 parishes within the Division and all had problems with speeding traffic. Resources had to be prioritised and measures introduced where they would be most effective. Some residents suggested that measures similar to those introduced in Newport should be introduced and there was also some criticism that the officers operating speed traps in Newbiggen Street were too visible. Inspector Rayner explained the health and safety implications of undertaking speed traps. He also urged parish councils to cut back foliage which obstructed speed restriction signs.

Reference was also made to the number of heavy vehicles driving through the village. This was an increasing problem which the Parish Council needed to raise with the Highway Authority. In relation to the speeding problem, a member of the public referred to a scheme in Northamptonshire where residents were encouraged to inform the Police of the registration numbers of persistent offenders cars. However, Superintendent Brown did not consider that this was the way forward. He emphasised that there was a need for corroboration of an offence as it happened. Solutions could only be found by looking at the overall situation and involving the Police, the Highway Authority and the Parish Council. Inspector Rayner reported that in 1992/93 there had been only 1 injury accident in Thaxted and this was far less than many other parishes. The Chairman of Thaxted Parish Council said that he hoped to see an imaginative and unobtrusive solution to the problem that slowed traffic down effectively. He also emphasised the need for speed checks to be carried out.

In conclusion, Superintendent Brown undertook to report back to the next meeting of the Consultative Group and to advise the Chairman of the Parish Council of the results of his investigation.

Reference was also made to local policing in Thaxted. Superintendent Brown explained that Thaxted had two posts. However, there was a continual struggle to meet the demands for beat officers and the main priority was to respond to emergency calls. It was also asked why the Police house was not occupied by a Police Officer. Superintendent Brown replied that most Police Officers preferred to buy their own houses.

A member of the public also referred to the level of juvenile crime within Thaxted. Superintendent Brown encouraged members of the Group and of the public to attend the Police Open Evening at Braintree on 16 July 1997 and he also urged people to come forward to volunteer as Special Constables as these were particularly effective in rural areas.

In concluding question time, a member of the public thanked the police for their continued support of the Thaxted Morris Ring meetings.

**(The meeting was attended by 31 members of the public).**

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm.