
Communities, Youth, Public Safety & Emergency Planning portfolio. Report for Full Council - May 2021

Public Safety

I am pleased to report that as we ease into some form of normality and away from the restrictions of lockdowns, the Officers in the Communities team are looking forward to being able to get back out into our communities. That is where they are needed and that is where I support their eagerness to return to what they do best.

Rural matters

Plans to revisit farms and landowners are continuing and the community safety partnership (the CSP) is looking to expand ***the Reaching Our Rural Communities Project***. The CSP are looking to hold another engagement day where, the Farming Network Community, CVSU, Next Chapter, RET and our Officers from the UDC communities' team will be visiting more of our farms. We will be raising awareness of Domestic Abuse, Suicide Prevention, Farm Watch, reporting methods, the use of What 3 Words as well as using the CSP horse trailer, which provides us with the ability to serve hot drinks and light refreshments as well as being the focal point to indicate our presence.

We will also be accompanying the CVSU who have a program mapped out to visit villages in the district for the purpose of engaging with residents. They are hoping to encourage socialising, meeting others in the village and signposting those who are seeking assistance in some other shape or form. The CSP horse trailer will also be used for this project. Please watch your respective village Facebook pages for dates and times when we will be down your way.

Strategic Assessment

Each year a Strategic Assessment is prepared for the CSP with the assistance of Essex Police Criminal Intelligence analysts and our own UDC community safety officer (Angi Greneski) who is the administrator for the Partnership. The aim and purpose of this document is to assist the CSP to determine the strategic priorities for the forthcoming financial year. These priorities provide information to the Partnership for their Action Plan, which in turn assist in the allocation of appropriate resources to tackle the issues identified. Consequently, it is worth remembering the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998 places responsibility on the community safety partnership to annually review levels and patterns of crime and disorder. In so doing, this will support local communities to counter the perception, threat, and consequence of criminal and anti-social behaviour by striving to reduce both crime and the fear of crime, and to reduce re-offending. Community Safety work encompasses anti-social behaviour, disorder and the misuse of drugs, alcohol, and other substances. The pandemic restrictions have impacted on crime committed and reported in 2020 and the first quarter of this year which has resulted in crime types experiencing unprecedented significantly reduced or increased levels. As restrictions have changed, crime levels have continually readjusted. Consequently the crime data produced within the pandemic environment may not accurately inform what priorities to be selected for this year.

The previous Strategic Assessment dated for last year was published shortly before the pandemic restrictions were implemented in March 2020. In this circumstance, the Partnership has agreed to adopt the principles identified in that year for this period of 2021-2022 as there has not been an opportunity to address them. Therefore, as last year, the priorities will be: -

- (1) To protect vulnerable people***
- (2) To reduce crime, re-offending, and the fear of crime***

(3) To continue effective partnership working, to meet emerging local threats and issues

One of our three priorities within the Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership is to protect vulnerable people, and following an in depth analysis with our partners of the emerging issues for Uttlesford, domestic abuse came out as the “hidden harm” where the partnership could collectively provide the most impact on reducing this crime. Recent data obtained from Next Chapter shows they have supported 86 clients from Uttlesford from April 2020 to March 2021. This amounts to 7.4% of the total number of clients supported by the Community Outreach team at Next Chapter.

At the April meeting of the CSP it was agreed to establish leads for each of these three priorities and work has commenced on annually reviewing levels and patterns of crime and disorder. Also, at that meeting a new Chair of the CSP was elected as I stood down from that position as my two-year tenure as per the constitution came to an end. I am pleased to report that David Messan who is head of the North Essex Probation & Aftercare Service will guide the partnership for the next 2-years.

Working with and in schools

The CSP will be funding a virtual Crucial Crew project this year, which is due to take place at the end of May. In order to ensure the event remains relevant and meets local priorities, a multi-award-winning theatre production company has been commissioned to develop a bespoke production piece, targeted at year 6 pupils, that will centre on child exploitation, in addition to a focus on grooming, county lines and knife crime. Child exploitation linked to gangs and county lines, is an issue that affects the whole of Essex, including Uttlesford. Incidents of violent crime are on the increase across the County with intelligence suggesting a rise in the number of young people carrying a knife. Our aim is to raise awareness before secondary school transition, to help children recognise an exploitative friendship or relationship, via a powerful theatrical performance and interactive workshop.

I would encourage **members** to go along and watch one of these presentations and by so doing see and understand our UDC officers in action as the Crucial Crew. If you are interested please contact me and I will arrange for you to attend.

Violence towards women

All of us I am sure would have been shocked to hear of the tragic death in South London of Sarah Everard. As a result, Councillor John Lodge, as Leader of UDC asked me as the Cabinet Portfolio with responsibility for public safety to look to see if there was anything, we as a Council could do to help in eradicating this form of violence.

Clearly no woman should feel unsafe in her own community, Sadly the truth is that many do. No woman should feel scared or be threatened going out, meeting friends, or walking home, but the reality is that many do. The events two months ago have brought into sharp focus something that is very wrong in our society, something we need to change. We must seize this opportunity. We must try and make a different society.

As we reflect on the tragic death of Sarah Everard and the national outpouring of emotion that has happened since, the sad truth is that this abuse, harassment, and violence should not be happening in the first place. Women should not be scared to live their lives, to walk around their communities or simply be who they are.

When Councillor Lodge originally spoke to me, we agreed we should do what we can to help women to be safe and to feel safe. To be respected. To live their lives free from fear. We should not tolerate male violence against women. We must root it out and make it clear there is no place in our world for this kind of behavior and stop it. We need to create a society where women can live free from the fear of violence which has a real psychological and emotional impact. So often women live in fear and cannot live their lives as they be able to do. This is a big ask and as a district council in reality it is probably beyond our capability to make a massive impact. That said, we should not sweep the subject to one side and thereby ignore it. We can play our part and not just sit on our hands leaving it to others. Resultant from this -

Both myself and Officers within the community team, together with other agencies discussed the issue in depth and as a result it was agreed we should visit schools and through the education process engage with children in their formative years. By so doing illustrate to them that abuse towards females is unacceptable in our society.

As a result of this decision our Officers are looking to work with the same theatre group, as mentioned above, to raise awareness around Domestic Abuse, Consent and Healthy Relationships. The 'Bruise You Can't See' is a theatre/workshop experience centred around domestic abuse. The intention is to provide an insight initially to **members** as to how this production works before we take it out to all our secondary schools within the district. The production will actively explore the early warning signs of unhealthy and abusive behaviour in intimate relationships. It will explore what a healthy relationship looks like, the various forms of abusive behaviour and advise as to how to access help and support. This includes issues around consent. There will be a live play, followed by a stimulating lively discussion with thought provoking questions, whilst inviting the audience to walk in the shoes of the characters to recognise the differences between each other's views and beliefs, and the issues that can surround that. In 2019 the Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership commissioned the creation of this production, and the delivery of performances at Saffron Walden County High School. We are looking to provide this project to all our secondary schools. We hope that members will support this and come along and take part. Further announcements will be made when the date and time has been confirmed.

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Police, Fire & Rescue Services

Anti-Social Behaviour

We have recently seen a rise in anti-social behaviour in Thaxted. I thought I should share this with you to hear about some partnership between Essex Police and Uttlesford District Council Community Safety Team jointly working together within Thaxted to discourage this type of behaviour by a relatively small minority of young people.

Last month a total of 7 homes were visited by UDC Officers and members of the Local Police Community Team. These addresses were targeted, being based on local intelligence and each young person at these addresses were served along with their parents a warning letter. These warning letters highlighted the different types of incidents of antisocial behaviour that had been occurring recently in the village. The letters mentioned that it was believed they may be responsible for the events, or they had been present when these events had occurred. All parents were at home and nearly all were happy to assist our Officers in talking to their child about the impact their behaviour was having in the local community. The letters also stated that the behaviour must stop immediately, but that police investigations were continuing. We have received further intelligence since delivering these letters, including who may be responsible together with further information regarding possible drug dealing.

I would urge all **members**, where you can, to reassure your community that the Community Safety Partnership is working together to tackle these kinds of issue and that any information is useful, if it is sent directly to our UDC community safety officer (Angi Greneski, email: agreneski@uttlesford.gov.uk), Essex Police via 101 or on their Website or if the person reporting wishes to remain anonymous then use **Crime stoppers (Tel: 0800 555 111)** but certainly not on Facebook as this isn't a reporting platform!

Fire prevention and protection

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) has launched an interactive data tool on [Essex's Open Data platform](#); it is a dashboard that allows anyone to search through their incident data, and where new data will be added to on a monthly basis.

The dashboard has been structured based on different incident category types and includes a data dictionary and user guide and will be used to help to target ECFRS prevention and protection work to areas seeing higher demand of their response function. It will provide communities with insights about what's happening in their local community and beyond.

To use the tool visit <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/e7dgg/fire-service-incidents-dashboard>

Scams

The CSP distributed 38,000 'Scam Awareness booklets', to residents across Uttlesford in April. The booklet focused on scam prevention and staying safe online. Maldon District Council are now implementing the same idea for their residents. Another Community Safety Booklet is due to be distributed, providing information around safety messages, and highlighting the work of the partnership.

Violence and Vulnerability

I am not sure many of you will be familiar with The Essex Violence and Vulnerability Partnership and their work. For this reason, I am taking this opportunity to hopefully give you some insight as to their purpose. Fiona Gardner, our Communities, Health & Well-being manager and I are members of the Safer Essex Group who were essentially the parent group for forming this Partnership.

Essentially, they are charged with reducing violence in our communities across Essex and the impact of drug driven violence being the key priority. Working together the Partnership has tested and trialled a range of interventions and through careful evaluation has developed a strategic approach that is delivering significant results in the fight against violent crime. Working together the Partnership closely aligns activity to prevent violence and protect the vulnerable with strong, robust enforcement activity. Across the County the wider strategic approach includes:

- **Identifying and tackling organised crime gangs, County Lines, and drug supply.**
- **Delivering a proactive, robust local enforcement programme in partnership with communities.**
- **Reducing the risk of young or vulnerable people being exploited by gangs and help those involved in gangs to break away.**

While their report focuses on the work undertaken to reduce the risk of exploitation it is important to recognise that this work is part of a broader strategic approach. This approach has started to turn the tide of violent crime in Essex with the rate of growth of violence in communities slowing over the last two years and early signs that this will start to fall. I would also stress at this present time thankfully we are not experiencing this form of violence in Uttlesford. That is not to say we should be complacent and we are far from forming such a mindset.

As the Partnership has continued to develop, so has their understanding of the specific nature of the problem we all collectively face and importantly how we can intervene to reduce the risk to young people by breaking the business models used by county line gangs, which has such a devastating impact in this county.

We now know the profile of those in Essex who use drugs and whose activity fuels the violence that goes hand in hand with drugs. This has allowed the partnership to develop interventions to focus on users, reinforcing to them the real cost and impact of their activity upon society. Through the development of a serious problem profile the partnership now has a much better understanding of the small number of individuals who cause disproportionate levels of harm in the communities. How they act and importantly how to identify people early and tackle the behaviour, is key in preventing them from affecting communities.

The Partnership work in Accident and Emergency Units is just one example of where this level of insight has led to developing an early intervention by trained youth workers. This has proven to be very successful with many young people engaged and continuing with ongoing support. This ability to target the right people, in the right way and at the right time is enabling the partnership to change the course of these young people's lives and prevent future violence happening. This targeted approach has also been successfully used through the integration of safeguarding officers within the specialist police gang enforcement teams. These safeguarding officers work with partners to support those young or vulnerable people who are swept up in enforcement activity against higher up County Line gang members.

The Partnership has recently launched Operation Trespass in response to targeting cuckooing and County Lines. Our community Officers here in UDC will be supporting this operation and will be receiving appropriate training.

Youth

Hate Crime

Following discussions within the CSP the UDC community development officer for young people, John Starr, contacted the Hate Crime Lead for West Essex where opportunities to work together on future projects was discussed. A bid to run some diversity workshops at Saffron Walden County High school has been submitted for consideration in the 2021/22 funding round.

Youth Council

Work continues to re-establish the Youth Council with a recruitment campaign in schools. Existing members are maintaining their current positions and continue to represent young people in the Community Stakeholder forum and the Climate change and mental health working groups are ready to work on the ongoing projects paused by Covid 19. I have also suggested within Cabinet for each cabinet member to become a mentor for members of our Youth Council. These are very early days but over the next few weeks it is my intention to progress this with our community development officer for young people.

Youth Initiatives Working Group (the YIWG)

As I am sure you are all aware, I have a passion about the youth of our district and how best we can provide for them now and in the future. I believe for far too long we as adults have made decisions on their behalf without really listening to them and understanding what they would like. I truly believe that to be wrong and we must rectify that.

You will be aware I voiced my concerns about the consultation process for the Local Plan in the debates initiated at the Community Stakeholder Forum, whereby albeit there was representation on that forum from the youth council. I nevertheless felt there should be a wider dialogue with younger people. Our two consultants from the East of England Local Government Association intimated we should be looking to consult with those who traditionally are hard to locate or do not normally take part. I am please to say that our Local Plan Team, in particular Sarah Nicholas recognised this.

Moving on, The YIWG has met twice this quarter once to finish up this year's funding round of distributing financial support to youth organisation across Uttlesford. They also picked up the idea of running a series of summer events to act as a catalyst to re-engage with young people in the locality of an event. It was an opportunity to enable us to listen to the needs and aspirations of our youngster. I have sent a letter to Parish and Town Councils and stakeholders/partners with the intention of setting up a working group to be established to take this forward.

I am taking this opportunity of writing to you as the Uttlesford District Councillor who holds the Cabinet Portfolio position for Communities, Youth, Public Safety & Emergency Planning. I particularly would like to concentrate on the young person's aspect of my role.

The last 12-months have been unprecedented times. We have all had to negotiate uncharted waters and the effects of the deadly virus have left many scars. Some of us have coped better than others but we must all recognize there will be those who will need our continued support, I would suggest none more so than our young people. They have faced isolation, loneliness, and loss of connection with friends, a loss of routine and challenges accessing support.

There are now grounds over the coming months for optimism in dealing with the pandemic as the vaccination program continues to gather pace. We can look forward to the longer daylight hours and some summer sun. I believe we should also give young people grounds for optimism about their mental well-being, and we should try to ensure that they live in a society where they feel fully appreciated and supported.

Our young people will need to catch up socially and emotionally, to feel safe, to have opportunities to have fun, to do the things they enjoy, rather than have additional pressures heaped upon them. We have a responsibility to them to make sure they know where and how to find support.

I am pleased to report we as a District Council have recognized our responsibility to play our part in this support. At a recent meeting of the Full Council a thumbs up was given to incorporating the subject into the Corporate Plan for 2021-22. Our intention being to: -

Provide opportunities for young people and in so doing enable young people to be able to engage with their local community and do things that interests them, keeps them safe, makes them happy and supports improved mental wellbeing. To overall support and inspire young people to raise their aspirations and reach their full potential. We will work with Town and Parish Councils and voluntary sector partners to help explore youth provision in their areas along with working in partnership with the county youth service and schools etc.

We recognise that no organisation can do this alone. The key to success will be approaching this as a Partnership of multi agencies working as a team towards a common goal. We touched upon this at a recent meeting of the Youth Initiatives Working Group and at a 'brainstorming' session within our own Communities team. This generated a vision to plan for a series of summer events for young people across Uttlesford – with a theme of labelling it as a "Summer spectacular". In essence the seed is sown.

The main objective for these events being to re-establish contact with young people after this lengthy period of lockdowns. We would be looking to provide an environment where it is safe for those taking part, with the emphasis on engaging activities than are fun yet giving agencies the opportunity to engage with them and thereby hopefully assess needs for their services, as we enter the recovery stages of CV-19.

At this stage we are asking partners to commit to supporting these events. As I have mentioned already, no one organisation can deliver this and as such we would hope you will become a stakeholder and assist in the planning and resourcing of the programme. It is hoped that we will deliver between 4 and 6 events during the summer holidays, exact dates, times, and venues to be agreed. We hope this will lead to a core offer delivered by locality wide agencies as well as local additions to each venue.

I do sincerely hope you will be able to agree to be part of this project. We will be setting up a working group of partners to plan, market and deliver the project imminently so I would be most grateful if you could let us know of your wish to be involved as soon as possible.

I would very much hope that all **members** could put to one side their political differences and join me in supporting and advertising this initiative within your respective communities. I am pleased to report that Great Dunmow Town Council has already pledged their support. Let us not forget the young people of today are our future. We have a duty as mere temporary custodians of Uttlesford that we hand them a future not of dreams but a reality. And who knows in years to come they will say thank you.

Finally I would also like to urge members of our Local Plan Leadership Group (LPLG) to take note and seriously consider within their deliberations what our young people tell us when we engage with them. May I further suggest members of the group might wish to consider attending one or more of our events with the view of discussing such matters with those who participate in these gatherings.

[EALC Youth Participation Conference](#)

The Community Development Officer (Young people) represented the District Council at the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) Youth Participation conference on the 28th April and presented a brief history of the Uttlesford Youth Council and some ideas on how Parish and Town councils can reach out to young people and improve participation. I too attended this meeting and was the only district councillor from across the whole of Essex present. I may well be accused of being biased but I felt our UDC officer (John Star) gave the best presentation at the conference.

Safeguarding

There has been an increase in concerns around the elderly population and poor mental health. As a result, our UDC safeguarding officer (Fleur Brookes) has carried out several visits and appropriate referrals have been made. Operation Henderson, (Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Awareness outreach work), will be going ahead for the week beginning the 31st May. The safeguarding officer will be working with Essex Police and will visit several train stations in the district on the 4th June 2021. This will be accompanied by a publicity campaign promoted with posters and digital leaflets. This will help to ensure that taxi operators are aware of reporting processes for CSE concerns.

Work continues with UDC housing colleagues (including Housing Associations) about those residents who are victims of domestic violence and reside in our district. The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is now attended by the relevant officers for those living in Uttlesford, The MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk Domestic Abuse cases between representatives of local police, health child protection, housing practitioners, probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

A successful application for funding to Stansted Airport in 2020 by Next Chapter (commissioned service for domestic abuse) has resulted in a dedicated domestic abuse adviser for the district. This part time post is working closely with housing and community safety colleagues.

Colin Day

District Councillor representing Great Dunmow South & Barnston Ward

Cabinet member with the portfolio for Communities, Youth, Public Safety, Emergency Planning, and liaison with the Police & Fire Service