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

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## ***Communities & Public Safety***

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### **Local Councils Liaison forum**

Some of you may not be aware of this forum which normally meets twice a year. It essentially forms one of our intentions as set out in our Corporate Plan. This, which as I'm sure you are aware has (4) themes. For this report to you I am referring to the theme of **Putting residents first** and our overall intention of being a council that listens to and acts for residents. Within this vision we have an objective which is split into two parts, namely.

(a) *we will actively and positively engage with and listen to our town and parish councils. This being undertaken by continuing to promote and develop liaison with town and parish councils through regular meetings of the local council's liaison forum (LCLF). Equally we will ensure that engagement with town and parish councils forms a key part of the council's approach to community engagement and consultation. It is therefore essential that regular meetings of the (LCLF) take place. Feedback will be sought from the town and parish councils regarding the utility and potential development of the forum.*

(b) *we will support town and parish councils to better represent their communities. This being achieved by promoting awareness through the local council's liaison forum of "good practice" support which is available through the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC), especially its Chartermark scheme.*

I specifically raise this as a subject and take the opportunity to remind ourselves because at the recent (LCLF) held on 14<sup>th</sup> September I was disappointed to witness the lack of representatives from our town and parish councils; with only 5 being present. I felt sorry for our Officers who had spent time in preparing reports and I was also embarrassed as we had representatives from Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, Essex County Council and a Culture advisor in attendance giving presentations.

Both I as Portfolio holder for Communities and the Chief Executive are joint Leaders for this topic within the Corporate Plan. Please be assured when the new Chief Executive arrives, I will be discussing with him how best we can engender more enthusiasm. I strongly support engagement bottom up with our town and parish councils and I feel it is a vital link in the chain of communication. It is also a partnership whereby collaboration gives a strength to make things happen.

I would like to highlight one matter from this forum. Our Community Safety Officer (Angela Gresenski) referred to **Community Safety Cameras – CCTV surveillance framework**. In so doing she outlined that stringent rules are in place through the CCTV Code of Practice. There are self-assessment forms which she can supply. Essentially anyone looking to instal CCTV must justify why the cameras are required and that any such installation would need to be reviewed to ensure

compliance with legislation. Our Community Safety Officer should be the first port of call if a town or parish council is considering installing such cameras.

Our Communities, health & well-being manager (Fiona Gardiner) mentioned she will be arranging focus days at various locations throughout the district and will be inviting town and parish councils to attend.

### The UDC Community Team of Officers

I am pleased to report *business as usual* for our officers within the community team. They are but a small team and are probably the 'Cinderella' section in this council. They are not high profile and are not seen as being at the forefront of what the council is required and expected to deliver. I would suggest many do not realise what they are responsible for and what they provide. That said, I would very much hope through the reports such as this, which I write for you, this gives you a clearer awareness of how they function. Put simply, they carry out a considerable engagement within the communities across the district, they guide and support and in so doing signpost to other agencies if unable to solve the problem themselves. Participation as partners is very much embedded in the way they conduct themselves. Working closely with them as I do very much admire their dedication and professionalism.

### Partnership initiatives

We work hard to address anti-social behaviour (ASB) across the district all year round in partnership, in the main with Essex Police. The period between 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July saw us participating in the first national anti-social behaviour awareness week which gave us the opportunity to highlight how we work with our partners.

We started off in Great Dunmow with an Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership (CSP) event at the Recreation Ground off the Causeway on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July. Police Officers in uniform from the Uttlesford Community Policing Team, together with Officers from our environmental health and environmental protection officers together with our communities' officers, talked to residents and visitors about their concerns and provided them with useful information, including Watch schemes they could join, how to report (ASB) and what UDC could do to assist them.

People were also able to enjoy a free drink and a biscuit supplied by volunteers from the Council for Voluntary Services Uttlesford (CVSU) at their mobile horsebox café.

Similar events were held in Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted throughout the week and we engaged with around 250 people. Tool marking also took place with more than 80+ tools marked, and owners were also encouraged to register their tools, whilst in Elsenham, the police talked to motorists about how to keep their 'keyless cars' safe.

As I will mention again further into this report, through the (CSP) '**Reaching rural communities**' initiative, during this week various members of the partnership visited 19 farms in the Thaxted area to talk to farmers and landowners about the specific issues they face, particularly at the time of bringing in the harvest which is probably their busiest time of the year.

Essex Police and licensing officers from UDC also visited licensed premises in Great Dunmow to talk about the town's pub watch scheme.

Also, during that week, roads policing officers carried out speed checks in Great Dunmow, Leaden Roding, Newport and Thaxted. Speed checks and surveys were also carried out with Community Speed Watch members. A total of 41 people during the week were reported for driving at excess speed. 13 for driving without a seatbelt and one for driving whilst holding and talking on a mobile

phone. One motorist was reported for driving a vehicle in a dangerous condition, two for vehicle defects and one for having no MOT.

I would add here that anti-social behaviour is not just nuisance behaviour, it can severely impact on victims and make their lives a misery. Whilst some of this is down to people deliberately causing problems, there are others who are unaware their behaviour is seen as intimidating or disruptive. There are several ways of dealing with (ASB), supporting victims and dealing with those responsible.

### **Human trafficking and modern slavery**

As part of Operation Aident (an Essex Police initiative), a team from our Community Safety partnership (which included, Fleur Brooks our UDC Safeguarding Officer and officers from our Environmental Health department) have been out and about in the district raising awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery, ahead of the National anti-slavery day scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> October.

This partnership team joined modern slavery charity, Stop the Traffick, at Birchanger Services during the middle of September to raise awareness of the issue. Transport hubs, haulage routes and freight vehicles are used to traffic people in and out of the UK, and the team was keen to engage with lorry drivers and give out information about the signs to look for and how to report.

More information about the initiative is available at:

<https://antislaveryday.com/>

<https://www.stopthetraffik.org/>

### **Process for reporting speeding and traffic management issues**

I am frequently asked if I can assist in obtaining a police presence at locations around the district where it is suggested speeding offences are taking place. Our Community Safety Officer also receives a considerable number of enquiries on this subject. We thought it would be useful to share the process for the way in which to report speeding and other traffic management issues.

In the first instance, we would ask you to visit the [Local Highways Panel \(LHP\) pages on the Essex Highways](#) website. Here you will find guides relating to many different highways-related topics, including guidance on speeding which should help you to understand if there are grounds to take your queries forward.

If there are grounds to take an issue forward, you will need to ask your representing county council member to request that a speed survey is undertaken. This will evidence whether there is a speeding problem or not. If there is, any obvious engineering solutions will be looked at through the LHP. Essex Police will also be notified through the Safer Essex Roads Partnership, and targeted enforcement will be carried out.

### **Recruiting Community Special Constables**

It is an ambition of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex to recruit more Community Special Constables (CSC) during the next 4-years. This is an ambitious objective whereby he would like to see a (CSC) in every parish in Essex. At present Newport and Birchanger have their own funded Special Constable. I am pleased to report that Thaxted Parish Council have just been given the go ahead to recruit a (CSC). These officers are fully warranted and therefore have the power of arresting offenders if so required. Should you or your parish councils require further information on this scheme please contact Fiona Gardiner, our Communities, health & well-being Manager at [fgardiner@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:fgardiner@uttlesford.gov.uk)

## Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex

Over the past couple of months, I have participated in a considerable number workshops arranged by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex (PF&CC). These being part of the process for him to produce a new police and crime plan for 2021 to 2025. This being delayed because of the elections for a new PF&CC were placed on hold due to CV-19 last year. As you are aware Roger Hirst was returned for another term at the election in May this year and his manifesto during that election campaign formed the framework going forward for his plan. I was invited to attend the ten initial sessions due to my liaison role with the police within the administration here at UDC. This identifying me as being a key stakeholder. Added to that involvement, I have in the latter stages of moving towards a draft plan been further able to contribute; this time as a member of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime panel (which is basically responsible for scrutinising the PF&CC). This has enabled me to remind the PF&CC and his staff of our needs as a predominant rural district but nevertheless not losing sight of the requirement to have the comfort of seeing uniform police officers present on the streets of our built-up areas.

I am hopeful from what I have seen as we travel towards a definitive draft that Uttlesford, being the largest rural land mass in the county will witness several our concerns being addressed in this new plan. Hopefully, for example we will see: -

- i. More investment in fighting rural crimes, such as hare coursing, wildlife crime, heritage crime, fuel theft, unauthorised incursions and fly tipping as well as the theft of major plant and equipment.
- ii. Working more closely with rural communities and councils to understand rural communities and their issues, prevent crime and receive feedback on police activities.
- iii. Encourage the reporting of rural crime by working with partners to promote ways to report and show the positive impact this has on targeting offenders and crime hot spots.
- iv. Ensure Police and the Fire & Rescue Service work closely together to protect those in rural and isolated settings through joint advice and support.
- v. Develop the new Tri-Service Rural Community Officer pilot.

*Incidentally this is an interesting concept and is currently being trialled the Maldon and Dengie peninsular districts of the county. This officer will work, in uniform wearing the insignia of all three emergency services, but for administration and supervision purposes will be part of the fire & rescue service. The role being to engage with residents and to either directly tackle or pass on safety concerns at a very local level.*

The intention of these five examples is clearly to prevent crime and to reduce vulnerability in rural communities.

Here in Uttlesford regarding to point iv) I would suggest we are ahead of the game, in so much as our Community Safety Officer has been instrumental in persuading the Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to adopt the objective of **Reaching Our Rural Communities project**. I have as you will realise already touched upon this in an earlier paragraph when I gave a resume of the work conducted in the (ASB) awareness week. I also referred to the project in my July report. This as an initiative carries the aim of reaching every farm across the district in the next 12 months. It will see members of the partnership conducting visits to land and farm owners to provide well-being, crime prevention and fire safety advise. The intention being to provide reassurance around the fear of crime and up to date methods on how to report crime; provide details and joining instructions for Farm Watch and Neighbourhood Watch; provide advice about the Farming Community Network and

Farmer's Union; raise awareness of domestic abuse, how to report it and where to reach out for help; conduct high visibility policing patrols; carry out fire safety visits, focussing on farm outbuildings and providing advice to prevent fires/explosions; tackle loneliness and isolation by offering advice on clubs and networks specifically directed to the farming community.

This project has been spotted by the PF&CC and he has decided to use it as an *example of good practice* across the county. Well done team Uttlesford!

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### Crimestoppers

Several you have spoken with me about crime issues within your Wards. My first question has inevitably been, "Are the police aware of this, has it been reported to them?" On many occasions the response has been, "I think so because it is all over social media." When I then speak to our liaison officer, they can find no report of the matter in question. I therefore once again urge you all to encourage your residents to report first and then if that is their want to chat about it on Facebook. Unless the Police are aware of what is taking place, they are not able to apply resources where most needed.

I also have had conversations with some of you regarding members of your community wanting to tell someone about a crime but don't want to go to the police. This being particularly so with regards to crime that involves drugs and violence. Essentially, they know something about a local crime and want to speak up and thereby make a difference, but don't want anyone else to find out. This is where **Crimestoppers** play such a very big part in stopping crime because it is 100% anonymous. Please bear this in mind and advise accordingly if you are approached by a resident facing this quandary.

They should get in touch by telephoning **0800 555 111** or via their secure online form, and one of their trained team will take details of the crime, but never any personal details about the informant. Put simply that person will have no police contact, no witness statements required and no court appearances. The only person who will ever know they got in touch with Crimestoppers will be themselves.

Our Community Safety Officer is currently liaising with the charity for the purpose of having a joint initiative throughout Uttlesford, in order to raise the awareness of how they operate and can be of assistance. Please watch this space for further details.

### Visit by the High Sheriff of Essex

We are to receive a visit from the High Sheriff (Simon Brice) on 7<sup>th</sup> October. As I'm sure you are aware this is this an unpaid ceremonial, but justice related role dating back to Anglo Saxon times. I know he is particularly interested in issues such as domestic abuse, modern slavery, county line drug gangs, mental health and rural crime.

The purpose of his visit is to meet our communities' team and learn how our local partnership works and how we are tackling the crime related matters which are his chosen themes during his year of office. I am sure we have much to share with him and I will certainly be championing our staff, the police, the fire service and the voluntary section in how we work closely together for the good of the people of Uttlesford.

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## *Youth*

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### Hate crime

We continue to offer Hate Crime awareness workshops to young people across our four secondary schools and youth groups and hope to facilitate Essex Police's Hate Crime unit to come and deliver these. Young people completing the course have the option of becoming Hate Crime Ambassadors in their schools and in so doing helping to raise awareness of how Hate Crime is identified and reported.

### The Youth Council

Work also continues to re-establish interest in the Youth Council with a recruitment campaign in schools. Existing members are maintaining their current positions and two youth councillors are currently members of Cllr. Pepper's full councils Climate Change working group. This is a key area of work which we hope will encourage young people to be part of many projects to address climate change issues both in schools and their communities and in doing so create opportunities for them to join the youth council. We are also working to create better engagement of young people with their local parish councils and to facilitate joint collaborative working with District Councillors.

### The Uttlesford Youth Initiatives Working Group

The Youth Initiatives Working Group is working through its funding allocation and aside from the repeated match funding agreements, which are:

Saffron Walden Town Council £10,000, Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council £7,500 and Great Dunmow Town Council £5,000.

I am pleased to report the following projects have been funded:

Saffron Walden County High School LGBTQ and Allies – Diversity workshops.  
Radwinter Parish Council – BMX cycle tuition.  
YES Flyers – Build a Plane Project [in partnership with Stansted Airport College]  
Great Easton Primary School – Post Covid Mental Health & Transition to Secondary School group, a work project for young people with special educational needs

There is £20,000 remaining.

The Youth Initiative Working Group has decided to undertake a digital mapping exercise to record the type and spread of youth provision to assess how best to allocate future funding. Next year's funding cycle will invite bids from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 with a closing date of 20<sup>th</sup> June for the first [and hopefully only] round. It is our intention to invited select members to be part of a funding panel for discussion and decision making, rather than at present circulating the bids to the wider group asking them to vote.

Interestingly, Essex County Council have themselves just recently formed a similar group for Uttlesford consisting of the four County Councillors and other stakeholders involved in youth work in the district. However, for some obscure reason, myself as the UDC Cabinet Portfolio holder for Youth have not been invited to the table. I ask myself, why not, are they embarrassed because they have not injected any funding for youth initiatives into our district? I will be lobbying to seek assurance I will be included.

As we are all aware the County Council has severely cut youth services across the county by almost 70% in the last decade. The Conservative led administration at County Hall in 2014 decided to stop running youth services. They made very experienced youth leaders redundant in the quest to save money and have shown very little interest at all, albeit they are responsible for youth services. making very experienced youth workers redundant. Their intention being to train volunteers to take their place and by so doing save money. They slashed the budget from £5 million to £2.4 million at the stroke of a pen. It was Cllr. Ray Gooding who was the Cabinet portfolio holder at the time and was very much at the forefront of that decision.

Interestingly it was reported in the Guardian on the 16<sup>th</sup> of last month, with a headline of "**Youth services in England and Wales, face being decimated.**" Youth leaders are calling for the recruitment of an additional 50,000 youth workers and volunteers to meet a tripling in levels of need during the pandemic. Public spending cuts, coupled with the depleted reserves of youth charities mean that failure to give more support "will see youth clubs and centres close, the youth sector decimated and lost opportunities for young people", said Leigh Middleton, the chief executive of the National Youth Agency. He went on to say, "there will not be much left to cut further without losing it all. Every decision not to invest forces more and more youth centres into perilous situations".

This recent decision by the County Council to form an Uttlesford working group shows just how late they are coming to the party. Hopefully they will not be trying to duplicate our work but with an intention of working with us as a partner for the ultimate benefit of our young residents. However, I am not sure they have started on the right footing. I am led to believe at their first meeting there was an issue on deciding who of the four County Councillors should act as Chair. Apparently, Cllr. Foley was proposed and elected but it was thought that the Conservative leadership at County Hall would not accept that because they would wish to see a member of the administration in that position and Cllr. Gooding was proposed. Surely not, he was the Cabinet portfolio holder who has the track record of slashing the youth budgets in 2014. I would suggest his mindset would be totally wrong for a position whereby we need to repair the mess he has been responsible for. It would be like allowing someone to mark their own exam paper.

### New Youth Provision Opportunities

We are currently working in the following locations to support volunteer led youth provision in community buildings.

**Takeley [Community Hub]**

**Thaxted**

**Hatfield Heath**

**Leaden Roding****Flitch Green**

All involve members of the parish councils and community volunteers. The District Council will work in partnership with the Essex Youth Service and Essex Association of Boys and Girls clubs to provide the support and resources they need to get established but ultimately each project will need to be self-sustainable.

**Projects in Schools**

Our Communities Officer (John Starr) is continuing to work with our planning and business departments to try and offer the opportunity for schools to work alongside us in delivering the local plan and business improvement. By embedding some of these topics in their curriculum young people can hopefully benefit from working on real life situations. Sustainable housing or starting a new business are but two examples, whilst at the same time providing valuable feedback to the District Council. This all being part of our intention to give local young people a voice and to ensure they are heard and acted upon.

***Colin Day***

**District Councillor** for Great Dunmow South & Barnston Ward

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