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

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### *Community activity*

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We have hosted a total of 51 Weddings/civil partnerships at the Council Offices this year all under Covid secure conditions.

#### Grants

To date we have awarded 96 grants to the voluntary sector and community groups with many more to come through the Ward Members Initiatives grants. I have been asked by Sue Heydon to remind all district councillors not to forget to complete application forms and send them to her.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you all that funding will again be available to Voluntary and charitable organisations in Uttlesford. They are urged to apply for funding to help with their costs in providing valuable services to local communities. Last year, we as a district council handed out £330,000, with an additional one-off grant of £53,000 towards Covid expenses, through our Voluntary Sector Provider Contribution Fund scheme. This has now been re-launched for 2022/23 with the process now open for new applications.

Awards will only be made to registered charities whose work fits with the council's own corporate plan priorities, details of which can be found at [www.uttlesford.gov.uk/corporate-plan](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/corporate-plan). The grant is for revenue expenditure only and cannot be used towards capital projects such as refurbishment of buildings. The closing date for applications is **midday on Friday 21 January 2022**.

An application form can be downloaded from the council website at [www.uttlesford.gov.uk/voluntary-sector-provider-grant-scheme](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/voluntary-sector-provider-grant-scheme), or for further information contact Sue Hayden, Community Development Officer, on 01799 510563 or [shayden@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:shayden@uttlesford.gov.uk).

#### Day Centres

As many of you will be aware, Covid-19 was instrumental in the district council having to close our day centres. It being part of the precautions during the lockdowns to stop the spread of the virus. As restrictions started to lift it gave us the opportunity to see whether there was scope for them to be better utilised by a wider age group within our communities. Resultant from this, prior to the lockdowns, day centres or as we would prefer to call them - community hubs or drop-in centres, were a corporate service and overseen by that department within the district council. The responsibility has now shifted to the Community and Well-being team.

Quite rightly it was recognised that town and parish councils are better placed to know the needs and wants of their communities, far more so than at district level. This will mean the control and services provided on a day-to-day basis will be managed locally. The Officers in the Community team will be available to support and guide. The district council will step back and effectively be the landlord responsible for the general upkeep of the premises which they own, such as the Rowena Davey Centre in Great Dunmow and at Vicarage Place in Thaxted. We are at present drawing up a management agreement between the district council and

the Board of Trustees in Great Dunmow and the newly formed Community Interest Company (CIC) in Thaxted. I am most grateful to Councillor Tayler for his excellent work in progressing the CIC; not an easy task when starting from scratch.

We are still looking at ways of how the Garden Room and the somewhat limited facilities may become a drop-in centre for use in Saffron Walden. This remains work in progress and with consultation with Saffron Walden Town Council and local councillors.

**Reaching Our Rural Communities project** is now just over the halfway line. The final area this year to be covered will be Felsted/Stebbing and Little Dunmow and will take place on Wednesday 1st December. The project continues to be well received by the farming and rural communities and the Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner has been contacted and is hoping to join officers at a location early next year. Roger Hirst has acknowledged this project as a good practice initiative.

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### *Public Safety matters*

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The Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership (CSP) were instrumental in organising a FREE anti-theft marking event for Catalytic Convertors. The event was held in partnership with SelectaMark and TreadFirst at their premises in Shire Hill, Saffron Walden in October. More than 50 car owners attended, and the component of their vehicles were marked. This initiative took place following an increase in the theft of catalytic convertors across the district. It was an opportunity for the CSP to help reduce this type of crime. A similar event is scheduled to take place on **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2022**, and this will be advertised from Monday 29<sup>th</sup> November online on Eventbrite for tickets to ensure COVID rules are adhered to.

An amnesty is being run in Uttlesford as part of a national campaign to tackle knife crime. Uttlesford CSP is providing a knife bin where all bladed items that people do not want or should not have can be disposed of safely and without fear of prosecution. The temporary bin will be taken to parishes across the district over the coming weeks - residents should look out for details in the local press, on social media and in parish newsletters. The bin will first be used at the Co-op car park Flitch Green from 10.00am to 2.00pm on Wednesday 1 December.

The initiative is part of Operation Sceptre, a coordinated nationwide effort led by police forces to tackle serious violence by reducing the number of knives in circulation. In Uttlesford, the operation is also being used as an opportunity to raise awareness of new legislation which makes it illegal to possess certain weapons in private places, such as homes. This includes items such as knuckledusters, flick knives and telescopic truncheons, basically offensive weapons made for the purpose of causing harm to others.

Whilst knife related crime in Uttlesford is low, we have seen in other parts of the County and Nationally the impact that incidents involving knives can have on victims, their families, and the wider community. It is important to prevent knife crime from happening in the first place. I would urge anyone, including those with ornamental weapons at home who may not be aware of the new legislation, to make use of the amnesty and to dispose of a knife, without the need to divulge the reason they have it, in this safe and secure way. Anyone who wants to surrender a knife should make sure it is fully wrapped up and placed in a secure container before bringing it to the amnesty bin. If anyone is unsure about whether to bring in a knife, they can contact Essex Police on this link for advice [Uttlesford.cpt@essex.police.uk](mailto:Uttlesford.cpt@essex.police.uk)

The legislation on this subject of offensive weapons amends section 141 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 to make it a criminal offence to possess in private any weapon set out in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons) Order. Since 1988 it has been an offence to manufacture, sell, hire, offer to sell or hire, possess

for the purposes of sale or hire, import, lend or give weapons to which that section applies, and this section makes unlawful the simple possession of these.

In England and Wales, and in relation to this legislation, a private place is a place other than:

- a public place
- school premises
- further education premises, or
- a prison

How does this affect online purchases? Later in the year, you will notice changes to the process of purchasing bladed articles online. These will include:

- You will need to verify you are 18 or over. This may include the use of identity documents, credit checks or age verification systems.
- You cannot have bladed items delivered to a locker or other automated pick-up point.
- Items will be clearly labelled as bladed articles, and those delivering the items may ask you for proof of age.

Be prepared for these changes now to ensure you receive the items you order promptly and without issue, and always ensure you store knives securely at home.

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### *Unauthorised encampments by Travellers*

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The following is a resume of a report submitted by the Rural Engagement Team of Essex Police (RET) at the November meeting of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Committee. The report covers the period of January to November this year.

There were **148 Unauthorised Encampments** (141 for the same period in 2020). Of these **14 were moved on by RET under Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994** (39 for the same period in 2020). It would appear the general trend over the last 5 years is that the criminal element of Unauthorised Encampments (UE's) has reduced dramatically.

The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and aggravating factors that bring the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) guidance into play and allow for the proportionate use of Section 61 are seen with far less frequency. Anecdotally RET officers have been told that Essex has a reputation as having a no-nonsense approach to the management of unauthorised encampments and is best avoided for criminals who live within the nomadic communities.

It is not an aim of Essex Police to reduce the number of unauthorised encampments in Essex. Their aim is to apply the law consistently, without fear or favour. The NPCC guidance is referred to in all cases to ensure that when Section 61 is used it is proportionate and justifiable. That said, if it is clear where there is justification, Essex Police will have no hesitation to use the powers under this act.

RET have been provided with the latest draft legislation with regards to the 'Statutory guidance for Police on UE's. The aim of this proposal is to "strengthen Police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments. The draft is available for view at: -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill>

I would stress this document is clearly marked 'DRAFT'. As such the finer points of the police response to an unauthorised encampment, if this bill is passed, would require further guidance and direction from the National Police Chief Council who will undoubtedly provide guidance on the application of the legislation.

To highlight some key points in the draft it seems that the police can make the initial request to vacate the land. It will be required to also evidence that the trespasser who has failed to leave the land has caused or is likely to cause significant damage, disruption or distress. Significant is later defined.

Section 60D provides police the power to remove property on the land and retain it for 3 months or until the conclusion of any criminal proceedings.

A question Essex Police has raised in relation to the draft is that the legislation seems to point towards a person responsible for the offence of damage etc. It is not clear if, as an example, an individual who is causing damage with a quad bike to land whether the whole encampment should be moved on or just the individual.

Section 61 will still be an available power in a strengthened form. It can be used on a highway and allows for a direction to leave to be issued to all trespassers even if just one of their number has, for example, caused damage. Whereas the new act requires issues to be 'significant', the strengthened powers under Section 61 do not. It seems that if there are 6 or more vehicles on the land then S61 can be used without further justification.

The draft also makes mention of the Governments expectation that local authorities assess the need for sites in their area, interesting!

Finally, within this section of my report you may be interested to see the chart below which shows the UE activity in the County. It gives details by district/borough which includes those on the highway and on private land under the local authority heading- total encampments for the period were **167** from January to October (end) 2021.

Basildon <b>33</b>	Braintree <b>13</b>	Harlow <b>3</b>
Colchester <b>23</b>	Uttlesford <b>9</b>	Maldon <b>3</b>
Chelmsford <b>21</b>	Brentwood <b>8</b>	Castle Point <b>2</b>
Tendring <b>19</b>	Thurrock <b>7</b>	
Epping <b>17</b>	Rochford <b>6</b>	

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### *Work in schools*

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Following the tragic death of Sarah Everard earlier this year in South London and the justifiable public outrage concerning violence against women and girls; the Uttlesford CSP has considered ways of how to reduce such crime and essentially contribute towards preventing it from happening. It was agreed our aim would be by way education and to start this by discussion in schools.

Last month, Peter Holt our new Chief Executive was invited to attend with the High Sherriff of Essex a production at the Joyce Frankland Academy, Newport of "The Bruise you cannot see". This was presented by the TicBox theatre group. I too attended this first showing and I know from speaking with Peter Holt he, like me was exceedingly impressed with the way in which this theatre group were able to engage and interact with the students in the workshop activities. It was truly thought provoking. "The Bruise you cannot see" explores the early warning signs of controlling behaviour in teenage girlfriend/boyfriend relationships.

Targeted to Year 10 and upwards, students become part of the story, actively taking part and exploring the early warning signs of unhealthy and abusive behaviour. This leads them to discuss what a healthy relationship looks like. Various forms of abusive behaviour are identified by the actors and the participating students. Finally, they are given guidance on how to access help and support.

The following is a list of the next dates this will be shown in the schools.

10th January at Saffron Walden County High  
12th January at Helena Romanes School, Great Dunmow  
13th January at Helena Romanes School, Great Dunmow  
2nd March at Saffron Walden County High  
6th July at Saffron Walden County High  
7th July at Saffron Walden County High

This has also been offered to Stansted Mountfitchet but at the time of writing this report they have not taken the offer up.

You may recall we were trying to arrange a showing for all district councillors but unfortunately the rules and restrictions in the aftermath of the pandemic have made it virtually impossible to gather all councillors in one location, particularly for the interaction workshop. Therefore, if any Member would like to view a performance, and believe you me it really is well worth viewing, please contact Angi Greneski at [agreneski@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:agreneski@uttlesford.gov.uk)

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## Scams

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Uttlesford CSP has been recognised as a partner of **Friends Against Scams** and is currently recruiting Scam Champions. The Scam Champions will then recruit 'Friends' who will assist the CSP in spreading awareness on how to protect each other against this type of crime. If anyone knows of any groups who may like to have an input on how to become a "Friend" please contact [agreneski@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:agreneski@uttlesford.gov.uk)

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## Youth

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### Hate Crime

TicBox productions completed a two-day training course [funded by the Youth Initiative Working Group] with 25 year 9 students at Saffron Walden County High School as a follow up to their Diversity day input. These young people are now regarded as Diversity Ambassadors and will work to raise awareness of diversity / hate crime issues in the school. A planned follow up piece of work to connect this group to Police Constable Glenn Braden [Uttlesford Schools Police Officer] has been postponed due to staff illness.

### Youth Council

Existing Youth Council members continue to work with the Climate Change working group and recruit in schools and the community. There has been some interest from different areas across the district, the plan is to hold a meeting early next month to co-opt these young people and get them to do further recruitment

in their schools. Work continues to liaise with schools and further recruit through their teacher/ school council networks.

### Youth Initiatives Working Group

Work is underway to form a YIWG funding committee so that funding bids can be more effectively dealt with in a timely manner. Currently we have a funding balance of £19,819.50 with one outstanding bid of £5,000 from Enterprise East who run the café at Cornell Court in Saffron Walden.

A potential cross locality project in schools has been identified at the Children and Families working group to address concerns with young people's wellbeing. Specific issues to be included, are mental health, drugs & alcohol and safeguarding, specifically county lines.

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### Harper's Law

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I am sure all of you who attended the Full Council meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020 will recall the motion which I proposed and to which my good friend Councillor Le Count seconded, whereby it was resolved:

***“requesting the Chief Executive to write to both the Rt. Hon. Robert Buckland QC, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice and Priti Patel, Secretary of State for the Home Department outlining the support of this Council for the widow of Police Constable Andrew Harper in calling for a change in the law to ensure a mandatory full life tariff for killers of emergency service workers to ensure they ‘spend the rest of their lives in prison’. The campaign is known as ‘Harper’s Law’. We as a Council believe that such a change in the law will allow both offenders and the families of victims to ‘get the justice they rightly deserve’. It will mean that anyone willfully or recklessly killing a police officer, firefighter, prison officer, nurse, doctor, or paramedic who is acting in the course of their duty is jailed for life”.***

As the Cabinet member with a portfolio that includes public safety and in general terms liaison with our police and fire & rescue service, I am now extremely pleased to say that those whom we expect to protect us will receive greater protection themselves from violent criminals after the Government confirmed at the tail end of last month, that ‘Harper’s Law’ would be added to the statute book. This will mean Mandatory life sentences for those who kill an emergency worker in the course of their duty and the change to the law is to be made as soon as possible. This follows the tireless campaigning of PC Andrew Harper’s family. The new law will be named after Police Constable Andrew Harper, who was killed in the line of duty in 2019.

Henry Long, Jessie Cole and Albert Bowers each received custodial sentences of between 13 and 19 years in prison for PC Harper’s manslaughter. An appeal by the Attorney General to increase their time behind bars was rejected. The HM Government website states that Ministers are determined to make sure that punishments fit the severity of the crime and are determined to introduce the law as soon as possible. Essentially the move extends mandatory life sentences to anyone who commits the manslaughter of an emergency worker on duty – including police, prison officers, firefighters and paramedics – while carrying out another crime **unless there are truly exceptional circumstances**. Courts must already impose life sentences for murder, with a whole-life order being the starting point if the victim is a police officer.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab said: We are going to pass into law mandatory life sentences for those who unlawfully kill an emergency worker in the course of their duty. I pay tribute to Lissie Harper’s remarkable campaign. This government is on the side of victims

and their families and we want our emergency services to know that we'll always have their back. Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said: PC Andrew Harper's killing was shocking. As well as a committed police officer, he was a husband and a son. It is with thanks to the dedication of Lissie and his family that I am proud to be able to honour Andrew's life by introducing Harper's Law. Those who seek to harm our emergency service workers represent the very worst of humanity and it is right that future killers be stripped of the freedom to walk our streets with a life sentence. Lissie Harper said: Emergency services workers require extra protection. I know all too well how they are put at risk and into the depths of danger on a regular basis on behalf of society. That protection is what Harper's Law will provide and I am delighted that it will soon become a reality. It's been a long journey and a lot of hard work. I know Andrew would be proud to see Harper's Law reach this important milestone.

The move follows recent government action to protect police, prison officers, firefighters and paramedics and ensure those who seek to harm them feel the full force of the law. This includes plans to double the maximum penalty for assaulting them to two years' imprisonment.

- Henry Long was given a 19-year extended determinate sentence (EDS). This is composed of 16 years in custody (unless his release on licence is ordered by the Parole Board at the two thirds point) and an additional three years on extended licence to bring it to a total of 19 years. Long would be liable to be recalled to custody at any point when he is on probation if he were to reoffend or breach his licence conditions.
- The changes will mean that those who kill an emergency worker while committing an offence will face a mandatory life sentence. The emergency worker does not need to be aware that that offence had taken place or be responding directly to it. **Judges will have the option to impose a different sentence in exceptional circumstances if there are exceptional circumstances which relate to the offender or the offence which would make it unjust to apply the minimum sentence.**
- It will cover those emergency workers as defined in the same way by in the Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 and in section 68 of the Sentencing Code who were acting in the exercise of their functions. This includes police officers, National Crime Agency officers, prison officers, custody officers, firefighters and paramedics.
- The courts must already impose life sentences for murder and the starting point for the murder of a police officer or prison officer acting in the course of their duties for offences on or after 13 April 2015 is a whole life order. The courts can also impose a life sentence for manslaughter.
- The Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 introduced a statutory aggravating factor which means judges must also consider tougher sentences for offences such as manslaughter, GBH or sexual assault – if the victim was an emergency worker (this has since been consolidated into the Sentencing Code and can be found in Section 67 of the Sentencing Act 2020).

I thank all fellow councillors who voted to support this motion, because we have many Emergency workers who live and work in this district. It illustrates our support for them and recognises the dangers they can and do face.

### ***Colin Day***

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