

The Frinton Residents' Association

REPORT on the Open Meeting held after the AGM

on

Saturday, 26 April 2014

The Chairman introduced Chief Superintendent Carl O'Malley (CO'M) who thanked the FRA for inviting Chief Constable Stephen Kavanagh to speak. He explained that as the Chief Constable was not available, he had been asked to provide a presentation entitled 'Changes to Policing in Essex – Policies, Structures and Strategies'.

CO'M gave a brief introduction to the Essex Police Programme of Change and explained where they were now, pointing out that the emphasis was on putting officers to the front line. He went through the content of his presentation before explaining 'What is an LPA (Local Policing Area) Commander?' by displaying a map showing Essex divided into districts joined together into police areas shown as red, blue, or green. He added that Essex had been divided in such a way three years ago, and that Tendring was in the red area with its head office in Braintree; from the map it was clear that the red area covered approximately 60% of the County. The next slide provided up-to-date information on District Commanders, but there were now likely to be two Superintendents based at Braintree. He then pointed out that Tendring District was covered by Chief Inspector Cat Barrie based at Clacton and Sgt Gerard dealt with local issues in Frinton, Walton and Thorpe.

The ninth slide provided details of the Evolve Programme: Essex Police had to save £42m over 3 years; Now has to save a further £24m; Aiming for more than just cuts in staff. CO'M explained that he had been the Programme Manager when it was called the Reform Programme. He said that ultimately the situation had not been as bad as first thought - because of increases in revenue generated by more residents moving into the community we were not in such a bleak position as expected and only £36m had to be saved instead of £42m, but we still have to save a further £24m.

CO'M reported that the Chief Constable wants Essex Police to be ambitious; for too long it has been afraid of making radical changes and re-organisation so he wants to try different approaches. However, the core purpose of Essex Police was still preventing and detecting crime, reducing harm, providing local policing, a good service, but now they were working predominately in partnership. He confirmed that although the principles had been set out, there was probably still a degree of waste because things were replicated, and they needed to work more regionally as well as with partners in Kent.

The tenth slide covered the Principles of Evolve, which are being reviewed by a dedicated team in order to suggest new innovative ways of working which will also be more efficient and save money. The principles were: Emergency Service and Threat Harm Risk; Local Policing and PCSOs; Best use of money and people; Collaboration and Partnership; Income Generation; Estate and Technology.

The eleventh slide showed what the Evolve Team had identified: too many Officers in specialist posts (numbers to be reduced and displaced officers to move back to the 'Front Line'; necessary changes necessary to the Marine Unit; a reduced number of dog handlers; savings within other specialist roles such as firearms and traffic. As a result, Essex Police would be a smaller organisation as 80% of costs were for staff.

CO'M explained that he had served in the Police Force for 25 years and attended a lot of public meetings. He felt that some of the Police service failures were very poor, often because of lack of the right resources in the right places. However, he confirmed that if anyone rings 999 with a policing emergency, 95% of the time someone would get there within 12 minutes, in a similar way to the Fire Brigade who also provided a last resort service. Essex Police intended to maintain this response time. They were also preserving local policing with the provision of PCSOs. He added

that as Frinton and Walton Town Council had committed to fully- funding six PCSOs – the Police were looking at ascertaining what could be done about resolving the imbalance issue because other areas were benefiting from PCSOs without paying for them personally.

He confirmed that they had been working closely with Kent, but were now arranging to work with other forces such as Suffolk and Norfolk because they reflected similar local rural issues. He felt that Essex Police could do more Income generation, and pointed out that probably the headquarters building at Chelmsford would be sold; the option of combining offices with the Fire Service at Kelvedon was being explored, but specialist elements in the Police Force might still need some of their current buildings.

He was pleased that more Officers would be on the front line, and that savings would be made on the expensive marine capability, the number of dog handlers and Firearms Officers, adding that reductions in Traffic Officers would mean more local Police Officers.

The twelfth slide covered Athena – an innovation change to Essex Police who were taking the lead in a new 'single' computer system involving a number of the country forces nationwide, eg Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk initially. This would enable Essex Police Officers to use just one system to record crimes, incidents, custodies, etc. It would be more efficient and allow sharing of information and intelligence between forces. The aim was for training and implementation to start in September 2014.

CO'M added that computer projects always appeared to go over-budget, but Essex Police were leading the way on Athena. Other forces in the country were being cautious about following the Essex example, but he felt that efficiency and effectiveness would improve as databases would be cross-populated. The system was already being installed, and would be implemented in two phases.

Phase 1 (Summer 2014) – Local Commissioning Officers would eliminate services and gives us control locally rather than centrally as in the past. There would be one instead of two local Inspectors and one third of the PCSOs in the County would go. CO'M predicted that this area would be happy with the ultimate PCSO settlement which could not be compared to the rest of the county.

Q (Councillor Iris Johnson on behalf of the Town Council): When will the PCSO Contract be available? We have not seen a draft, or anything else. We are looking to fund the six PCSOs, but we need to know that the contract is going to be suitable for our area. We may need to put some suggestions forward, but at present we are in limbo; we cannot make appropriate decisions until we see the draft contract. In the previous contract we had some control as to where the PCSOs would be designated. We want them to stay in our area, except in emergencies. We want some confirmation that this will be the case, and that there is no objection to them staying in our area. We also want to see localism happening.

A: Contracts have gone through Finance, and hopefully this will be tied up within 5/6 weeks. There are a number of areas of the County in a similar position and there needs to be a similar contract policy for the whole of Essex Police. We have to have to have a single contract structure and this is impossible at the moment, but negotiations are taking place with other local districts. However, I can understand your expectation of wanting the PCSOs to stay within the area – that is reasonable as they are fully-funded by the Town Council. If you are paying for them then they should be under your control.

CO'M then asked Sgt Gerard to have a word with those involved and get an answer on when the contract would be available. He then suggested that IJ came back to him if she was not happy with the draft.

CO'M explained that within Phase 1 they were trying to create a series of community hubs to make expenditure go further and they were in negotiation with TDC. Also the proposed change to bigger shifts of Officer would mean that all those Officers who used to have different responsibilities that

he did not own, now would be under his control, including some of the current Traffic Officers and CID. He confirmed that he was getting back all the resources in a particular area, and tasking of Officers would come through his command.

Phase 2 would involve considering changes to shift patterns – five at present, but this could change to four. Again, CO'M pointed out that this would mean more Officers on the ground at any one time, which would improve service to the public. It would also enable him to make sure shift patterns met demand. With regard to closure of front officers, he understood that this was unpopular, but more would be closed as the number of people coming into police stations was very small. In fact, he said that he was shocked to find that the number was now extremely small, but work was being done to get crime reported on line.

CO'M reported that with possibly one third less PCSOs in Essex Police, they would become an integral part of local policing in core areas, focus on local community priorities, and patrol core areas where they would have geographical ownership. The future function of PCSOs would be to aim to attend 20% including criminal attempts and anti-social behaviour so that there is local understanding of what is going on in the community. He added that PCSOs needed to be employed intelligently and effectively in order to support local crime investigation, weekly beat surgeries that the public could attend would be held and numbers attending the surgeries needed to be increased by improved publicity. With regard to further Community Engagement, consideration was also being given to Local Police & Community Meetings (a replacement for Neighbourhood Action Panels), four per district (minimum) every 8 weeks, to be attended by a local senior officer and the local team.

CO'M concluded his presentation by saying that unfortunately, he could not promise that the situation would be glowing in terms of the financial settlement as it was not going to improve. He stated that over the past four to five years there had been no increase in funding and probably there would not be in the next six to seven years. The positive was that the Police were now physically facing the same financial issues as in the private sector – they had to be more innovative and take risks in order to continue to provide a good service.

The last slide covered Final Thoughts: There had been many challenges to policing in Essex over the last few years, but Essex Police would continue to listen to the people it serves, as well as continuing to deliver the best service possible in the face of ever decreasing budgets and operating constraints.

Q: I think it is a very good idea to have police surgeries. Where will we find out when and where these will be taking place?

A: We are receiving assistance with better publicity. A Communications Plan is being worked on consistently across the County. We will use media systems and use the right venues.

Sgt Gerard added that details of surgeries held at Parkers' Garden Centre were published on the website, and tailored meetings would be held at other venues.

Q: When I was Portfolio Holder for Governance and Resources three years ago I was regularly involved with policing, liaising between TDC and Essex Police. As part of that I was kept informed of development in intelligence gathering. Are you going to expand that facility?

A: Local intelligence – information that affects the Police on the ground – is now being returned to local control. I will use that to inform at local briefings. Mainly, it is kept at Colchester, but we do have individuals who work in Clacton and supply to Clacton, Walton and Frinton - they will work for me. I hope this will improve the local situation.

Q: Is it necessary for PCSOs to patrol in pairs?

A: No, they should not be doing so. The Chief Constable does not want this to happen. We need to be informed when this is the case and we will challenge it. We try to stop police going out in pairs in cars. This needs enforcing and I would like you to let the local office know about any such occurrences.

Q: Are you still recruiting Special Police as volunteers?

A: Yes, we intend to go from 425 to 650 Specials. A campaign will start as soon as I obtain the money, and then there will be a massive recruiting drive. We need Specials in CID and to deal with domestic violence issues, especially in areas where we need to utilise private sector skill sets.

The Chairman thanked CO'M for a very interesting presentation.

She then introduced Matthew Townshend (MT), Projects Director, MT Productions who would be speaking about 'The Future of Frinton Summer Theatre – celebrating its 75th Anniversary'.

MT stated that although he felt embarrassed about discussing 'The Arts' after such an important subject as policing had been covered, he felt that in Frinton we were privileged to have a local theatre that binds people together, makes a community and provides an opportunity to reflect upon ourselves. He added that although he was here to cover the 75th Anniversary celebrations, he was going to answer (A) three questions (Q).

Q1. What has happened to Edward Max who has run Frinton Summer Theatre for nine years?

A: Edward very much felt that the burden of managing the season was starting to tell on him and he asked me to consider taking over producing this season, as well as including educational and community programmes. The first time he asked, I said no, but when he asked again, I said yes. Edward Max is still Artistic Director at the McGrigor Hall and he is also an Associate Director of MT Productions.

Q2. What is happening to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Frinton Summer Theatre?

A: This year there is a season of six plays taking place in the McGrigor Hall. The first night is 15 July and the season runs through to 30 August. I believe that the Frinton Summer Theatre is the longest surviving British Repertory Company in the world (until someone tells me something different and nobody has said this is not true so far). Several very well known actors will be performing and every famous face is appearing on exactly the same terms as all the other actors. I am absolutely delighted and grateful to them for agreeing to celebrate a very special part of repertory theatre heritage with us.

New events include community dance projects at the Columbine Centre with open access from Key Stage 2, ie including performers from primary school age to the elderly, which has been made possible via support from Frinton & Walton Town Council. An amount of £10,000 has been obtained from the Colchester-based Hervey Benham Trust to support art projects for young adults in the community, and we will be running workshops at Tendring Technology College. We are grateful to Tendring District Council for allowing us to use the Princes Theatre free of charge where we could meet youngsters and local actors. All theatres have increased overheads so this was very special.

In addition, Godspell will be performed during Frinton Mission week and this will include a sing-along event at the Lock & Barrel in the evening. A Comedy Night will be taking place in the McGrigor Hall, together with a Gala Night with Jacqui Danksworth – details to be announced.

My job is to get the theatre to move out of its traditional context. The core will always be the six-week season of plays with 7 ½ days of rehearsal beforehand. We need to continue to support our regular audiences (he gave the example of the family from Hitchin, Herts, who had been attending every performance for the last 50 years).

Friends will still receive the annual invitation, but non-Friends will be able to book on-line via the website (www.frintonsummertheatre.co.uk) from 19 May. In addition, it will still be possible to walk to the Box Office which will be located in Harwoods; this is just one example of the wonderful support we receive from local businesses.

In total there will be 9,700 seats to sell and events in four different venues - in a reasonable-sized theatre that represents over a month of full houses. Please visit us on these occasions.

Q3. What does the future hold?

A: 'The Arts' are the second biggest income-earners in Britain; a survey has revealed that 'The Arts' earn more than the motor trade. Taking into account everything involved in the cost of going to the theatre (travel expenses, theatre tickets, refreshments/meals, etc, and possibly overnight accommodation) that all adds up. It is a huge driver for industry, and increases local business incomes. This year we will be delivering our story to an even wider audience.

The Chairman thanked MT and stated that everyone was looking forward to the Summer Season. She encouraged people to become members of the Friends of Frinton Theatre and stated that a form could be obtained from the new Chairman of the Friends, Anthea D'Ancey, who was in the audience.

The Chairman explained that unfortunately Jenny Heard, the FRA Health Representative, was not able to attend this meeting, but she had done some extremely hard work lobbying behind the scenes for a long time, with regard to encouraging the setting up of a **Patient Participation Group** (PPG) at Caradoc Surgery, and everyone was glad that it was now available.

She then read out a report from Jenny Heard (FRA Committee Member and PPG Secretary) as follows:

"As you will have read in the FRA Newsletter, a Patients' Participation Group (PPG) was set up in January (2014). There have now been four meetings, a Committee has been set up as well as three sub-groups for fundraising, publishing a newsletter and working on the terms of reference.

There are currently 48 members, with Dr Meleka – GP Partner, and Sue Mitson, Practice Manager, representing the Surgery.

Much discussion has taken place on the appointment system at the surgery and the lack of success in recruiting permanent doctors. But in February, Dr Mann joined Dr Meleka at the surgery, and there are four 'permanent' locums working regular sessions each week.

Considering that appointments are at a premium, it's interesting to note that in the first three months of this year 109 patients didn't turn up for their GP appointment (31 in January, 32 in February and 46 in March).

Our local MP, Douglas Carswell, attended the last meeting and he has been working closely with NHS England – who have responsibility for providing a GP service, to make sure that the surgery is supported. The latest news from Mr Carswell is that NHS England, recognising the number of significant changes at the practice over the last nine months, have agreed to make additional money available to help make any necessary changes to their procedures. During April, the surgery will carry out an access survey and that data will be sent to NHS England and an action plan drawn up. Those details will be shared with the PPG at their June meeting. NHS England are also providing the services of a recruitment company, Attain, to assist with GP recruitment.

In the meantime, the PPG is seeking funding from the private sector for additional equipment for the surgery, including the repair or replacement of the check-in screen. The first newsletter has been published, a notice board has been allocated for the PPG in the surgery waiting room and an email address: caradoc.ppg@nhs.net and PPG link from the surgery website: www.caradocsurgery.co.uk, have been set up. Minutes of the meetings can be accessed from that site.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 14 May 2014, here at St Mary's Parish Church, when Jill Walker will be giving a talk on the nursing provision at the surgery.

The PPG newsletter is available at the surgery and Frinton Library.”

The Chairman then pointed out that there was a link to Caradoc Surgery/PPG on the FRA website (www.frintonresidents.co.uk) and Councillor Robert Bucke explained that he was the Town Council representative on the PPG in order to share findings and information.

Q: Do we know the figure NHS England has donated?

A: We will check with Jenny Heard.

Q: What time is the meeting on 14 May?

A: 7.00 pm

John Smock (Chairman, “Ontrack” Rail Users’ Association) pointed out that people could now register with any GP in the country.

The Chairman then introduced **Residents’ Issues** and explained that the following questions (Q) had been received:

Q: What is the latest situation re the proposal to demolish Westpoint, 2 The Esplanade, and build a block of flats.

A: This application has been submitted several times. The FRA has always objected, the Town Council has turned it down, and it has received a refusal from the District Council. It has gone to Appeal and a Government Inspector’s decision is awaited, but the wait could be anything up to six months. The reality is that developers are allowed to appeal, but we hope that the Inspector will turn down the application.

Q: In Brightlingsea the Council provides pooh bags in a dispenser above each pooh bin. Could this be implemented in Frinton to encourage people to clear up after their dogs?

A: (Councillor Nick Turner) I know Brightlingsea Town Council funded that, but I thought that provision had stopped because they went through 30,000 bags (people removed them) and there was still no reduction in dog pooh on the streets. I will go back and check to find out the up-to-date situation. However, if Frinton & Walton Town Council are willing to supply bags, I am sure TDC would provided dispensers.

Secretary’s Note: Subsequently, Councillor Nick Turner provided additional information: The bags cost Brightlingsea Town Council £2,600 pa and they stopped providing them approximately two years ago.

Q: No problem with cyclists on the promenade in the off-season, but during the summer when the prom is crowded with promenaders, sunbathers in deck chairs and picnickers, cyclists (sometimes in large groups) continue to plough through the crowds as if they have every right – what is the current ruling?

A: As a Beach Hut Owner and member of the Association of Beach Hut Owners, I feel that it is a shame that some cyclists are irresponsible, but others do get off when they see people. The signage has been improved, but it is up to people to say something to them because those who impose fines cannot be around all the time.

A: (Councillor Nick Turner) TDC Officers and staff have had long discussions with representatives of the FRA, and TDC Seafront staff have been given zero tolerance instructions with regard to cyclists and cars on the promenade when they are not supposed to be there as it is anti-social behaviour.

Secretary’s Note: At the FRA meeting with TDC Councillors on 10 May 2014, the FRA were informed that installation of more ‘No Cycling’ signs on the Promenade was in hand.

A member reported that her three-year-old granddaughter was nearly knocked down by a car on the promenade. The driver informed her that they had every right to be there in the middle of the day. She added that children's lives were in danger.

The Chairman explained that this was one of the issues that the FRA had been working on with TDC and there were now closer links with Seafront Officers (telephone numbers on which they can be contacted to report such situations are available in the FRA Newsletter). The situation with regard to locking of gates accessing and on the promenade was also now much improved, but the FRA were continuing to monitor the situation and asked residents to report any incidents. Councillor Giles Watling added that if anyone saw a gate open on the promenade, they could take action and lock them themselves because all gates were now fitted with new code locks.

John Smock provided an update on the Rail Users' Association stating that they had now met with senior people in the Council and foot counts were now taking place in Clacton where they need helpers. Their Honorary Secretary was standing down and they would be grateful if anyone could lend a hand.

A member pointed out that with streetlights being turned off, there was now a problem if cars were parked on the wrong side of the road at night, ie contrary to the flow, because their reflectors would not be seen by oncoming traffic. The Chairman agreed that this was an issue, as did Sgt Gerard. He added that the police were encouraging people to park the correct way at night as it was still the law, albeit rarely enforced.

Q: For the last eight days, at 3.00 am every morning drilling is taking place near the level crossing. What are they doing and how long is it going on for?

A (John Smock): The railway was closed over the whole weekend. Network Rail should adhere to code of conduct. The Residents' Association, the Town Council and TDC should make sure that Network Rail consult them and inform them about forthcoming works. This is not a good reflection on how they are conducting themselves.

The Chairman agreed to follow this up with communications.

Q: What is the law regarding garden refuse being burnt during the day?

A (Councillor Nick Turner): There are no byelaws restricting this. If it gets out of hand, you can call the Fire Brigade.

Q: Can you provide an update on the proposals for The Spinney as we have to live opposite it, and I do feel strongly about it.

A (Councillor Nick Turner): It is now in the hands of the Chief Inspector of TDC as the Horticultural Section and Essex Wildlife Trust want to get rid of it. It will be tidied up and work will be started as soon as possible, but it will go out to consultation first. You will be asked your opinion, but the majority of people see it as an eyesore.

Q: Can you give an update on the amount of clutter on pavements in Connaught Avenue?

A (Chairman): This was covered in my report in the Newsletter. I tried to meet with certain businesses who were not following guidelines, but failed miserably as they were not interested. The FRA have asked about enforcement, particularly for safety reasons, but it is a difficult situation.

A (Councillor Nick Turner): Tending are preparing a detailed leaflet which will be circulated to all local businesses, but there are differences between the ECC and TDC policies: TDC are asking for 2 metres of clear space on pavements and ECC want 1.2 metres clearance. As soon as I know the outcome, I will bring it to an FRA meeting.

Q: Can the FRA give us a list of the 'bad boys'?

A (Chairman): You can see it at the sea end of Connaught Avenue. Each shop should only have one 'A' Board positioned right next to the shop with nothing across the other side of the pavement. Customer pressure may prove more fruitful. If guidelines are adopted by TDC and leaflet

distributed to all shops, this should help, but we would like it if relevant Councils enforce those policies because there has been no enforcement so far.

A (Councillor Terry Allen): The FRA should write to a County Councillor as they have been involved in dealing with shopkeepers for many years. It's like ice cream selling on the Promenade - TDC dealt with it and now there is a precedent. We need to get the County Council to change their attitudes. It is a shame there is no County Councillor here today to tell us what they can do.

The Chairman stated that the FRA met regularly with Councillors representing Essex County Council, Tendring District Council, and Frinton and Walton Town Council, and this subject has been on the Agenda with ECC for over two years. We will be stronger in future.

Q: What is the situation that currently prevails regarding legislation? Isn't there trader legislation that does not allow street trading and is street trading illegal in Connaught Avenue? If shops are displaying goods for sale outside, are they trading illegally? If they take money outside, then they are trading outside.

A (Chairman): My understanding is that they are not trading on the pavement.

A (Councillor Nick Turner): Connaught Avenue is not a consent street by which I mean that if it was a consent street, traders would be able to obtain licences to trade on the pavement. In Connaught Avenue, they cannot trade on the pavement. My understanding is that County have not enforced the policies because businesses are suffering in difficult times. The Chief Executive is looking into the situation of a consent street.

Councillor Iris Johnson stated that she was totally opposed to anything being on the pavements in Connaught Avenue. She added that wide pavements allowed people to see what was in shop windows. She did not expect to see goods on the pavements in Connaught Avenue, and felt they should be displayed in the window with shop doors open. She was also concerned because when the pub (Lock & Barrel) was given permission to open in Connaught Avenue, they were not to allow drinking outside the premises. It was now her understanding that they were doing exactly that.

Councillor Robert Bucke added that apart from the 'A' Boards and tables and chairs, machines were being operated on the pavement dispensing ice cream, etc, and milk was being spilt all over the pavements. Councillor Iris Johnson pointed out that those businesses were selling on the pavement contrary to the byelaws.

The Chairman concluded by saying that these were the type of businesses that must be restricted and enforcement should be sorted out.