

The Frinton Residents' Association

REPORT on the Open Meeting held after the AGM on Saturday, 21 April 2018

The Chairman introduced **Sgt Pete Gerard** (PG) who had been asked to speak about "**Local Policing Issues and the Role of PCSOs**".

PG explained that he was going to cover the current situation with regard to PCSOs, ie where we were with them and how they were benefitting the community. He stated that Frinton & Walton Town Council had been buying support from the Police for some time. They had looked at the prospects of policing in the area and seen an opportunity to enhance policing with PCSOs. Back then they had invested in the idea and match-funded six PCSOs, which was then increased to eight policing the Frinton & Walton Town Council area. There was a financial cost to the Council for these eight individuals, but by and large PCSOs have been in the area ever since. However, there had been some movements in the finance and some Officers had changed. In 2015, the number was reduced to six and the situation now was that they are wholly funded by Frinton & Walton Town Council. With that investment there came a strict working arrangement and protocols around their deployment to satisfy the conditions of the agreement. Within that policy, a meeting is arranged with the Council every six weeks to report back some of the work that they are doing in the community. PG explained that he attends these meetings together with some PCSOs. From them, a steer is taken away regarding how the PCSOs are employed; tasks are obtained from the Councillors who are communicating with the electorate. In addition, a report or statement is submitted every three weeks covering their effectiveness. The PCSO role was scrutinised as they were a resource for the community.

PG then introduced Amy, a new PCSO, recruited in December 2017, now covering the Frinton and Walton area, who was standing at the back of the room. He added that she loved it in Frinton, and had commented that it was different to Clacton. She was one of the six. The other five had been in the area for many years and their local knowledge was fantastic. They had a passion for the area, which was right and proper. They dealt with anti-social behaviour and supported the Police.

PG stated that he thought it was fair to say that Essex Police were going through change, which at times was financially driven. Walton Police Station still existed (has not been closed), whereas Brightlingsea and Mistley Police Stations had gone. It was now being used to house the PCSOs, and because it was still there, Constables often dropped in for a cup of tea, or to find respite. This meant that an operational force was in the area. Throughout their employment the Police are obliged to give PCSOs a base, and a lot of training. They are given equipment and they have use of a marked police vehicle. Under their working agreement, they are still directed and controlled by the Police, but they are working for the benefit of the local community. An initiative to try and develop that relationship was by arranging 'Coffee with Cops' sessions at Costa in Connaught Avenue and in the Triangle. The Police were mindful about delivering policing that the community wants so now Officers make themselves available by going into various establishments, sitting down and having a free cup of coffee with residents; the reason being so that residents can bend their ear.

Frinton and Walton PCSOs were ring-fenced to the area, and Essex Police were sticking to that. However, sometimes, such as when serious crimes occur, PCSOs had been instructed elsewhere, but when this occurred, it was made sure that it was reported back to the Council. The Police were mindful to do that routinely, but these occurrences were few and far between.

PG reported that PCSOs worked from 8.00 am until 10.00 pm. They were supervised by PG, or another Sergeant based in Clacton, by tuning in with them every day and arranging provision.

PG pointed out that In the District, there were a further nine PCSOs based at Clacton, who covered the rest of the Tendring District, ie Clacton, Harwich, Manningtree, Brightlingsea, Thorpe, etc, shared these nine PCSOs, and it was difficult to stretch them across the Tendring area. He stated quite candidly, that what the people of Frinton got was a better service than the rest of the District, adding

that in all seriousness the service from PCSOs was far less in the rest of the District. The response to crime in this area was timely. The PCSOs were all tuned into the Essex Police radio and they responded to matters where there was a local issue - they got there fast. They were out and about, speaking to people. They were in touch with the Town Councillors, some of whom had a direct telephone number (to call a PCSO when necessary). They were a local resource, and they actually took on a lot of things that staff in the rest of the District did not have the time to do.

For example, Walton had had a problem with anti-social behaviour and one PCSO had grasped the nettle. On her own initiative, she said that could not be right as criminal activity was having a detrimental effect on the community. Christmas in Walton prompted this work. She looked at the CCTV in the area and identified ten individuals who were causing or linked to the ASB. Then she drew up a document, went round and visited the individuals stating that if they carried on they would face the consequences of the Law. The document was a contract stating that if they kept to it then everything would be 'rosy'. He felt that Walton was now a much better place, and only two individuals had not abided by the contract. Two months later, that work had resulted in only two still left committing illegal offences.

PG reported that last year there had been issues with moped use and anti-social behaviour infringing the Law. A dozen young people who were interested in illegal motorsport on the Highway, had been identified and it was arranged that a 'banger' would be built with them. This built a bridge with twelve young people who were eventually taken to a track where they raced it to diffuse their enthusiasm. He pointed out that this course of action had not been replicated across Tendring as other PCSOs did not have the capacity to deliver such approaches. Frinton and Walton had a resource in the PCSOs that, in addition to responding to daily calls on their time directed over the radio, could do things to the benefit of the community.

PG then described another example of PCSO activity recently when they had responded to issues with Quad bikes being ridden over from Clacton. A Section 59 Notice had been issued to the individuals concerned, as a warning that they could have their vehicle taken. There was also a problem with scrambler bikes on The Naze.

PG pointed out that PCSOs were not able to make arrests. They were there to provide high visibility, carry out checks, get out on the beat and fill the void (left by constables who used to patrol the streets on foot). The PCSO powers were limited, but PCSOs could demand names and addresses, issue fixed penalty notices and routinely did so. The PCSOs' role was to support vulnerable and needy individuals. They had the power of entry to homes and used this to ensure the safety of vulnerable local residents. With regard to fraudsters and unscrupulous traders, PCSOs could make sure any local traders were acting in a right and proper way. PCSOs provided an extra level of ability to police the area.

PG added that Nottingham Knockers were now possibly part of organised crime, and they could be quite hostile on occasions. They tried to pull on people's heartstrings by stating that they were just out of prison and trying to earn a living, but they could have an alternative agenda. The Police needed to ensure that they had a permit to sell door-to-door.

PG then explained the many ways the Police could be contacted, and AE pointed out that information was available on page 59 of the Spring 2018 issue of The Frinton Resident.

Q: What are Officers doing about recurring beach hut damage?

A: In November/December 2017, there was a real problem with arsons in Walton, and break-ins in Frinton. The Promenade is difficult to patrol. PCSOs did change their duties and they volunteered to work beyond their normal working hours, but it is difficult trying to catch people at it. A productive meeting took place with TDC and they came up with ideas for lighting, mosquito devices and how beach huts could be made more robust against attack. These actions would act as a deterrent. After investigations, six people were interviewed, four were arrested just before Christmas. This came about through the help of community resources and by referring to Facebook entries. Detections did come out of that. Four of the offenders went on to behaviour contracts, but two were still persisting. There has been no detections with regard to the arsons, but now there has been a decline. Some

huts were broken into over half term, but the Police are mindful of this and are always monitoring the situation.

Peter Dias, Chairman of the Association of Frinton Beach Hut Owners (AFBHO), added that they paid Community Guard (previously known as AGS) to patrol the Promenade all night on some nights of the week. Only last week, they had come across gangs of ten and twelve individuals. On seeing the Community Guard, they had disappeared and then Community Guard had undertaken a foot patrol for the rest of that night. There were less occurrences of vandalism when Community Guard were seen patrolling. He felt that the AFBHO had filled a void and represented its members very well.

Giles Watling MP stated that the point to bear in mind was that even with the Police and Community Guards patrols and although it was disturbing, beach hut owners should make sure that their huts had solid bolts and were of a solid construction.

Q: Cycling on pavements is getting worse. I am worried about the speed that they are going. Also, there are a group of approximately ten individuals who regularly gather at the level crossing.

A: Cycling on the pavement is an offence. It is easy to enforce for adults, but under 18s could not receive a fixed penalty notice. There is no Law with regard to the lower age limit. However, young people should have gone on a course at primary school after which they should be on the roads. It is a challenge for PCSOs. If they have driven past someone, I would question why they did not stop and have a discussion with them. PCSOs should be able to deal with it robustly. I will pass on the instruction to PCSOs - if they came across it, they should deal with it. With regard to the early evening gathering at the level crossing, we will look into it. Sometimes it is intimidating, and people could be nervous walking past. By and large, most youngsters are well behaved. Education is provided by PCSOs locally who and talk to them about danger and youth related issues. The Fire Service also educates youngsters. It is important that PCSOs stop and have a conversation with young people.

The Chairman thanked PG for providing so much information.

He then introduced **Councillor Nick Turner** (NT) who was to provide a presentation entitled "**The Vulnerability of the Naze to Erosion/Flooding and the Threat to the Sewage Works**".

NT explained that a mound, an embankment, or a dyke, is now known as a bund and a Sewage Farm is now known as a Water Recycling Centre (WRC) proving that the "Ministry for Double Speak" was alive and well.

He then pointed out that the slide showed an aerial screen shot of the north east corner of the Naze with the most vulnerable part being highlighted by a blue arrow. The next slide showed the north east corner again, but closer up with the Blue arrow showing the start of the bund, and another arrow showing the most vulnerable point. Also, for those who knew the Backwaters well, he had included a Chart.

The next slide showed the prediction by the Environment Agency of what would happen when the North Sea broke through. The reed beds were indicated by the left hand arrow with the right hand arrow showing the vulnerable point again. The bottom line demonstrated the situation if the reed beds were contaminated at the WRC, then that must shut down. He stated, "I leave it to your imagination as to how that will affect us as the Sewage Farm services approximately 20,000 people.

The next few slides showed the erosion that had taken place over the last two years. NT pointed out that the white stick showed the highest point, marked by a vertical arrow as it crept ever closer to the sea, and he added that the last photograph had been taken on Thursday morning, 19 April 2018.

NT stressed that the situation was beyond critical - it was dire.

The solution was a bund, ie a mound of clay 260m long, up to 17m wide and up to 2m in height, to tie in the higher ground to the existing sea wall. The bund would be made of clay dug up from Mr David Eagle's (the local farmer's) land and would consist of approximately 5,000 cubic metres of clay. Mr

Eagle had kindly stockpiled clay ready for this and for another project he had facing the Walton Channel. It was then discovered that it was the wrong type of clay! NT pointed out that this was when a simple solution had started to become much more complicated, and now virgin clay dug out from Mr Eagles' land, which lies above the proposed site, would be used.

The next slides showed the path that had been cut, prepared and made ready for the bund to be built, together with a chart as a reminder of the topography.

The land to be protected would be Mr Eagle's, the Water Recycling Centre (WRC) and the John Weston Nature Reserve, together with part of the Naze owned by Tendring District Council but made over to Essex Wild Life Trust to manage.

NT pointed out that by far the most important aspect was that the sea would be held back and not allowed to cut through to the Walton Channel and thus erode the Naze Marsh, Cormorant and Stone Creeks, and Stone Point would not disappear, all leading to radical change which could have destroyed the Backwaters as they currently existed. He added that the Backwaters were designated a protection area by every type of criteria, both National and International, except that they did not have National Park status, which was something both he and Giles Watling MP had been working on since 2007.

He further explained that the Backwaters were designated as a -

NNR (National Nature Reserve)

SAC (Special Area of Conservation)

SPA (Special Protection Area)

Coastal Protection Belt

Ramsar (A Ramsar being a wetland site designated of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. The Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention, is an inter-governmental environmental treaty established in 1971 by UNESCO, that came into force in 1975. It provides for national action and international co-operation regarding the conservation of wetlands, and wise sustainable use of their resources.)

SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)

Local Wildlife Site

NT clarified that all of the above designations carried weight in planning environments, and by adding them together, they provided more clout to the proposal to protect the Walton Backwaters.

NT pointed out that now everyone present knew the importance and the reasons for the proposed protection for the Naze, but the question was " Why had it taken so long?" First of all, this had been because few people fully understood the processes, both natural and manmade, that were in place to allow for the destruction of the Naze.

In approximately late 2010, the critical situation of this part of the Naze had been drawn to his attention. A few months later, he became Portfolio Holder for Coast Protection. Over the intervening eight years, he had taken numerous photos (in excess of 400) from the air, from the sea, from the beach at various times of the tide and, of course, on top of the Naze. He had started to work on how the erosion could be stopped, which was still a work in progress. In 2013, Tendring District Council had installed a fillet, ie more clay behind a critical point, a few metres below the area shown in the slides, thus prolonging the life of that immediate area.

However, there were many and varied individuals, Councils and organisations with interests on the Naze, and all had to be brought on board, ie Frinton and Walton Town Council, Tendring District Council, Essex County Council, Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC), Environment Agency, Natural England, Anglian Water (AW), Hamford Waters Management Committee, Essex Wildlife Trust, The Naze Protection Society, and David Eagle, the farmer.

NT explained that to do this and to help manage the new Essex Wildlife Trust facility then being built, the District Council had founded The Naze Management Board. This Board was of a rare variety in that it brought together the many and varied groups that had an interest, it had teeth and it worked.

Unfortunately, they came up against a big stumbling block (which was really more of a Berlin Wall) when Natural England (NE) refused to allow any manmade solutions to stop natural processes. He added that nowhere else in the world would you meet this attitude and policy.

As far as the project was concerned, this refusal meant "please come to Walton and take a piece home with you", and there were some frosty and candid Committee meetings as a result. Then in Autumn 2017, David Eagle and NT attended NE's launch of their new strategy - Conservation 21. This was not only a breath of fresh air, it was a radical change in attitude from demand and tell to ask and offer. They also met a Director of NE, who supplied the last piece of the jigsaw.

With regard to funding, AW had been generous to TDC in giving £3m towards the Sea Defence scheme in Clacton and NT had thought they would be similarly inclined with this scheme as it would be saving a £15 to £20m asset of theirs. However, they offered very little, despite NT writing to the Chairman and CEO of AW, a company owned by Pensioners in Canada, a Bank in Australia plus a Venture Capital Company. He had pointed out their liability if the sea did break through, but they hid behind the funding periods that were required by Ofwat, and only £70.5k had been offered up.

NT reported that Mick Page at ECC had been instrumental in getting £100k from the RFCC, and David Eagle had very generously offered up the gate money for the replacement clay amounting to £26.5k. The total of £197k left a shortfall of £60k.

NT had then asked the Naze Protection Society and the Town Council to match each other up to £30k, of which £7.5k would be spent by both organisations and the remaining £45k represented an amount for contingencies.

NT added that whilst all the above had been going on, TDC had been 'beavering' away getting the permissions, reports and planning consent at a conservative cost of £35k, not including Officers' time.

NT concluded by saying "So there you have it. During eight years, upwards of £300k in monies has been raised from six different funding streams and eleven different bodies have been involved. Work is starting on Monday, 30th April 2018, and it is anticipated that the build will take three to four months".

A resident then stated that he knew that NT had been working on this for years. He felt that NT deserved a vote of thanks as dealing with the EU must have been a nightmare, and he hoped that the project would be completed shortly. NT received a round of applause.

Q: I have been involved in the coastline since 2011 and I would also like to congratulate NT on his sterling work. The problem with the Environment Agency is that they have classified various sections of the coast in different ways. They have classified Walton as 'no active intervention' as in Brightlingsea. The coastline has been retreating two metres a year. If this is allowed to go on, the sea will come in behind. The Environment Agency need to re-classify or Colchester will become a coastal town. Will the Environment Agency re-classify?

A: Yes. I will not let them do otherwise. We need to stand up to them. If we can get matched funding, we can achieve anything we want, but it takes time.

Q: It seems to me that for us as residents, one of the most important things is the sewage works servicing 20,000 people. Is there a contingency scheme regarding the priority for that? How would the sewage be re-directed?

A: It would have to be picked up by lorries outside the Columbine Centre. I said to a member of staff at AW, "Are you going to tell people that you should not go to the toilet?" A Director of Natural England has moved a lot of pieces. It takes a long time for Conservation 21 to permeate through, but it is now just three months to completion.

AE thanked NT for providing a presentation on such a vital issue for the area.

Tony Baxter (TB) of Ontrack Rail Users' Association, then spoke on various issues concerning the **local rail service**.

He pointed out that there was a new timetable in preparation, a draft of which should be available within the next month. A three-month consultation period would then be held, and he encouraged rail users to respond. He reported that new trains were under construction. The first was nearing completion in the works at Derby and would be delivered mid-year. However, there were a series of issues with regard to the proposed depot at Brantham.

With regard to the proposed Garden Village in West Tendring, TB stated that infrastructure was to go in first, ie schools, surgeries and transport. Consultants had prepared a Transport Report for ECC in September 2016, but this had not been publicised.

To provide good access between the Garden Village and Central Colchester, two options for a rapid transit scheme were proposed:

- i) a conventional bus service via East Hill, Greenstead Road and the University, or
- ii) a take-over of the railway from Hythe to Colchester Town in order to construct a guided bus way or tram line.

The basic bus option could not be described as "rapid", while the tram option would be poor value for money leaving guided bus as the default. This would require the closure of Colchester Town station so that rail passengers from Clacton, Walton, etc, would need to change at Hythe causing inconvenience, increased journey time and potentially increased fares.

He reported that Network Rail were against the idea. They owned the land (at Colchester Town Station) and it could not be compulsorily purchased. Ontrack had written to Giles Watling MP asking him to ask ECC to state that they would not give any further consideration to the closure of Colchester Town Station; ECC's reply was awaited.

It was noted that a promise had been made to John Smock (Chairman of Ontrack) that at the next public meeting, the FRA would try to include a speaker from either Abellio or Network Rail.

After asking for permission to speak, **Giles Watling MP (GW)** warned about the possibility of **cyber attacks** on various systems, arising from the problems with Syria and Russia. He pointed out that there were weaknesses that could be used to advantage by cyber attackers, particularly when people did not change their passwords often enough. He asked everyone to please change their passwords regularly. He reported that he had recently visited the Permanent Joint Headquarters and had been impressed by the planning that was going into possible unified joint strikes by the US, France and ourselves, and how prepared the UK was for dealing with any future hostilities.

He then reported that he had been looking into local policing, and had had an interview with the previous Chief Inspector, Russ Cole, who had pointed out that the police had reached a 'tipping' point with regard to the need for more Officers on the street. He had then got in touch with the Chief Constable and the Police & Crime Commissioner. As a result, an extra £270,000 had been allocated to policing, meaning twelve more Police on the streets in Tendring District. Therefore, not only would more police be seen locally, but increased background work would be keeping people safe.

GW pointed out that over the last five years there had been proposals to close the Clacton MIU, but now £14.7m had been allocated to the rebuilding of Clacton Hospital. With regard to the problems at the ACE surgeries, he reported that he had talked to the Managers and the Managing Director had come to see him. He had now been in touch with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and they had promised to take action within 14 days. Secretary's Note: Later in the meeting, a resident raised the question "Do you think we will get a decent answer in the next couple of weeks?" It was then repeated that the CQC should reply within 14 days.

The Chairman then introduced **Residents' Issues**, indicating that there were a collection of people in the room who could answer questions, and those present raised the following concerns.

Q: With regard to the zigzag path, ie the gateway to our beaches, what is happening to it? I understood that funding had been intimated.

A (Councillor Nick Turner): I no longer have the power so it will not be funded. I have asked the Engineers to put up and improve the handrails. TDC Open Spaces department are removing the flower bed (where the shelter used to be) and putting in seating to go with the existing seating.

Q: I am really concerned about the appearance of neglect around Frinton, particularly the state of The Esplanade compared with Clacton. There are patched pavements and a potholed road. It is sheer neglect.

A (Chairman): The FRA are aware of that and an FRA report on the state of that road, in particular, has been submitted to ECC via Councillor Mark Platt. We have set up a sub-committee to keep records of where problems exist, but unfortunately, complete re-surfacing of The Esplanade is not in the County's budget. As an organisation, we are lobbying for something to be done and to get it included in the ECC priorities.

Q: What is happening about the public toilets in Old Way? I see that they are out for tender.

A (Councillor Robert Bucke): The Town Council entered into negotiations with TDC for twelve months, but it was not possible to reach an agreement on the tenure; the cost of doing so was prohibitive. TDC want the Walton one to remain closed, but in the case of Frinton, it is now on the free market. The Town Council have put in an offer on that basis. The District have received three offers and we have asked for a five-year lease. There is a possibility that we will get them re-opened under the control of the Town Council.

The Chairman added that the FRA had written to the Chief Executive of TDC stating that residents wanted them to be kept open. He pointed out that there were approximately 140 people in the room today, and asked those who wished the toilets to remain open to put up their hands. Virtually everyone present raised their hand which, he stated, demonstrated that none of the people of Frinton wanted them closed.

Q: I am concerned about the cleanliness of Connaught Avenue. In some cases, next to food shops, the pigeon problem is really bad. Is there any possibility of pavement cleaning being undertaken twice a year?

The Chairman pointed out that the FRA were disappointed that some of the shop owners did not clean the pavements outside their premises. The FRA would certainly continue to lobby on residents' behalf with regard to keeping the pavements clean outside the shops in Connaught Avenue.

A (Councillor Nick Turner): I have had it done several times. The problem is that then every other town centre wants their pavements cleaned. The FRA should write to the District Council Portfolio Holder. There was some talk about buying their own steam cleaning machine, but there was no budget included for cleaning when the refurbishment of Connaught Avenue took place.

Secretary's Note: After the meeting, Councillor Robert Bucke reported that the pigeon issues, particularly alongside Wrights' Butchers, had been reported to TDC Town Centre Manager.

Q: I would like to report vomit next to the old NatWest building in Harold Grove, near the driveway with the Studio. It must be a health hazard.

A (Chairman): It has been noted of by one of our Councillors who will take action.

Secretary's Note: This issue was resolved within two days of the meeting, with the area being cleaned by TDC staff.

Q: How many of our Councillors have put pressure on the Government about the appalling train service? On the 1976 timetable, there were three trains every hour to London. As a weekend traveller, I have found that on eight out of ten weekends there were no trains from Frinton to London. The line was shut every weekend in July.

A (Giles Watling MP): Yes, I am constantly applying pressure. It is not good enough. I am regularly in touch with Greater Anglia and Network Rail. We are suffering from decades of neglect and we

have not been upgraded. It is a really tricky operation. They have to close it down at some point. I know what an inconvenience it is. We have to grit our teeth. New stock is arriving. Myself, and other Councillors, are on to it.

Q: With regard to emails being sent out on the FRA Data Protection Policy, will you be using the bcc facility?

A: (Honorary Secretary) Yes, definitely.

Q: Along the lane from Wittonwood Road to the Cricket Club, there is a problem with rats and rat poison has been put down on three separate sites. My dog has ingested this and had to be taken to the vet.

A: (Chairman) Thank you for this information, but I do not believe there is any advice we can give.

Q: The beast from the East and the strong tides have moved lots of sand from the Frinton beaches, several feet deep in places, exposing steps and stony areas. Much of this sand has ended up nearer Walton by the breakwater bend in The Esplanade. I was wondering if and when the beach sand deposited here will be moved back along the beaches it was moved from. Where it now lays it is covering the groins and they can't work as they should. I know in Margate it is common each year to see diggers moving the sand around after the winter has passed. Can you provide any information?

A: AE read out the reply received from Mike Carran, TDC Head of Sport and Leisure as follows:

" I have spoken to my colleagues in Engineering Services, who have provided the following response. The east coast has been subject to huge sand loss and migration due to the 'beast from the East', in some areas entire beaches have been lost leaving the seawall exposed and vulnerable. Although the Tendring District has been subject to sand loss and migration, I can confirm all our sea defences and groynes have been inspected and the sand lost has not increased their vulnerability or performance. We are monitoring the sand levels and expect the sand to start to return over the next few months, due to this we currently do not have any plans to move the sand mechanically. We will continue to review the situation and develop our plans accordingly. I hope that answers the question, but please let me know if you require any further information."

Q: What is happening with regard to the survey the FRA carried out on the possibility of a one-way system in Connaught Avenue?

A: (Honorary Secretary) The FRA submitted the results to ECC in November 2016 and every since then we have been trying to obtain a reply from ECC. It has subsequently been discovered that the ECC Officer who suggested the survey, no longer works for ECC, but the matter is now being followed up by Councillor Mark Platt.

Before he closed the meeting, the Chairman thanked those present for turning out on such a sunny day, and particularly thanked the Councillors and representatives of different organisations for providing input.

Report produced by
Jeanette Phillips
Honorary Secretary
Frinton Residents' Association