

HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL
Guildhall, Church Street, Harwich CO12 3DS

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, CHURCH STREET, HARWICH
on
WEDNESDAY 13th MARCH 2019 at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllrs Ashley, Calver, Fay, Fowler, I Henderson,
J Henderson, McLeod, Smith and Todd

Clerk: Ms Lucy Ballard

Chairman: Cllr C Powell

Also present: 3 members of the public, 0 members of the press and Inspector
Darren Deex

The Chairman welcomed members of the public as well as guest speakers. He asked if all were content for the police briefing to be given prior to public questions to accommodate Inspector Deex who needed to leave the meeting by 7.45pm.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs B Brown, J Brown, Morrison and F Powell

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Betty Holbrook of East ward proposed the minutes as a true record.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 18th April 2018 (previously circulated) be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

BRIEFING FROM INSPECTOR DARREN DEEX ON LOCAL POLICING MATTERS

Inspector Deex, local community policing inspector for Tendring, thanked all for his attendance and began his briefing by giving a general overview of crime across the 4 wards of Harwich. He admitted it wasn't a great picture in terms of statistics and reported a 14.7% increase in crime across the board compared with this time last year however this was slightly higher than the district average and in line with the force wide picture. He said only in West ward had crime reduced with 4 fewer offenses. As a district it's an 11% increase on crime which is higher than he'd like. It is concerning but there are identified reasons including changes in which crimes are recorded at the Home Office, particularly around violence without injury offences such as stalking, harassment and malicious communications.

Burglaries have increased with 19 more offenses, however robberies have reduced to 9 offenses. Vehicle offenses are unchanged from last year. Violence with injury offenses (ABH/GBH etc.) are down with 178 recorded offenses (4% reduction on last year) which bucks the county- and nationwide trend. Violence without injury, however, saw a 23% increase and this is a reflection of the county and national picture also. Shop thefts were on the increase with 49 more offenses, taking it to 134. Possession of drugs offenses were up by 10 offenses and possession of weapons offenses have also increased, by 4

and this is a reflection of the increased number of stop and searches being conducted by officers. He thanked HTC for agreeing to part fund one of the new PCSO posts. He further referred to the new community policing team for Harwich which is a massive plus for the town. He confirmed the new team would include a sergeant, 3 PCs and the 2 PCSOs which is so important. They've identified that Harwich does have issues and some troublesome individuals but they do know who they are and are taking positive steps to tackle them.

Cllr McLeod asked if there are any county lines issues in the town. Insp. Deex said it wasn't a major problem despite the large number of vulnerable individuals which could be targeted. He said ~~one line~~ in comparison to Clacton where they were aware of 17 different groups lines being active in the area. When it comes to dealing, Harwich has home-grown dealers and the Community Policing Team had executed a number of warrants recently to target them.

Cheryl Thompson of East Central ward asked if Insp. Deex knows how many robberies and burglaries are committed to facilitate drug addictions. He said it's a difficult crime to detect, however his experience suggests that these, including theft from vehicles and shop lifting, is linked to drugs misuse.

Betty Holbrook of East ward referred to those gangs of people going around committing local break-ins and mentioned to a recent break-in at the sailing Club. Insp. Deex said they've always been around and it's very difficult to identify who commits the crime as they're not caught in the act. He said the community probably know who it is but there's often not much evidence to prove it.

Cllr Fowler congratulated Insp. Deex on the fantastic job the police are doing on social media which shows the public they're doing proactive policing. Insp. Deex thanked Cllr Fowler and said he does monitor some of the local crime pages on occasion but agrees it's not always factual. He confirmed their Fb page was the most followed page in the county.

Cllr I Henderson said one of the biggest issues is the fear of crime and it's a fact that an attack elsewhere in the country often makes people worry in other parts of the country. He said nationally there's the biggest increase in crime in a decade and so whilst it's not a great increase on last year's figures, there is a steady increase over the years. He said Insp. Deex said under reporting is a big issue which he feels has been affected by the cuts in policing. He said there's an average of 6 crimes per day in Harwich (1720 per year), which isn't a huge number. But this is reported crime, it's the unreported crime that's an issue and that possibly doubles the number. He felt that a lack of understanding of how to report, or lack of faith in the police were potential reasons for not reporting crimes. Cllr I Henderson said the 101 service had improved. Insp. Deex said they're pushing the online service as this aims to make Essex police more efficient and frees up 101 for those who can't use the internet.

Cllr Todd asked whether the new team would be on the beat 24/7. Insp. Deex said they'll work between 8am and 10pm and later on weekends (possibly 2am) but these hours are flexible to meet the need at the time or to address particular issues. It'll be a 6 on, 3 off shift pattern with an average 40 hours per week. He said there'll be the team at Clacton during the off days, but they will allocate resources to where the issues are. He said they will be visible, talking to the retailers and business community and they'll do Coffee with Cops etc.

Betty Holbrook referred to an event at the Sailing Club a few weeks back, to which 2 of the Specials attended, which was lovely to see and she thanked Insp. Deex for their hard work. Insp. Deex said they have some really competent Specials.

Cllr McLeod asked whether the PCSOs would hand out business cards. Insp. Deex said this ceased for financial reasons a few years back and said this can also lead to underreporting as the PCSOs were being contacted directly so crimes weren't being reported in the usual way.

Cheryl Thompson of East Central ward asked if the PCSOs can go into the Harwich Schools because Harwich does have a drugs problem with youngsters in the areas and she said some school-aged children are very ignorant about drugs and felt awareness should be raised. Insp. Deex referred to the loss of Schools officers, which was a shame, but he said he would love the PCSOs to go into the schools and engage with the pupils. He said they're looking to roll out across the district, a knife crime workshop/briefing which was delivered in Clacton. He hopes that education engagement can increase but said it is currently on the curriculum.

Cllr J Henderson referred to interaction between young people and PCSOs and said often the young people going along to the local football matches aren't always there with honourable intentions and sometimes just a presence helps to deter them. She felt that as it was a more relaxed environment than school, they would be more likely to talk to the PCSOs. She also felt the parks and skate park would be obvious places. Insp. Deex said there are many kids which have good families and support networks, some on the periphery, in serious danger of going down a bad route, then there's the really troublesome individuals. He wants his officers concentrating on the latter from an enforcement point of view. He agreed they do need to engagement across all groups but at varying degrees. Cllr Powell said any ward councillors can bring issues back to the Council, to the Mayor or Clerk to be passed onto the PCSOs regularly. This way, HTC has more of an input than ever.

Cllr Fowler asked about the other end of the age spectrum and recalled that a few years back the PCSO(s) made visits to the Golden Oldies club and similar, and felt some education about home safety would be helpful. Insp. Deex said also advice to help them avoid scams would be useful and it's something the PCSOs can help with. He said, with some exceptions, he has 8 PCSOs across the district and they're stretched but the elderly community is a group he's like to reach.

Cllr I Henderson said a national concern is the number of young children not in school and receiving lessons at home. He reported 1943 young people are home tutored and there's no monitoring of them nor are they registered, which is a real safeguarding issue as many of them aren't actually receiving any education, they're on the streets. These are the vulnerable ones. Insp. Deex agreed.

Cllr Calver referred back to when he worked alongside Insp. Deex on Rhyme against Crime and said he was most impressed with the work being done, and the way he approached this evening's meeting was very refreshing.

The Chairman thanked Insp. Deex for his attendance.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Betty Holbrook of East Ward referred to the shipyard by the New Bell pub in Harwich where all the broken up boats are. She said it was like a burial ground for boats and with all the promotion to American tourists in the lead up to Mayflower asked if this could be addressed. Cllr Smith said he raised it recently with Mike Carran of TDC and now believes that area of beach doesn't belong to them. Cllr I Henderson said it was Harwich Haven Authority land. Betty asked if there was anything that members could do. Cllr C Powell

offered to liaise with Fiona of the HHA and agreed to take a look tomorrow with a view to having the area cleared.

Cheryl Thompson of East Central ward asked who was responsible for proof reading the materials which are placed in the council noticeboards and on the website. The Clerk asked if she was referring to anything specifically and said most of the materials were from third parties so council staff wouldn't naturally proof it but said it was good to receive the feedback as HTC could be more proactive.

Betty Holbrook asked about the two co-opted councillors, who had recently resigned and asked about their allowances and whether these would be repaid. Cllr C Powell confirmed that as co-opted members, they weren't entitled to an allowance.

Cllr Calver pointed out the reason they resigned is that they no longer live in the area.

Cheryl Thompson asked the expectations were of councillors in relation to replying to the emails of their constituents. She said some ward councillors reply very promptly whereas other never reply. Cllr J Henderson said (at district level at least) she is aware there is no obligation to reply and it's well known that some members don't respond to residents and there's little than can be done to enforce it. The way to make your voice heard is at the ballot box. Cllr I Henderson said at Tendring District Council, if no response is received, they go to an officer who then prompts for this to be done. He agrees that once you take on the role of councillor, you should take all that comes with it, including responding to emails. Cllr Ashley said residents can always phone councillors directly. He said he's away all week so finds it difficult to respond to emails but can usually answer his phone, which he feels is a better way of addressing issues and getting to understand needs. The Clerk confirmed that residents can always come via the office if they're having difficulties contacting their councillor but that all contact information is on the website. She added that some emails may slip through the net or take longer to respond to if members suffer email overload.

Cheryl Thompson referred to the council's criteria for grant funding and in light of the evening's police briefing asked if there's any mileage in councillors considering the introduction of additional criteria. She said rather than simply supporting those events which are only marketed to a small target audience or which aren't well attended, could, say, a place such as the Grand Theatre of Lemmings receive a grant to enable them to go into the schools to assist with getting the message out about crime/drugs etc. She felt it might be a better investment in the community. Cllr Calver said applicants apply to HTC rather than HTC seeking organisations to go to them, so as long as they meet the criteria, they will have their applications considered. Cheryl asked if the criteria could be broadened. Cllr Calver said it possibly wasn't necessary, so long as they came to us with a viable project. Cllr McLeod said he's a trustee on the Grassroots charity and said he can forward applications for grants up to £1000. Cllr J Henderson said quote often, a large expenses for organisations when completing projects, is staffing costs and HTC doesn't fund salaries.

No further questions were taken.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.58pm

CHAIRMAN

DATE