

Annual Reports from Councillors Appointed to Outside Bodies 2023/24

1 Fawbert and Barnard's Educational Foundation – Joel Charles

It has been another busy time for the foundation. Trustees allocated over £1,600 in grants to help young people further their educational interests in 2023. This year, the foundation's Trustees have already awarded over £1,500 in grants. One of the most positive aspects of the foundation's work is the support it provides to young people that receive pupil premium funding. Fawbert and Barnard's Primary School is currently responsible for 34 young people who access pupil premium support, so the foundation's grant funding enables them to enjoy more educational opportunities than they normally would.

This year, funding has been awarded to the educational trust Fawbert and Barnard's sits within to fund a five-year lease on a minivan that allows teachers to take more pupils to swimming lessons and sporting events. The homework club, that has been funded by the foundation in previous years, continues to be a success. 15 to 20 pupils regularly attend the club at Fawbert and Barnard's, and those who join the sessions have fed back that it has significantly aided their learning experience.

At the most recent meeting of the foundation that took place in March, Trustees awarded funding for new play equipment, allocated an additional grant to keep the homework club running and agreed to purchase two netball posts for Fawbert and Barnard's. A further £600 was granted as a reserve fund to the primary school for an educational activity, to be determined through consultation with Trustees, that would involve several pupils from different classes.

The foundation is also undergoing some change. Sue Spearman will sadly be retiring as the Headteacher of Fawbert and Barnard's to focus on her role as the Chief Executive of the Templefields Multi-Academy Trust. The Trustees thanked Sue Spearman at the most recent meeting of the foundation for her work as Headteacher and formally recognised the positive contribution she has made at the primary school over several years.

Modest interest gains and investment outcomes in 2023 have continued to be realised in the first quarter of 2024, which has allowed Trustees to slightly increase the amount of grant support that can be provided.

One of the priorities of the foundation is to ensure young people in Harlow are not excluded from accessing the best possible educational support. The foundation is constantly looking for more opportunities to support the educational aspirations of young people in the town. Trustees remain committed to increasing the number of grant applications that come directly from young people looking to pursue their educational interests to help boost learning outcomes.

2 St Johns Arts and Recreation Centre – Sue Livings

The Arc as far as technology is concerned is being upgraded on IT and software plus maintenance issues. The building now has fibre broadband with Wi-Fi throughout the building, plus a faster computer in the office which has enabled us to install software upgrades including domain, email and diary improvements and you will notice when you access our website that improvements are a work in progress.

During the year the Arts Society of Harlow (previously known as HADFAS) notified the ARC that it would be closing down to falling membership and the lack of anyone prepared to be on the committee. Whilst it is unfortunate to lose a regular booking, the ARC is very grateful that the Arts Society decided to donate their remaining assets to the ARC, for its use in promoting its arts and recreation facilities. In its place we now have the New Arts Harlow group that now meets on a Tuesday morning.

We have also lost 3 other long-established groups, but we have gained besides New Arts Harlow, The Quakers, Harlow Concert Band, Ground & Grow, Essex Music Services and recently Michelle's Gong Bath.

We continue to be a venue for parties and one-off bookings plus additional hirings from our regular holding quiz nights for their own fundraising efforts.

There have been three series of Friday midday concerts which continue to be a major draw and remain the most popular events and many of the musicians either individuals or groups have received support from the Tollinton Fund if they are under 35 years old. This gives the musicians support while building their repertoire and experience. We also advertise other public concerts and events held at the ARC.

We thank all the volunteers and staff who support the ARC in many ways from fund raising events such as our quiz nights and Old Harlow walks, manning the tea pot and ensuring the events run smoothly.

3 Harlow Arts Trust – Sue Livings

Art Trust is a very exciting body to be involved with – both Catherine and Toni work very hard and there are always new events coming up. As you are all aware last November, we had a new sculpture placed in the park an owl 8ft tall with human feet. Just wonderful. In a few days' time there will be a big thank you for all volunteers from Gibberd Garden, Harlow Mill and of course the Art Trust. I am looking forward this function very much. Always new things going on.

4 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel – Mike Garnett

Over the past 12 months I have attended seven EPFCCP Panel meetings where the Commissioner was questioned about how he was dealing with crime in Essex.

Essex has recruited an additional 800 police officers. To deal with crime most are front line some deal with specific areas such as violence against Women and Girls, Supporting victims of crime and Cyber crime.

Many of our meetings were used to put together the new crime plan. We had to review all the wording and photographs that made up the completed Plan. The Commissioners Plan was around his 12 policing priorities:

- Further Investment in Crime
- Reducing drug driven Violence
- Protecting Vulnerable people and breaking the cycle of domestic abuse
- Reducing violence against women and girls
- Improving support for victims of crime
- Protecting rural and isolated areas
- Preventing dog theft
- Preventing Business crime
- Improving safety on our roads
- Encouraging volunteers and community support
- Supporting our Officers and Staff
- Increasing collaboration.

I have also attended additional training for panel members. I am on the Ethics Sub committee and attended two meeting dealing with this area of specialist scrutiny. I was also a member working on the Commissioner's Budget and precept setting panel.

Most recently we reviewed the HM Inspector's report on the Fire Service in Essex.

All in all it has been a very busy but enjoyable year.

5 Harlow Occupational Health Service – Tony Edwards

Over the last year I have attended four meeting as a Trustee of the Occupational Health Service.

During this time, the Trust has reviewed its constitution and is currently looking to expand Trustee membership. It has recently appointed a new Chair.

The Trust continues to consolidate its work and enhance its charitable activities by offering first aid training and health related advice and support to other third sector agencies in the Town.

Please see link which gives some details as to the activity service
<https://www.hohs.org/>.

6 Harlow Citizens Advice Bureau – James Griggs

Harlow Citizens Advice continues to offer outstanding service and value for money to Harlow residents. With its main office operation in the town centre and a range of weekly outreach projects it is active across our entire community providing much needed support and advice. The attached annual report gives details of their extraordinary work, I have selected a few highlights below which show in financial terms the impact the service has but it is much more than this. For some residents, just the knowledge that someone is listening and trying to help is the first important step to a better life situation.

Achievements and performance

As we reflect on yet another year of progress and accomplishment in delivering our services to Harlow, it is imperative to highlight the following key statistics: During 2022/23, Citizens Advice Harlow delivered free independent, high quality, specialist, and general advice to 2,205 clients with over 11,844 issues . The number of issues we dealt with reflects the complexity of life and situation for many people. We had 2,156 active cases which took longer to resolve, but still delivered tangible outcomes for people

Outcomes

Debts worth £250,867 were written off with the aid of our specialist advisers. Our welfare benefits team assisted clients with benefit awards, resulting in income gains of £229,770. Increasing people's income and ensuring they receive the benefits to which they are entitled helps both their mental health and general wellbeing. Our energy teams' efforts resulted in additional financial gains of £894,147 by assisting clients in accessing energy-efficient products, reducing consumption, switching wireless plans to find better offers, and assisting in the write-off of energy debts. The outcomes delivered by Citizens Advice Harlow are important because they provide individuals with knowledge, support, and resources to effectively address a wide range of challenges, improve their well[1]being, and navigate complex systems. Our advice services and specialisms contribute to individuals' empowerment, informed decision-making, and overall quality of life.

In 2022/2023...

For every £1 invested in our service we provided £22.92 of public value. Through the work of our specialist housing team preventing homelessness and housing evictions and council tax rescheduled payments, we saved Harlow Council £129,656. This is an increase compared to the previous year of £114,012. The value of our advice work by reducing the use of mental health service and GP services and keeping people in work helped save the NHS £135,478. By working with housing providers to prevent homelessness and evictions we helped save the sector £342,405.

Caseworker Molly Andrews was runner up in this years Town Centre Awards, another example of how much residents appreciate and respect the work of the organisation.

A review of this year's performance until March 2024 indicates that the service will have another busy year. According to management information, Citizens Advice Harlow has advised over 3800 people, helped clients increase their income by more than £1 million, and provided over £700,000 in benefits through energy advice, house insulation, and reducing fuel poverty for Harlow residents.

They continue to provide outreach throughout the area, reaching deep into the community.

Having worked with and seen Harlow Citizens Advice staff in action and having spoken with many of the people they have helped it is clear this is a much needed and valued service that truly delivers. I thank them for their work and dedication over the past years and their commitment to the future.

7 HTS Board – Jodi Dunne

2023-2024 has been a year of transition for the HTS board. Changes at the managerial level of chief executive, chair of the board and finance have meant that the business has had to be agile in its endeavours in order to adapt to the new challenges of new personnel and maintaining and improving services levels.

David Morrissey as chief executive, Andy Belton as chair of the board and Michael Shirt in finance have taken to their roles with vigour and confidence and it's to the credit of the HTS culture and working atmosphere that the latter two roles were taken by people that were previously on interim contracts: their experience with HTS as a solid enterprise seemingly leading them to apply for their positions long term and through their hard work and application are already proving to be assets to the company.

The make up of the HTS board itself has changed this year with the addition of four non executive directors from outside of the business bringing experience and knowledge from the worlds of HR and housing management, to name just two.

The new members of the board have recently taken their induction ready to become active members of the organisation and I welcome the added infusion of experience to the group.

HTS has also this year begun the process of winding down the Housing and Regeneration section of the company with the sharing out of the five properties that the enterprise holds. Three of which were returned to the council and the remaining two are being sold on the open market with tenants in situ.

These properties are being marketed through Reyland Johnson Estate agents and we await the outcome of any interest.

All in all, with the challenges that HTS has faced over the last year, the company is I think in a sound position, ready to move forward in confidence for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025 as a respected and flexible local employer.

8 Safer Harlow Partnership – John Steer

Harlow’s Community Safety Partnership is known as the Safer Harlow Partnership (SHP).

Statutory, non-statutory, community and voluntary agencies work together to identify, tackle, reduce and prevent ASB, crime and disorder in Harlow.

The SHP is led by the responsible authorities;

Harlow Council
Essex Police
Essex County Council
Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Partnership
Probation Service

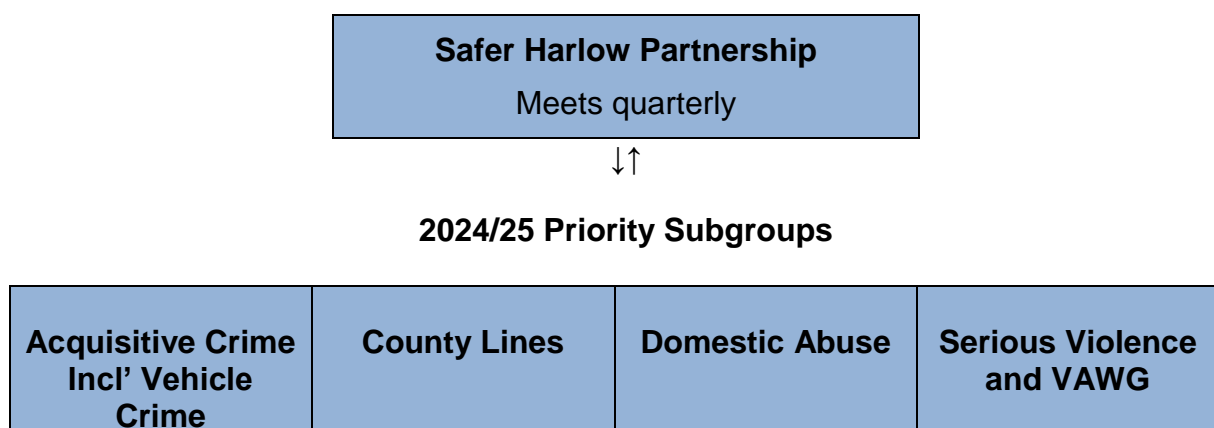
The Partnership also includes other local private, community and voluntary sector agencies (see end).

Historically the Chair of the SHP has been the Chief Executive of Harlow Council. Essex Police is represented at District Commander/Chief Inspector level. The Council’s Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience is a member of the SHP Board.

SHP priorities are identified each year through the Strategic Intelligence Assessment. Priorities are aligned to the Essex Police and Crime Plan where relevant.

Work to achieve identified priorities is currently undertaken by multi-agency priority subgroups. Each subgroup has an operational action plan detailing what work will be undertaken throughout the year to help achieve SHP objectives.

Current structure:



All subgroups meet quarterly.

In the main, subgroup Chairs are from partner agencies, supported by a lead officer from Harlow Council. The Partnership is currently considering whether there are

benefits of moving from priority subgroups to multi-agency Task and Finish Working Groups during 2024.

Funding

The SHP is awarded an annual Community Safety Partnership Grant by the PFCC to fund activity to address identified priorities. Statutory, non-statutory, community and voluntary groups can apply for up to £3,000 per application if they can demonstrate how their application supports the partnership's current priorities.

In 2023/24 the PFCC grant supported delivery of a range of projects and activity including the following:

- Delivery of two Firebreak courses
- Purchase of Hate Crime awareness resources
- Upgrade of CCTV in vulnerable locations
- Development of the new Harlow Women's Safety Charter
- Purchase of crime prevention resources
- Delivery of J9 Domestic Abuse training and awareness raising activity during Domestic Abuse Awareness Week

SHP Membership

Changing Pathways
Essex County Council Children Services
Essex County Council Youth Service
Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Essex Police
Harlow Council
Harlow Ethnic Minority Umbrella
Integrated Care Board
Probation Service
Rainbow Services
Streets2Homes
Victim Support