

# Annual Reports from Councillors Appointed to Outside Bodies 2024/25

## 1 Welfare Panel – David Carter

We are now down to 7 members Sue Livings, Danielle Brown, Tony Edwards, James Griggs, Kay Morrison, Matthew Saggars, and myself. Others have dropped off due to work and other commitments.

I have sent an E Mail to all other councillors to see if we can get some more support. Between April 2024 and February 2025. 30 cases have been heard by the panel. 5 cleared the debts just prior to the meeting.

17 cases were heard and the panel gave delegated powers to the officers after a commitment was given by the tenants.

7 were given eviction notices of these 1 was evicted 5 were suspended when agreements were reached and the remaining one came to the February meeting and a plan put in place and this tenant has been referred to the April meeting for an update.

## 2 Great Parndon Community Association – Tony Durcan

I can confirm I have meet with the chair of the association and attended one board meeting. The key issue is the number of sites this association runs for the benefit of the community. Most of these building are owned by the council and concerns have been raised about the lack of infrastructure.

As we know maintenance cost and energy prices are increasing which is a major challenge for this association. It was a pleasure to hear about how many community group they support for all areas of the community.

All public bodies such as emergency groups and health often use the many of the site to provide direct support and intervention to support Harlow.

On my visit there was a number of groups who were very busy and active. From sports to tea and talk session from book clubs to mum meetings, it appears all sites are busy.

In the warm weather the association allows charities to use many of the external areas for sports/fun days free of charge.

The energy and support they provided is an excellent example about how community groups make a direct and positive difference.

It was a pleasure to attended and take part in the meeting. I would like to express my thanks both to the chair Alan Jones and the management team.

### **3 Essex Police Fire and Crime Panel 2024/25 – Mike Garnett**

It has been a very busy period in the Crime Panel.

I have attended 6 Panel meetings a number of Teams workshops and 3 (Teams) appointment sub-committee for the appointment of new Independent Members of the Panel.

During all our Panel Meetings we also look at the Commissioner's decisions he makes regarding procurement costs ranging from new cars, IT and all new associated service providing costs

We renewed both the Police Plan and the Fire and Rescue Plan this evolved over a number of meetings looking at the Commissioner's priorities and pulling the plans together both with statements of intent along with a number of relevant photographs.

During the meetings we questioned the Commissioner, Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer on the performance of their operations, These discussions did not allude to Operational matters as that is not in our remit, The Commissioner informed the Panel during these discussions on the crime figures and how he is targeting Drugs, Violence against Women and Girls, ASB, Knife Crime with the knife arches.

We also study both the Police and the Fire and Rescue Annual Reports and raise issues contained in them and the overall Performance Measures.

The Panel held two Budget Workshops where we looked at the Commissioner's required expenditure and various Government Grants in addition to the yearly anticipated Revenue Grant from the Home Office.

The Panel received the Peel Report from HMICFRS. In the Police Inspection Report Essex Police were graded Good or Adequate on Five areas and One area Required Improvement on the Fire and Rescue Report there were Three areas of Good Four were Adequate and Six that required Improvement. In both Areas there has been marked improvement.

Finally, following the Budget setting meeting in January the Panel requested the Chairman to write to the Home Secretary with regard to the Home Office settlement Grant which was lower than last year thereby causing cost cutting measures to be taken, this would involve the loss of 99 PCSO and 65 Staff. Also possible reduction in Police numbers to cover additional Police Pay Skills increments or allow the continuation of the East of England Pay Allowance. Following this meeting and before the letter was sent the Government awarded Essex Police a further £2.3m for the Essex Neighbourhood Funding Grant which allowed the Commissioner to retain all of the PCSO.

### **4 Fawbert and Barnard's Educational Foundation – Joel Charles**

The purpose of the foundation is to issue grants to support the education of local young people in Harlow and the surrounding areas. £1,975 was allocated in grants by Trustees in 2024. The current balance of both the investment and business account remain healthy thanks to interest gains over the course of the last financial

year. As a result of the investment gains, Trustees will have scope to continue allocating grants at the same level as previous years and are looking for new opportunities to support educational projects in the wider district.

Several small grants have been issued. In March last year, funding was allocated to a circus day for pupils at Fawbert and Barnard's Primary School and the homework club, which has consistently received the backing of Trustees. £250 was then awarded to the homework club to ensure its continuation at the foundation's meeting in June last year. £125 was granted to the young carers club for art equipment and a cookery creative club at the school also received £125 for ingredients at the same June meeting. The young carers club is an important initiative at the school because it supports children who look after parents or siblings with physical and educational needs.

In November last year, Trustees received funding requests from Fawbert and Barnard's and Harlowbury Primary School. Trustees awarded £600 for design resources to Fawbert and Barnard's and £400 to Harlowbury Primary for new play equipment. The next Trustee meeting is due to take place in June this year.

There has been more change at Fawbert and Barnard's. Trustees welcomed the newly appointed Headteacher, Sophia Ovonlen, at the November meeting of the foundation last year. A new Deputy Head was appointed last year too, so the school's most senior leadership roles have now been filled. The school also recently explored, informally during last summer, if the old police station nearby would be a viable option to acquire for expansion, but it was deemed at the time that the investment required to meet certain educational needs would be too high.

It has been another successful year for the foundation – it is making a positive impact in the community. Targeting funding to support young people who have more complex support needs is a relatively new area of focus for the foundation, but one that can ensure that no pupil locally is unable to benefit from additional support.

## **5 Safer Harlow Partnership – Joel Charles**

The partnership has continued to meet throughout the municipal year to coordinate activity to tackle anti-social behaviour and crime in the district. Some of the Safer Harlow Partnership member organisations include: Essex Police; the Fire Service; Essex County Council; Harlow Ethnic Minority Umbrella; The Probation Service; Rainbow Services and Safer Places.

All of the organisations that belong to the partnership support the four new priorities for 2025: acquisitive crime; county lines; serious violence; and violence against women and girls and domestic abuse. The priorities are determined by a strategic intelligence assessment as part of an evidence-led approach to reducing crime in Harlow.

There has been a large amount of activity undertaken by member organisations in the last year. Essex Police deployed officers to carry out a range of targeted activity to deter knife crime. A knife arch has been used in the Town Centre and main railway station on several occasions. Facial recognition technology has also been

trialled successfully, helping local police officers to identify suspected criminals and missing persons.

A major focus for the partnership has been the Clear, Hold, Build project in The Stow. Work undertaken by police officers as part of the 'Clear' phase led to several arrests to deal with certain criminal elements in the area. The project has now moved into the 'Hold' and 'Build' phases, which are aimed at building community resilience and making sure criminal elements do not return to The Stow. That is why the council injected an additional £100,000 into the project and set up a community hub in one of the shop front units.

The council's own community safety hub in the civic centre is increasingly well-used by Safer Harlow Partnership member organisations. Police officers regularly work from the hub – Fire and Probation Service staff have been offered desk space too. There has also been interest from the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System (ICB) team to work from the hub. The aim is to encourage closer working between Safer Harlow Partnership member organisations.

A grant, issued annually, of just over £24,000 for community safety initiatives issued by the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is making a difference. A media campaign set to launch this year for the local Women's Safety Charter has been allocated funding, and Rainbow Services were able to arrange workshops in schools in February this year to discuss gangs and serious violence. A range of crime prevention resources are being acquired for the council's Community Safety Team to conduct more public engagement events.

Both at the October 2024 and January 2025 meeting, there was a discussion about the future governance, structure and membership of the partnership. The focus was on how to better pool resources, share information and best work with victims of crime to deliver the right impact in the future.

Violent crime is currently a concern in the town. Preventing serious violence is a Safer Harlow Partnership priority and member organisations will continue to work together to look at new ways to combat it, including targeted high visibility patrols and increased community engagement.

The last municipal year has been a busy time for the partnership, despite crime falling overall by 12.5 per cent in the district, when compared with the last 12-month period, there is recognition that more needs to be done. Member organisations are committed to developing several joint initiatives in the next municipal year to provide greater reassurance to residents that tackling anti-social behaviour and crime both remain a high priority.

## **6 Essex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Danielle Brown**

The committee has been working in line with Essex County Council's joint health and wellbeing strategy which aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all ages, including reducing health inequalities. In the past year for Harlow this has included updates on PAH redevelopment, including site visits to understand challenges being faced and why a new hospital is needed. More widely the focus

has been on maternity services, county wide healthy weight strategy and hospital waiting times. The board works with local health and wellbeing board as well as other partners

## 7 Harlow Active – Danielle Brown

Chris has provided a list of projects under Harlow Active Partnership as below; this doesn't meet in same way that Harlow Creates, or HWB being groups do. It's delivered about £14k of physical activity across 10 or so projects this financial year in addition to the Strength and Balance contract and Place Partnership work. Chris has secured short of £3k for the next financial year but we would like to use this to enhance areas of need within the Place Partnership Budget like the Bounty Club Kit Shop and Active Lives Hub.

Chris has fed in to Active Essex that there is a need to work collaboratively to join the Place Partnership and Active Harlow networks together. There is a resource implication in joining everything together, though there is some post support included in Sport England bid, but we'll need to think about how this is done in a resource efficient manner in collaboration with Active Essex that goes beyond Place Partnership work.

| <b>Organisation</b>               | <b>Summary</b>  | <b>Amount £</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Glow Cheerleaders                 | Equipment for establishment of club   | 1,625           |
| St Clare Hospice                  | Gardening project   | 1,000           |
| Rainbow Services National Playday | Payment of physical activity provision for national playday                     | 1,000           |
| Tye Green Bowls Club              | Facility improvements   | 2,000           |
| CIA Fire and Security             | Church Langley gate sign-up   | 156             |
| Parkplay                          | Weekly free family play sessions at Long ley                                    | 2,000           |
| Gail Nichols                      | Equipment and delivery of physical activity sessions at Mark Hall Sports Centre | 1,000           |
| Harlow Running and Tri Club       | Payment of 2 coaches to become level 2 qualified                                | 1,500           |
| Harlow parkrun                    | Parking permits for core team volunteers  | 120             |
| Marie Bedford                     | Weekly seated yoga sessions   | 1,675           |
| Harlow Parkinson's Table Tennis   | Establishment of table tennis club for residents with Parkinson's               | 2,000           |
| Harlow Amateur Boxing club        | Additional equipment for neurodiversity boxing project                          | 314             |
| CIA Fire and Security             | Church Langley gate - service   | 552             |
| <b>Total</b>                      |   | <b>14,942</b>   |

## **8 Harlow Occupational Health Services – Tony Edwards**

Over the last year I have attended six meetings as a Council nominated Trustee of the Harlow Occupational Health Service.

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.

The Trust is currently undertaking a review of how the service is managed.

Please see the attached link which gives some details of the service

<https://www.hohs.org/>

## **9 St John's ARC – Sue Livings**

Chairman's report about St Johns Arts & Recreation for Harlow Council 24th March 2025

During the past year usage of the centre by a regular group of 15 organisations covering all age groups and types of activities, along with a wide range of our own events, many of which are music based and have included some aimed at entertaining children in the school holidays. When not being used by the regular groups, the building is available for private hire for parties and family events.

We hope to encourage some younger people to join our ARC committee from the groups. At the last Annual General Meeting Malcolm & Jane Quinton resigned from the committee, they had been involved with the ARC stretching from the acquisition of the lease on the disused St Johns Church to its present day operation as a Community Centre- some 45 years in total. I thanked them both on behalf of the ARC.

Along with other organisations we have to keep a on watch income and expenditure due to rising heating and lighting costs, but fortunately the number of bookings has increased since last year enabling the cost of running the ARC to be spread over a wider customer base. The money we have raised at our Quiz Nights has helped balance the books and an enjoyable evening had by all.

After some difficulties with the main hall heating system, we had to have two new boilers fitted in readiness for the 2024-5 winter but we have found there is a cold area near one of the exits so we are having to look into installing a storage heater to resolve the issues with a key or time switch control. We are grateful to a grant towards the cost of the boilers received from London Stansted Airport Community Fund.

After several years usage the 100 linkable chairs used in the main hall are failing and we are submitting applications for grants from various organisations and also looking at a formal appeal to our members to sponsor a chair, the funds generated would be added to any grants achieved. The chairs have to be linkable as they are used at public events like the concerts.

To help with publicity for the centre we are investigating methods used by other local organisations, as at the moment Facebook doesn't appear to work.

We thank all our volunteers and staff for their continued support at the ARC be it running events such as the Friday midday concerts, manning the refreshment counter or maintaining the grounds

We are grateful for the continued support and advice from Councillor Sue Livings at our committee meetings as the Harlow Council representative.

Elizabeth Cox

Chair