

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
TUESDAY 23rd APRIL 2024 at 7.15pm**

- Present:** Cllrs Calver, Fay, I Henderson, J Henderson, McLeod, Powell, Richardson, Todd and Wade
- Clerk:** Ms Lucy Ballard
- Chairman:** Cllr Fowler
- Also present:** 1 member of the public, 0 members of the press, Insp. Aaron Homatopoulos and PC Sarah Latchford from Tendring Community Policing Team and Steve Beel of Freeport East.

The Chairman welcomed members of the public as well as guest speakers, Insp. Homatopoulos, PC Latchford and Steve Beel.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Chable, Davidson, Morrison, Saunders and Smith
Absent – Cllr Armstrong

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Mrs Holbrook of Harwich & Kingsway Ward proposed the minutes as a true record and there being no other member of the public able to second the proposal, the chairman asked members if there were any objections to her signing them as a true record. With no objection, it was **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 14th March 2023 (previously circulated) be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

**BRIEFING FROM INSP. AARON HOMATOPOULOS AND PC LATCHFORD,
TENDRING COMMUNITY POLICING TEAM**

Cllr Fowler welcomed Insp. Homatopoulos (AH) and PC Sarah Latchford (SL) to the meeting.

AH reported that crimes as a whole were down 7.1%, which equated to 152 fewer incidences than for this time last year. He gave a breakdown of crime statistics in Tendring and Harwich (inc. Ramsey and Oakley). A number of crimes had seen a reduction in offences, including Anti-Social Behaviour (down 39% in Harwich and 42% in Tendring with 153 fewer incidents); violent crime (down 8.1%); vehicle crime (down 21%); burglary (down 16.9%); domestic abuse (down 74%) and hate crime (down 2.7%). Shoplifting offences saw a 40% increase as did drug offences, which were up 82%. AH confirmed that they only include crimes where they have investigated, stopped and found drugs and felt his team had been proactive at catching people which had led to the increase. He reported that there were a few extra officers on the team but that 133 people had been stopped by a single officer. He report that in an attempt to tackle shoplifting, the

'Shop Safe' initiative, which is a radio system where intel gets shared across all shop safe partners and the police, will be introduced in Harwich within the next few weeks. This allows crimes to be reported as they occur and is funded by the Police and Fire Crime Commissioner (PFCC). Local policing teams will be canvassing Harwich shops in next few weeks. Offensive weapons offenses are up by 3% (1 incident on last year). Operations Stronghold and Sceptre will be in force in the next month or so. 'Stronghold' looks to tackle recent issues and Sceptre concentrates on knife crime. The work on the new Harwich Police station is due to start in December. There is presently no contractor on board but they hope to make progress soon with works expected to be finished late 2025/2026. More officers are starting in July and September 2024 and there is a new PCSO who has come across from Frinton and Walton.

SL said that the new PCSO has settled in well and they are always looking to engage with the public. 24th-30th June is Response Policing Week with a 'Ride along' possible with the response team. SL talked about signing up to 'Dispatch', which is a weekly email that provides updates about what's going on and is deal for those not on social media. She left some flyers with the clerk.

Cllr I Henderson referred to the new police officers coming in and asked if they were additional to current numbers. AH said it's an overall increase of 1 since 1 is a replacement for an officer who left a few months ago. He is trying for another PCSO too.

Cllr Calver asked if there anything that the police feel had specifically attributed to the reductions in crime as detailed above. AH said visibility and a dedicated town team in Clacton, which meant that he could redistribute team members to cover other areas if needed. He said they are good with their data, identifying trends and tackling prolific offenders. Working closely with their partners has helped.

Cllr J Henderson asked about shoplifting at local supermarkets and whether this was being consistently reported to police when obvious theft has taken place. AH said that many offenders are shoplifting to fund drug habits but that the Shop Safe initiative will help to identify these crimes and report them.

The chairman thanked both AH and SL for their time.

BRIEFING FROM STEVE BEEL, FREEPORT EAST

Cllr Fowler welcomed Steve Beel (SB), CEO of Freeport East, who gave an update to those present. (See Appendix).

Freeports focus on certain areas of the country (mainly seaports) in order to attract jobs, as well as new industries and business (relating to trade and clean energy), support local people with skills and improve transport. There are 12 in the UK and there are tax reliefs for those operating in a Freeport area (a customs rules benefit).

Freeport East Ltd is a not-for-profit company and they don't own any land. They area a counterpart to central Government who provides funding enabling them to control activities locally. Five local authorities sit on the board along with universities and local business partners. The headquarters is based at Harwich International Station.

Freeport helps to bring forward development sites and attract industry to those sites.

SB talked about improving accessibility into certain kinds of jobs and the agencies they work with to achieve this. A key aspect is if they succeed in developing these sites, 100% of the business rates generated are kept locally and spent on local priorities. The forecast is hundreds of millions over 25 years.

In Harwich, a large part is around inward investment marketing with existing local businesses, such as RWE, as well as engaging with both national and international businesses. They work with British Embassies overseas too. They have set up a Clean Growth fund and an Innovation Skills Fund so far and are working on GRID investment as there is insufficient capacity to support these new (green) industries. They are also starting some work with Transport East to discuss rail investment and connectivity between Harwich and Felixstowe. They intend to work with businesses locally (Harwich Port) and are engaging with Government over Bathside Bay development. An event is planned around innovation clusters, working with the university and others to discuss skills and opportunities.

Cllr McLeod asked about the sustainability of these developments when there is much needed focus on the infrastructure (A120). He asked for pressure to be put on where possible. SB said profile of the area can be raised through Freeport East to open up funding opportunities.

Cllr Todd asked if the anticipated 13500 jobs would only be delivered at the end of the 25-year term. He asked when the works to the quay will be finished and when the jobs will be in place in the town?

SB said that the 13500 is a projection over the first decade, but in other areas in the region, they're already seeing large numbers of employment as a result of Freeport East status. In so far as the port development, the construction process is 2/3 years but it depends on who is attracted to the area (manufacturing possibly), but it's hard to say. Offshore wind support may pick up in the next 5-7 years.

Cllr Todd asked how new businesses can establish themselves at the port if it's ultimately intended to become a container port.

SB said there is a challenge with employment land but Bathside Bay site is a large area and therefore even if it is a container port, there are areas within it where facilities could be built and remain for the long term.

The Chairman thanked Mr Beel for his presentation.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Mrs Holbrook of Harwich & Kingsway Ward asked Steve Beel if they intend to go into the local schools and talk with students, especially those looking to take on apprenticeships. SB said yes. They've done an event in Clacton recently which went well and this is a big part of what they want to do. There are established programmes to get into schools and support apprenticeships.

Cllr I Henderson confirmed that there are now STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts and Maths) sessions to work with young people about opportunities for the future. Many industries want home-grown skills.

No further questions were taken from the public.

Cllr Fowler thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.07pm

CHAIRMAN Cllr P Morrison

DATE 22nd April 2025