



## COLCHESTER ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Minutes of the Colchester Association of Local Councils meeting held on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>. December 2015 at 7pm in the Marks Tey Village Hall

Present: Cllr John Gili-Ross (JGR) (Chairman), Robert Johnston Vice-Chairman (Myland), Simon Dougherty & Alan Frost (Abberton & Langenhoe), Chris Stevenson (West Bergholt), Nicki Matthews (East Donyland), Stephen Scrase (Wakes Colne), Malcolm Bartier (Copford with Easthorpe), Brian Hindley (Dedham), Alan Walker (Marks Tey), Lawrence Alexander (Fordham), David Smith (Messing-cum-Inworth). Kevin Money (Clerk)

- 1. Apologies for absence** were received from Mick Mead (Gt. Horkesley), Chris Boyce (Birch), Neil Lodge (Wivenhoe), Carol Sutton (Stanway), Sheila Beeton (Dedham).
- 2. The minutes of the meeting** held on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>. September 2015 were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.
- 3. Guest Speaker** – Emma Callaghan

JGR introduced Emma Callaghan, Manager from the Restorative Justice Hub Development in conjunction with the Police and Crime Commissioner. JGR explained that the Restorative Justice (RJ) is a new initiative that was trialled earlier this year and is to be rolled out to all districts. Emma will provide background information and indicate how the scheme has provided benefit to those who are the victims of crime.

Emma thanked JGR for the introduction and went on to say that the Restorative justice enables victims to meet or communicate with their offender to explain the real impact of the crime. This is part of a wider field called restorative practice. Restorative practice can be used anywhere to prevent conflict, build relationships and repair harm by enabling people to communicate effectively and positively. Restorative practice is increasingly being used in schools, children's services, workplaces, hospitals, communities and the criminal justice system. Restorative practice can involve both a proactive approach to preventing harm and conflict and activities that repair harm where conflicts have already arisen. Where the latter is required, a facilitated restorative meeting can be held. This enables individuals and groups to work together to improve their mutual understanding of an issue and jointly reach the best available solution. But in many cases a less formal approach, based on restorative principles, may be more appropriate. Restorative practice supports people to recognise that all of their activities affect others and that people are responsible for their choices and actions and can be held accountable for them. It enables people to reflect on how they interact with each other and consider how best to prevent harm and conflict.

The use of restorative practice in early intervention aims to keep young people out of the criminal justice system. This can include the use of restorative practice in schools, care homes and the community, as well as in crime prevention activity. By supporting challenging young people to deal with conflict in a positive and constructive way, restorative approaches can help to ensure that they are able to avoid contact with the criminal justice system. This both improves their life chances and reduces demands on the police. The use of restorative practice with young people is increasingly prevalent in care homes, where its benefits can be particularly clear. Young people in residential care are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, with incidents that take place in this setting more likely to be reported to the police. A restorative approach can ensure that incidents are dealt with in a way that resolves the situation positively without recourse to the police. In any setting involving children and young people, restorative

approaches teach an understanding of others' feelings and the ability to connect and communicate successfully. They enable young people to think for themselves about how to respond to challenging situations. And they enable young people to build trust and develop more mature responses to a difficult situation. Children are able to take these skills into adult life. Restorative practice in communities' resolves conflicts and disputes before they escalate into crime and is an effective approach to dealing with antisocial behaviour and neighbour disputes. It enables people to understand the impact of their behaviour on others. It delivers effective outcomes owned by the local community and creates stable, positive community environments. Restorative approaches in communities incorporate a range of models including community mediation, police and community support officers using restorative skills on the street and neighbourhood justice panels – an innovative, community-based delivery model being used across England and Wales. Neighbourhood justice panels are a form of restorative justice conferencing that involves trained volunteers from a local community facilitating meetings between victims and offenders for low level crime and antisocial behaviour. Referrals can come from police, local authorities and housing associations, among other agencies. Restorative practice can be used to build strong communities and to ensure that disputes and disagreements are dealt with positively and constructively. It can contribute to lower levels of crime and disorder and give communities an active role in resolving disputes where they do emerge. An increasing number of housing associations are using restorative practice to deal with neighbour disputes including noise nuisance, verbal abuse, harassment, children arguing, pet nuisance, damage to property, drunken behaviour, rubbish and fly-tipping, untidy gardens, intimidation and violence or threats of violence. Restorative practice is effective at both tackling new disputes and resolving conflicts which may have developed over many years. Evidence collected from housing providers indicates that 97% of antisocial behaviour cases are resolved without any legal action being taken. Restorative practice has the potential to be used in a high proportion of these cases and may be the only viable option to resolve the situation. Using restorative practice in neighbour disputes not only stops the conflict but can repair relationships. It does this by:

- Empowering neighbours to take control of their own conflict and find appropriate solutions.
- Giving neighbours the opportunity to talk openly in a calm environment.
- Giving the harmed neighbour an opportunity to explain how they have been affected and what needs to happen to make things better.

What offences can RJ be used for is a common question. The answer is that RJ can potentially be used for any type of crime. It can help victims of low level crime and people who have experienced the most serious offences. There are certain offences which can pose particular challenges for the restorative process, for example sexual offences, hate crime and domestic violence. However, restorative justice can still help victims of these offences. It is important that senior practitioners who have relevant skills and experience handle these types of cases.

Emma then was asked about the timescale from introduction to completion. She said that this process normally takes about 3-4 weeks. Emma concluded her presentation by saying that if anyone was interested in becoming a volunteer then they could contact her on 01245 291609 or email her at [restorativejustice@essex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:restorativejustice@essex.pnn.police.uk)

JGR thanked Emma for coming to the meeting and informing all present of the works undertaken by RJ.

JGR then went onto the next item on the agenda

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CALC Secretary – Kevin Money - Telephone – 01376 521616 e-mail: [calc.clerk@gmail.com](mailto:calc.clerk@gmail.com)  
postal address - 25 Boydin Close Witham Essex CM8 1PD

Chairman - John Gili-Ross - 01206 242236 or 07957804621 e-mail - [john.giliross@gmail.com](mailto:john.giliross@gmail.com)

#### **4. To receive reports:**

- a. Kevin Money gave the treasurers report.

The bank balance as at 30.11.15 was £1362.30p

All Councils have now paid their subscription, which means that CALC has a 100% membership.

#### **b. LHP report.**

The meeting was again postponed until January 2016. It appears that the LHP is not working well, especially in two areas, with a lack of resources appearing to be the main cause for postponement.

#### **c. Governance Board.**

Malcolm Bartier (MB) informed the meeting that Councillors must declare any interests it is now a criminal offence for not declaring such interests. MB advised Councils to regularly look at their Declaration of Interest form that their council had sent to CBC, giving high priority to Spouse and partner declarations.

#### **d. EALC – Brian Hindley.**

There have been 3 EALC Executive meetings. On 10.09.15 the NALC Direct Access Scheme was discussed. This scheme allows the larger Councils direct access to legal advice rather than directing queries via their local associations. It was voted that EALC support this initiative to allow Councils with either an electorate of 6,000 + or an annual budgeted income/spend of £250,000. This would bring another 20 Councils into the scheme from 12 currently in Essex. Friends of Brandon Grove in Thurrock had a public meeting on 12<sup>th</sup>. October 2015. EALC was requested to attend this meeting to provide information about the formation of a Parish Council. Brian Hindley attended this meeting together with JGR and Joy Darby. There was around 400 people attending and there was clearly a hidden agenda against the local Ward Councillor and the audience was against any opinions which may have had implication to residents. There was little room for sensible debate and the majority felt there was no room for the formation of a Parish Council.

A full program of EALC training had taken place and the Executive is very pleased with the work that the Parish sector has achieved. EALC had hosted a successful consultation meeting and PCC Nick Alston (NA) gave a presentation on Essex Rural Partnership. NA reiterated that Essex Police is one of the most efficient forces in the country, but had the second lowest Council tax in the country. NA is committed to Watch Schemes. The AGM of EALC was held on 24.09.15 and the meeting was well attended at which there was a briefing from the Deputy Chief Constable who described how future police reduced funding would affect policing, in particular, neighbourhood policing will be reduced. He did not project a healthy future as we have known it. A police officer "walking his beat" will become a rare sight. NA also projected a less rosy picture with concentration of police resources upon child sex abuse, domestic abuse and cyber-crime reflecting society needs. However, both the DCC and NA pledged Essex police's commitment to protecting the people of Essex. At the EALC Annual meeting on 19.11.15 membership of various committees was agreed. The financial position of EALC is healthy. EALC and NALC will be informing Councils shortly of their fees due in 2016.

#### **5. Information Sharing**

JGR read out the applications from TC and PC submitted to the CIF panel which met in November '15

and the amount that was awarded to each Council. There were 29 projects on the list and among those were some excellent projects. There was £120,000 allocated to Colchester projects. with some Councils doing better than others.

Fordham PC advised the meeting that following their trial of using Metro Bank for the Councils banking needs they had felt it was not fit for purpose and the Council was changing the banking arrangements.

RJ reminded all Councils to be vigilant with all planning applications where there was a possibility of impacting the existing Public Rights of Way or where cycle way schemes may be affected. Local CBC planners were not always aware of the impact some planning applications had on the above.

**6. The next CALC meeting** is Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>. March 2016 at Marks Tey Village Hall at 7pm

There being no further business the meeting was closed by JGR at 9pm

Signed.....Chairman : Dated 3<sup>rd</sup>. March 2016  
**John Gili-Ross**