

BERA E-NEWSLETTER 11th April 2019 –

www.bera.co.uk

(printable version of Newsletter is available soon on website if needed)

BERA 2019 Membership

Thank you very much to all of you who have paid your 2019 membership fee. It makes a big difference to what we are able to do in the community with regards to buying shrubs, trees, holding coffee mornings and providing Christmas decorations.

We will be changing the Which password during May and will notify members of the new details.

Reminders:

Which subscription logon details: Email or Username: burgesestate Password: BERAResidents

If any of you have taken photos locally that you would like displayed on the BERA website, please send them by email to: photos@bera.co.uk.

We have received some new photos which are now on the website www.bera.co.uk which you may like to look at.

BERA Coffee Morning - The next BERA sponsored coffee morning will be on **Thursday 18th April 2019** at The Methodist Church on the corner of Johnstone Road and The Broadway from 10am to midday (unless we advise you otherwise it is always on the 3rd Thursday of the month). Please come along for free tea/coffee and biscuits. We will be bringing along panic and personal alarms, contactless debit card blocking pouches, and will take orders for the car key signal blocking pouches.

1. Parking Meters in Thorpe Esplanade

We have recently chased up the Chief Executive of Southend Borough Council asking what is happening regarding our Stage 1 complaint dated 22nd November, 2018 about the parking meters that were installed in Thorpe Esplanade without following usual planning procedures. The matter is being looked into and we hope to hear back soon.

2. Verge Cutting

Note from BERA Chairman: We chased up about verge cutting, as we think they started cutting the grass too late which is not good enough, and will keep chasing them throughout the year. We recently received the following response:

The team that was seen recently at the West end of town was a small team cutting the A127 and main drags into Southend. We try to plan our cutting so that we can try to ensure the main routes in and out of town are cut prior to Bank Holiday, so with Easter just around the corner that's why part of the team were in the West of the town.

The remainder and bulk of the grass cutting team re-started cutting at the East end on Monday, through the Painters Estate Shoebury, and today working through Delaware and Saxon Garden's.

They will continue to work Westwards, ie North and South of Thorpe Bay station, Woodgrange Drive, Bourne's Green area, Southend central and so on.

This grass cutting route is cyclical and on average takes 15 -18 working days to work East to West, including the main roads and parks. However, as you will be aware at this time of year this can be heavily influenced by both the weather and growing conditions.

3. Nitrous Oxide Canisters

We are still getting reports of nitrous oxide canisters regularly being found around our area, with over 100 found in this week alone, and we are reporting this to the relevant authorities so they are aware of the substance abuse that is going on and where it is going on.

4. Southend NHW Crime Data (1st to 7th April 2019)

Ward	Reference	Offence Type	Reported Date	Committed From	Street	Town	MO
Thorpe	42/53150/19	Theft from a motor vehicle	05/04/2019 09:34	04/04/2019 22:00	Huntingdon Road	Southend-on-Sea	SUSPECT UNKNOWN HAS USED AN UNKNOWN IMPLEMENT TO SMASH THE WINDOW OF THE VICTIMS MITSUBISHI L200 AND REMOVED GBP6 WORTH OF CHANGE FROM WITHIN.
Thorpe	42/53494/19	Theft or Unauthorised Taking of a Pedal Cycle	04/04/2019 10:41	03/04/2019 13:53	Thorpe Hall Avenue	Southend-on-Sea	SUSPECT UNIDENTIFIED HAS REMOVED VICTIMS PEDAL CYCLE FROM THE LOCATION.
Thorpe	42/54471/19	Theft from the person of another	07/04/2019 13:50	06/04/2019 19:30	Thorpe Esplanade	Southend-on-Sea	SUSPECTS UNKNOWN STOLE THE VICTIMS MOBILE PHONE WHICH WAS INSIDE HER HANDBAG WHICH SHE LEFT ON THE TABLE AT A PRIVATE FUNCTION SHE ATTENDED WITH HER PARTNER.
Thorpe	42/54536/19	ASB - Nuisance	05/04/2019 21:37	05/04/2019 00:00	Lifstan Way	Southend-on-Sea	SUSPECTS UNIDENTIFIED RUNG THE FRONT DOOR BELL AT PROPERTY ADDRESS AND

ONE OF THE
SUSPECTS
UNKNOWN HAVE
KICKED THE
FRONT DOOR
WITH THEIR FOOT,
CAUSING NO
DAMAGE.

Ward	Reference	Offence Type	Reported Date	Committed From	Street	Town	MO
West Shoebury	42/51841/19	Other criminal damage to a dwelling (Under £5,000)	02/04/2019 20:10	02/04/2019 00:00	West Road	Southend-on-Sea	SUSPECTS UNIDENTIFIED HAVE CAUSED DAMAGE TO THE DOOR OF THE FLATS AFTER BEING CHALLENGED BY A TENANT DUE TO THE SUSPECTS ARGUING OUTSIDE THE PROPERTY.
West Shoebury	42/54012/19	Theft if not classified elsewhere	05/04/2019 12:21	03/04/2019 00:00	Blyth Avenue	Southend-on-Sea	SUSPECTS UNKNOWN REMOVED THE COMMUNAL METAL REFUSE BINS FROM THE LOCATION.

There was no reported crime for Southchurch during this period.

5. Here is a brief summary of the crime information for the past two months for Southend-on-Sea:

	January 2019	February 2019
All crime	282	274
Anti-social behaviour	55	55
Bicycle theft	0	3
Burglary	23	11
Criminal damage and arson	23	23
Drugs	8	11
Other crime	3	5
Other theft	15	12
Possession of weapons	1	1
Public order	14	12
Robbery	4	6
Shoplifting	12	12
Theft from the person	0	3
Vehicle crime	24	22
Violence and sexual offences	100	98

6. Warning after bogus taxman defrauds Southend woman of £2k

Trading Standards officers are urging residents to be vigilant against a “sophisticated and high pressure” scam that saw a bogus taxman dupe a Southend resident out of £2k of her savings.

The Kursaal resident, who works as a self-employed music teacher, received an automated phone call at around 2.30pm on 23rd March, saying that HMRC was filing a lawsuit against her for an unpaid tax debt and that she needed to speak to a case worker.

Her call was then transferred to a bogus HMRC officer, who told her that HMRC had audited her and secured an arrest warrant over a fake debt of more than £13,800. He said she could stop further actions if she made an immediate payment against the debt.

After more than two hours on the phone, she then transferred the money to the scammers. It was later that evening that she realised she had been conned and reported it to Action Fraud.

“I usually keep myself vigilant against scams but I hadn’t actually heard of this one and it was so convincing to begin with,” she said.

“It came at the perfect time for the scammers because I’d recently been in contact with HMRC about self-assessments, so it didn’t seem entirely out of the ordinary that they would be contacting me.

“They did a lot to keep me in a state of panic the whole time they were on the phone with me. At the time, I just wanted to stop the threat of being arrested for tax debt and I ended up overlooking a lot of red flags.”

“It may sound odd, but when I found out it was a scam, my immediate feeling was one of relief as I knew I wasn’t going to be arrested. That’s how shaken I was at the time. But I’m also kicking myself for having fallen for it.”

Last month, HMRC revealed that it received more than 60,000 reports of scam calls in the six months leading up to January 2019 – an increase of 360% compared to the previous six months. Many of them followed the pattern described by the Southend resident.

The Director of Public Protection at Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, said: “This is a sophisticated and high-pressure scam that has tricked at least one local resident out of her hard-earned savings.

“The reality is that there may be many other local people who have fallen victim to it whom we are simply unaware of.

“I strongly urge local people to be on guard against this scam and never to hand out bank details, PIN numbers or passwords over the phone.”

How the scam works

According to the website moneysavingexpert.com, victims of the scam have reported scammers ringing to tell them that they are suspected of tax fraud and are about to be arrested.

Calls often come from a number similar to an HMRC one. In some cases victims have reported scammers 'cloning' an HMRC number, so that a genuine HMRC number appears on the screen. This is known as 'number spoofing' and is something Action Fraud – the UK's national reporting centre for fraud – has previously warned about.

The fraudster will then ask their victim to confirm details, such as their name and postcode, before telling them how much they 'owe'. If challenged, fraudsters then begin to give elaborate threats, for example claiming that they are dispatching police officers to arrest them, or that they will freeze their passport – neither of which they can do.

Victims are then pressured into giving their card details, which enable the scammers to take money from their account.

How to protect yourself from scam calls

HMRC has issued the following guidance to people to stop them getting caught out:

- 1. Recognise the signs.** Genuine organisations like banks and HMRC will never contact you out of the blue to ask for your PIN, password or bank details.
- 2. Stay safe.** Don't give out private information, don't reply to text messages, don't download attachments and don't click on links in emails you weren't expecting.
- 3. Take action.** Forward suspicious emails and details of calls claiming to be from HMRC to phishing@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk and texts to 60599, or contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 if you suffer financial loss.

The [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website also has more info on how to avoid and report scams.

A video about the scam, produced by *Which?*, can be viewed [here](#):

7. (Linked to 6 above) - A resident received the following reply after reporting the email to HMRC:

Thank you for reporting the suspicious telephone call/message you received.

We are aware that some customers have received telephone calls claiming to be from HMRC requesting personal information or bank account details in order to receive a tax refund, demand money for an unpaid tax bill, or to inform you that HMRC are filing a lawsuit against you. The caller may state that you must make an immediate payment (using various methods including iTunes vouchers), and threatening police action.

If you cannot verify the identity of the person making the call you should not disclose your personal details. For clarification, go to <https://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc> and contact the relevant department.

If you have suffered financial loss, you should report this to Action Fraud - the UK's national fraud and cyber-crime reporting centre - you can call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 (Please note this number will be charged at your normal network rate). They open Monday to Friday, 09:00 - 18:00.

The online form can be accessed by visiting the following website:

<https://reporting.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting>

Click Continue As Guest -> Tick 'I Understand' and Continue -> Click 'a victim' on the Start Reporting page -> Scroll down to 'I can't find the relevant option' -> fill in the online form.

The callers use a variety of phone numbers. To help our investigations, please dial 1471 after the suspicious call (where possible) and make a note of the telephone number quoted (geographic charges may apply). If you have not already done so, please report full details of the scam by email to: phishing@hmrc.gov.uk <<mailto:phishing@hmrc.gov.uk>>, including the:

- * date and time of the suspicious call
- * phone number given by 1471 – if possible
- * customer's telephone number
- * brief description of the call

Your email address and phone number will be shared with other organizations if that's necessary to close down the scam.

You may also wish to consider contacting your telephone provider to request that any suspicious telephone numbers be investigated and blocked (not all companies provide this service and some may charge you for it).

HMRC provides additional security advice which can be found by following the link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phishing-and-bogus-emails-hm-revenue-and-customs-examples>

8. BT Scam

We have also been advised of a scam threatening to cut off emails. If you receive a call such as this please put the phone down. If you receive an email do not open it, just delete it.

9. The Silent Solution – dialling 999 then 55 when prompted when you are in imminent danger but unable to speak

A national campaign to raise awareness of a system to help people alert police when in imminent danger but unable to speak, is being launched this week by the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

The Silent Solution system enables a 999 caller who is too scared to make a noise or speak, to press 55 when prompted, to inform police they are in a genuine emergency.

The system is well-established but is only effective if the public know and understand how it works. It could, in extreme situations, potentially save a life.

The 'Make Yourself Heard' campaign has been launched to coincide with National Stalking Awareness Week. The family of murder victim Kerry Power, who was murdered by her ex-partner, support the publicity.

Prior to her murder, Kerry believed that if she made a silent 999 call she would not need to speak or make a noise for police to send assistance. This was incorrect and her call was

terminated without being put through to police. Her former partner, who had broken into her home when Kerry made the call, later rang police to admit he had strangled her.

It is not true that police will automatically attend if you make a silent 999 call. Callers need to listen and respond to questions and instructions, including by coughing or tapping the handset if possible or, if using a mobile phone by pressing 55 when prompted by the automated Silent Solution system.

10. All Ears – Living with Hearing Loss

Southend University Hospital

Monday 29th April 2019

A free to attend 'All Ears' event will take place at Southend University Hospital Education Centre, in the Seminar Room from 15.00-17.00 hours, inviting people with hearing loss to take part.

People who are new to NHS hearing aids will find it particularly beneficial, though established users, friends and carer's are welcome to attend and find out more about the services and help available to them.

The event, planned by Hearing Help Essex, in co-operation with Southend University Hospital Audiology Team are a registered not for profit Charity that assists people with acquired hearing loss. There are more than 11 million people in the UK with some degree of hearing decline and a quarter of a million people in Essex alone have some degree of hearing loss, making day-to-day communication far less easy.

Practical information, advice and guidance will be given on how to manage hearing loss, adjust to wearing NHS hearing aids, acclimatising to regular use and the opportunity to learn more about assistive equipment and the benefits of technology that can really help, meet others and share experiences.

Places are limited and must be booked in advance.

It's easy to make a reservation:

Contact 01245 496347 or Text 07950 406173, or

Email: help@hearinghelpessex.org.uk

Hearing Help Essex is committed in making a provision of support that will help people with hearing loss to make life easier. www.hearinghelpessex.org.uk

Reg. Charity Number: 1113498

Further All Ears events will also be taking place in 2019 and the next session will be held on the 10th June 2019.

11. Pavement repairs

We have had a resident contact our Chairman concerning paving slabs being replaced with bitmac. It appears the council is once again reverting back to bad practice when repairing our paving slabs. We were assured in previous conversations that this would only be a temporary measure to make the area safe until a permanent repair, ie replacing the paving slabs, was carried out. We have now had a response back from the council that this is their preferred way forward – having bitmac rather than a proper repair. Once again this is another fight that the association will take on to ensure that where necessary our paving slabs are replaced with paving slabs. Money, I can assure you is available in the council budgets to do this job properly, so the council should make sure that our environment is properly maintained.

12. Fish and chips finally back on menu 14 years after fire guts world's longest pier

We have been informed by the council that fish and chips are back on the menu on the world's longest pleasure pier for the first time since it was devastated by fire nearly 14 years ago.

From this week, visitors to Southend Pier will be able to pick up the seaside staple from a brightly coloured beach hut at the pier head – a reward, which for insurance reasons, has long evaded those keen to walk the 1.3-mile long superstructure.

Fire last struck Southend Pier in October 2005 and a popular pub serving fish and chips was among the attractions lost to the flames.

But thanks to the installation of a high-tech sprinkler, fire main and alarms - combined with advances in fryer technology - fire experts last year deemed it safe to get the fryers going again.

They will be selling cod, scampi, chicken bites, sausage and a selection of pies – all served with chips – as well as hot and cold drinks. The hut will be open every day the pier is open until the end of the visitor season.

For pier opening times, please visit www.southend.gov.uk/pier

Pictures: You can download pictures of Southend Pier Fish and Chips [here](#).