

Bera AGM 28th March 2017

St Augustines Church SS1

Meeting opens at 8:00pm

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies from Committee members: Debbie Fuller, David & Margaret Harper, Ken Swain

2. Minutes of last meeting

Passed

3. Matters arising

No matters arising

4. Talk by Adam Eckley, Acting Chief Fire Officer

Adam Eckley has been in the Fire Service for 32 years, the last 10 in Essex, and the last 3 as Acting Chief Fire Officer. He believes people underestimate the role of the Fire Service and are unaware how their service has changed.

Today there are 50 fire station across the county, most of which were built in the 1950's and 60's and the service they were designed for is not necessarily the service we need today. During the 1980's they were responding to fires but nowadays they deal with more road traffic collisions than fires. Changes were made in the 1990's and they started educating people about how to prevent fires in the home, which has been very successful and there has been a 45% reduction in the number of cases they attend. Unfortunately, there has been an increase in the number of road traffic collisions but the number killed or badly hurt has remained steady. Presently there are 71 fire engines (although this will be reduced to 70) and despite having to respond to a greater range of incidents such as flooding (which they need boats for), collapsed buildings, animal rescues, terrorist attacks (need ballistic clothing) etc there is the problem of reduced funding. They currently have a £70m budget and 1,500 staff across the county.

The Fire Service also go into schools, speaking to 130,000 children each year to make them fire aware and fire safe and have also had success in talking to children on the verge of being excluded from school, and parents and children with dysfunctional relationships, to influence

behaviour. They have also been into Chelmsford prison, speaking with young men about to be released, giving advice.

80% of the population have a working smoke alarm but they want every home in the county to have one. They obviously don't prevent fires but will bring a fire to your attention for you to deal with or evacuate the building. The Fire Service offer a smoke alarm fitting service for free and are keen to find out who is at risk, why they are at risk, and how they can be helped. 8 out of 10 who die in fires in the community are over the age of 60 so if you are aware of any neighbours or relatives without a smoke alarm please put them in touch with the Fire Service.

Q. Theo Steel – What are the trends on flooding, this follows storms in the area

A. Upwards – there is more flooding. They have high volume pumping and internal boat capability. The east coast flooding is the biggest risk now

Q. The drains are not being looked after by the water companies

A. There is a multi-agency response and they use volunteers to clear gullies and they can bring influence to bear on local flooding

Ron: The drains are cleaned 4 times a year and it is expected that Anglian Water will put in more drainage in the future as the town grows.

Q. Peter Jefferies – Can you get cost recovery through insurance companies?

A. No, not allowed to do that or charge for statutory obligations they attend.

Q. Can pressure be put on the government to change this?

A. Yes

Q. Martin Terry – He has written to Anglian Water. They promised to undertake drainage review in the area. Flooding in coastal area tends to be flash floods. Anglian Water admitted in letters to residents that flooding is to be expected. Can you put any pressure on them?

A. The pressure they can bring to bear is small. DEFRA deals with flooding, there is no statutory obligation from the Fire Service. Their obligation is to save lives and get people to vacate if at risk.

5. Talk by Jeremy Martin from Southend Energy to discuss why prices are going up

Jeremy said he would be discussing the enormous changes in energy markets and what is coming in the future. The Council market and look after the energy scheme while OVO work on the cost of the service. 1/10 customers change their supplier yearly after checking prices and this is recommended, although comparison sites such as uSwitch may not show all deals that are available, just the ones they get paid by. The only company that shows all suppliers and their tariffs is Which. 2/3 consumers never switched or had only done so once meaning the vast majority of consumers don't get a good deal. The big 6 tend to have a low fixed price for the first year but then the price moves up significantly. Southend Energy have a fixed price that tends to move up gradually so if you don't plan to change your supplier regularly they may be competitive, and at times they are the cheapest. Prices last year were going down. This year they are going up and according to the press this is due to currency movement and OPEC not supplying so much oil. There have also been changes to the number of tariffs that can be offered. Previously this was 4 but now there is no limit, and energy companies can subsidise rates where they couldn't before. This is causing customers to distrust energy companies and the market is becoming more confusing.

Over the next 30 years every gas pipe in the county will be replaced and the cost of doing this will come through in charges to customers. The prices look to rise. You can buy bundle services to allow you to monitor the appliances you have on during the day.

Q: Freddie Dawkins – I am having a smart meter fitted. Will it deliver other services in the future?

A: Yes and No. The meter is read every half an hour so it will mean you are billed more accurately, saving you money.

Q: Stan Smith – Has a smart meter. Is it true if you have one with a company, then you can't switch to another company.

A: Yes. Early stage 1990s technology is being fitted at the moment. 2nd phase not yet started and they don't have a start date. Phase 1 will have to be switched.

Q: Will I need a new meter

A: Depends which one they put in. Some will need upgrading, some wont.

Q: Ron: Thinks there is poor communication and response when customers call Southend Energy. It is very much take it or leave it.

A: Sorry about that. The staff aren't allowed to negotiate on the tariff (Ofgen rules) but they should be polite and explain things clearly.

Q: Mike Stafford: Do you have to be a member of Which to find out the best tariff using their service.

A: Think so.

It was mentioned that you can read copies of Which at the library.

Q: Ken Pitcher used Uswitch and got a good deal. Can the price be changed if you agree a fixed price contract?

A: No but they may charge you if you want to move to another company. Energy companies must put on their bill if they have a cheaper deal for you. They must also write and tell you if you are coming to the end of your contract.

Jeremy suggested people write the date their contract ends in their diary and review it 6 weeks in advance.

Q: Roy Goddard: Is there an advantage to having a smart meter?

A: Depends on individuals. Some people are frightened how fast the meter goes round and put it in a drawer but if you work out what is using a lot of power eg oven or kettle and change how you use it, it can benefit you. It can usually save you about 5-10% over a year.

6. Freddie Dawkins – Open gardens

Freddie gave out leaflets and advised that any money raised would go to The Tram Stop Shelter project. He wants people to open their gardens on June 17th from 1.30-4.30 and is hoping for good weather. He would like a range of gardens and they don't have to have a perfect lawn or shrubs, just be interesting. He has 4 gardens so far and wants about 7. Morleys Nursery has offered strong support and given a £50 voucher and free plants. Members were advised to contact him if interested.

7. Ron – Road access

Roadworks at Kent Elms should come to an end at the end of the month. The year after next the Bell junction will be updated. Once Fossetts Way developed, it is hoped there will be an inner ring road. Up to 2030

it seems there are going to be short term fixes. We see speeding, new houses being built and many more cars on the road.

8. Talk re Southend A&E situation - Dr Ronan Fenton from Broomfield Hospital

There are changes taking place to primary care and mental health as well as hospitals. Southend is a great hospital and firstly there are no plans to close the A&E. There are currently 5 options being considered, none of which involve closing A&E (at the time of writing this, there were only 2 options left). It is good to see NHS social care, community provision, mental health and GPs working together to improve care. It is proposed that each hospital (Southend/Broomfield/Basildon) have 24-hour A&E, but 1 hospital has a super A&E for specialist services and this is likely to be Basildon. The other hospitals may have improved services in surgical, medical, paediatric units and Southend could be for operations for cancer – it could be the best in the country. This would benefit patient care. The plans for these changes won't be on a set date. They will be tested many times and put in place over time, which could take years.

Patients would go to hospital, be assessed and stabilised and then moved to a specialist treatment hospital. After a road accident patient may go by road or air to the hospital with the best treatment available rather than the nearest, this may even be in London.

Q. James Moyies – I am Chair of health scrutiny and have sat in on 50 meetings. Essex is in trouble. There is a £200m hole in the budget and it can't continue. There are good and bad GP services. In the future if you need A&E you will go straight to Southend. They decide whether to move you. If you have a stroke in Shoeburyness you will go to Basildon which will take extra time which is a worry. Southend Hospital will be downgraded and there will be worries for families having to travel to hospitals far away. There are not enough trained Drs and nurses and consultant vacancies in Southend are massive. We need evidence.

A. The evidence we have puts us in the direction we are going. Everyone is doing the best they can but the situation is getting worse and worse. Finance is an issue. The decision on strokes has not been made yet. Prevention is down to us, looking after ourselves and our neighbours.

Ron: In 30-50 years time Southend will be a City. What is proposed is short term. Will ambulances be available nearby? Will there be enough? This is a short-term view as Southend will need a massive hospital in the area.

A. These plans are projected for the future. People aren't worried about the distance, it's the time it takes to get to hospital. A seriously urgently ill person will be within 45 minutes of a hospital wherever they are with blue light services. The public are very good at moving out the way.

9. Tram Stop update – Mike Stafford

The Tram Stop Project is moving on nicely towards building a community shelter. They plan to get 3 quotes for this. They have raised £65,000, are going for a lottery grant and applying for full planning. If you want further information please look on the BERA website.

10. Treasurers Report – Mike Stafford

The account balance is higher than last year as the council has planted £2,000 worth of trees and shrubs and they haven't put the bill in yet. There will be shrubs planted around the church which BERA are funding. The Christmas decorations have been poor the last 2 years and so BERA are going to use the company that put up lights in other villages and towns nearby.

The accounts were proposed and seconded.

11. Chairs report

Ron thanked Mike for all his help. Ron mentioned that there was no power to the tree in The Broadway for the Christmas Lights this year but he is assured it is there now. This year 580 have joined so far and there are another 20 or so membership renewals at home. Ron hopes everyone is enjoying reading the e-newsletters and explained that as we get information we pass it on.

Regarding the police, Ron advised that despite funding cuts the area is still safe so keep walking about. BERA have panic and personal alarms available if people want them. If you are the victim of crime please report it or statistics will show crime is going down. Keep in touch with your neighbours and tell them if you see anything suspicious.

Litter and dogs mess are a problem. Report any problems you have on this subject to 01702 215006. The more it is reported, the more action will be taken.

11. Re-election of Committee members

Ron Woodley
Debbie Fuller
David and Margaret Harper

This was proposed and seconded

Catherine Marks is stepping down after 13/14 years. Ron thanked her for all her hard work over that time.

Election of new Committee members

Freddie Dawkins
Cecily Bonallack
Theo Steel
Ken Swain
Alan Meredith
John Sykes
Cliff White

This was proposed and seconded.

12. AOB

If anyone is able to help deliver newsletters or leaflets please let us know.

The next BERA sponsored coffee morning will be on 20th April.

13. Refreshments

Meeting closes at 21:50 with refreshments served.