



**Huw Merriman MP** opened the evening with a look back at his first year as our MP and gave his thoughts on local policing. He was keen to emphasise that what people think of, and almost dismiss, as scams regarding technology, is in fact attempted fraud. He urged, on behalf of the police, that people report incidences they experience to the police to help them fight it.

**Q: Paul Courtel:** Described a fraudulent call that was aimed at gaining access to his computer and asked whether there is any action that can be taken in such cases when the caller's number is withheld,

**A:** Yes there is value in reporting such cases even without the number to identify the callers as it helps the police to build up an understanding of the crimes being committed.

### **Katy Bourne, Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Sylvia Sigfusdottir and Joe Simmonds of the Sussex Youth Commission**

Slides are available on the Forum's web site via this link:

<https://bexhilltownforum.co.uk/meeting-records/>

**Q: Frank Moore:** Why is there only one police constable in Bexhill? Battle is better served than we are.

**A:** Bexhill is fully policed and no better off than other areas.

**Q: Robert Hadland:** As Commissioner, what influence do you have over parking and other traffic offences?

**A:** The local council are well aware of the police position on this. Of the 650 local councils in the country only 17 have not taken over responsibility for parking, which puts us in the minority. Parking should not be a criminal offence, it is a waste of police resources and the council should take it on. An issue that stands in the way is that money taken from parking fines would not come back to the council despite their having to meet the cost of parking control. The Chief Constable is 100% in favour of decriminalisation.

**Q: Barbara Eckland:** Stop and search was mentioned as a topic addressed by the youth commission – what other areas would the young people like the police to discuss?

**A:** How the police approach young people; hate crime; lack of clarity regarding the law and technology.

- Q:** **Robert Hadland:** Mention was made of 'attitude of mind' – have the young people found that the police attitude to them has also modified?
- A:** Having thought at first that police are scary, the young people came to understand that the police are regular people who do understand the young and want to protect them – young people misunderstand them. They now feel able to approach police officers and talk easily with them – they wish other youngsters could learn the same.
- Q:** **Lindsay Sprott:** Was very happy to hear what the young people had been doing and wondered whether the police had shared with them their own challenges so they could pass them back to their peers. Can more be done in schools to teach children about the police in a positive way?
- A:** Yes, it has been two-way activity. They have talked with youngsters about treating the police with respect and learnt that young people on drugs don't understand that the police are there to help them.

### **Chief Inspector Rosie Ross**

Slides from CI Ross's talk and a document about Sussex policing are available on the Forum's web site via this link: <https://bexhilltownforum.co.uk/meeting-records/>

**Q:** **Christine Byrne:** Is there a police address available for people who are not on-line to write to?

**A:** Yes there is – the Forum will advise it.

The address is:

Neighbourhood Policing Team

Terminus Rd,

Bexhill-on-Sea

TN39 3NR

**Q:** **Christa Waller:** It is reported that drugs gangs are coming to the South Coast – how will the police stop them?

**A:** Undercover work, surveillance and intelligence gathering are always under way, working towards arrests and getting people to court as soon as possible. However, it is also important not to criminalise young people who are vulnerable. Prevention is preferable to enforcement and the vulnerable are targeted by the police for prevention.

**Q: David Wallis:** Has anyone worked out the potential for privatising the control of traffic to manage street parking? Has any attempt been made to reduce the quantity of admin for officers when a crime is reported - would it be better done by a clerical assistant – would that be a better use of resources?

**A:** As has been said, the police are clear on where they stand regarding parking (see comments above). We have had discussions with RDC and ESCC and are looking to go forward as suggested. It is the councils' decision.

Admin for police officers has been reduced but handing it to a clerical assistant would still require the time of the officer to brief the clerk.

**Q: Peter Gadsden:** Bexhill is a safe place but the anti-social behaviour of unsafe parking is a great concern. Some parking is very dangerous and it is time something was done about it. Someone needs to get their act together and do something.

**A:** This is being progressed.

**Q: Lindsay Sprott:** Technology can be used for feedback and community participation. Calling 101 is a very slow process – could technology not be used to improve responses and updates for those calling it and so encourage community engagement?

**A:** Feedback is important and we are aware of the need – in fact it is something Katy is enthusiastic about.

**Q: Charles Clark:** Has a lot of sympathy with the police and feels that PCSOs were put through a bad time having to re-apply for their jobs, which are very challenging. Surely we should be recruiting more PCSOs?

**A:** Suggestion noted.

**Q: Robert Hadland:** People don't expect to be caught for illegal parking and so continue to do it. Would it not be better to have occasional blitzes on parking to discourage them?

**A:** It is not possible, as explained earlier.

**Q: Ted Haslett:** There has been a large lorry with people living in it on the sea front since March. It has no MOT but we are told it is not illegal until it moves.

**A:** This needs to be followed up separately.

**Q: Sara Edmondson:** Described a potential crime where parking with abandon might have led to a very nasty incident.

**A:** Noted.

## **Karen Coughlan, Street Pastors**

This link will take you to the Bexhill Street Pastors website:

<http://streetpastors.org/locations/bexhill/>

**Q: Laurence Keeley:** Do you find there is a pattern, ie the same people repeatedly needing you? As a county councillor I would prefer not to see buildings sold off when they could be used as safe havens.

**A:** Because of the homeless situation in Bexhill we looking to set up a new group – let's discuss later.

**Q: We are sorry but we did not catch this questioner's name:** Is aware of a similar group in Redcar, Redcar Beacons, and aware of the excellent work done. Thank you.

**Q: Edward Echlin:** Thanks for all the good work you do. Is there some way to help the needy with continuous help?

**A:** Not really – we go out only on Friday and Saturday nights, fulfilling specific needs. Teams do report to each other for continuity. We have helped some young people for four or five years and built relationships with them – they call us directly for help. Businesses also call on us.

**Q: John Wilson:** What care is available for those who need it?

**A:** There are quite a few homes around Bexhill that cater for mental health needs. Please always call the police when you see a need – don't leave the vulnerable without help.

**Q: Jan Walker:** Where does your funding come from?

**A:** We pursue fund raising in every way possible but always need more help. The council and police do help. We are all volunteers and pastors even pay for their own training.

## **Updates (Theresa Stanbridge)**

### **Wetherspoons**

Last November we heard that Wetherspoons would be opening about now but, as we are all aware, they haven't started work yet.

When planning permission was granted in May 2015 there were a number of conditions set, conditions designed to ensure that the results are right for Bexhill. It appears that Wetherspoons are still working on meeting these conditions. When they have done so they will be able to start the redevelopment of the site.

### **East Parade**

Most people are probably aware of the surveys that were carried out at the start of the year into what people would want for the East Parade. The information gathered was fed into a bid for lottery funding to support the work that needs to be done to protect this important part of Bexhill's heritage.

The bid was in competition with eight others and only two of them were successful.

While ours did not succeed this time, it was not a complete failure. Feedback was that it should be resubmitted with certain amendments and enhancements included that would give it a better chance of convincing the committee. This is now under way and it will be resubmitted next week for a hearing in December.

Probably the most important element to make clear to everyone is that the proposals have the preservation of the Victorian shelters at their heart with the intention that they be restored.

### **Committee**

Finally, I would like to say goodbye and sincere thanks to Sylvia Sigfusdottir who has had excellent results in her A levels and is now off to London Metropolitan University. At just 18 years of age Sylvia has already put a great deal of work into the community including projects with the Police Commissioner, as we heard earlier, the Youth Council and the Forum. This is a young lady with a great future ahead of her and the committee thank her very much for her support over the years. Thank you Sylvia.

And I am also saying goodbye. I have had a very interesting two years on the committee but am unable to continue.

I wish the very best to the new committee members, Christine and Peter, and to the six members who are continuing.

We need to recognise how lucky we are to have eight willing volunteers, not something that many committees enjoy. I hope that Bexhill will support them fully over the next two years.

### **Local Governance Review (an additional update)**

The report starting off the governance review was presented to Cabinet on Monday 5 September. The papers can be seen at:

<http://www.rother.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=26404&p=0>

and

<http://www.rother.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=26448&p=0>

### **Date of next forum:**

**The date of the next forum will be advised when it has been set**