

Member Champion – Community Safety Name: Chris Gibbings

Key activities involved with since 2009 annual council appointment

Member and Deputy Chairman of the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership. Attended all their meetings at Knowle and Tiverton. This group involve Police, Fire Brigade, Social Services, Probation Service and many others in working together to reduce Crime and Disorder.

The above body's elected representative to the Devon wide "Safer Devon Partnership". I attended all their meetings. You will remember that last year I was one of the prime movers in the scrapping of the executive of this committee, on which I sat, because it was not involved in making decisions, merely, in my view, a talking shop. As a result I was able to attend and vote on where government grant money was allocated to assist in the reduction of Crime and Disorder throughout Devon. East Devon got its share as a result of a fine case made by the Community Safety Officer Gerry Moore, thank you Gerry. I subsequently had input in the way these grants are made and changes will be implemented in the 2010/11 grants meetings. A new Chairman is to be appointed in 2010 but that is no slight in the outgoing chairman who has done a first class job in modernising they way this committee works.

Continued involvement with the Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy introduced by me to and adopted by the Council last year. This year I promoted training of Directors, Heads and Middle Managers and all of them have now attended courses. I wish to thank Karen Jenkins for her support and hard work in organising this and her continuing commitment to this subject. I now want to see that training implemented for the good of EDDC staff.

I attended a number of Local Action Group meetings (they feed into the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership) and gained a better feeling for local concerns. I was able to talk at grass roots level with Police, Social Services etc. and take that information to the highest level.

Continued the liaison with Licensing on the reduction of Anti Social Behaviour and I am now the Vice Chairman of Licensing. The training courses, paid for by EDDC, that I had to attend in order to serve on the Licensing Committee, were also very useful in my Community Safety Roll. In order to have a deeper understanding of the subject however, I took an additional course and an exam in licensing at my own expense, leading to me now holding a "Personal alcohol Licence". As I don't actually sell alcohol there is no conflict of interest.

Attended meetings of local Parish Councils, where requested, to discuss them setting up an "Emergency Plan" and obtained the assistance of Devon County Council Emergency Planning Officer and DCC literature on this subject. It is Government Policy that Parish Councils should consider having an emergency plan that dovetails with District and County plans and these should be in place by 2011.

In late February I attended a meeting between the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Constable where he requested joint working on press releases etc. It appears Devon and Cornwall Police are 3rd in the Country on Crime and Disorder/Anti Social Behaviour levels but bottom of 42 forces in a Home Office Survey on the perception of Crime and Anti Social Behaviour. With the agreement of the Communications Portfolio holder and Chief Executive I arranged for a meeting to be held between our Press Officer and that of the Police with a view to regular such meetings taking place in order to assist in reversing this perception. I intend to attend the first few meetings

On Friday 26th February I attended a conference called by the Chief Constable, attended by members of the Police Authority, senior Police Officers, representatives from all the Councils in Devon and Cornwall and Ian Acheson Director of Safer Communities, Government Office for the South West. The subject was "Improving Public Confidence – A partnership response". We as a Council have a statutory responsibility in assisting in the reduction of Crime and Disorder/Anti Social Behaviour and I am satisfied we are doing this well but together we are obviously not getting the message across to the public just how safe Devon and Cornwall and particularly East Devon is. It is important to our tourist trade that people feel safe as well as being safe and with that in mind I have asked the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if he would allow an address to the Committee by Tanya Croft, Head of Corporate Communications Devon and Cornwall Constabulary. He has agreed to make such an invitation when the Committee next discuss Crime and Disorder,

Many thanks to Peter Jeffs, Corporate Director, for his support, advice and facilitation in respect of many if not all of the above activities.

Conferences/Workshops - if attended and their benefits

With our Health and Safety Officer, Stephen Cross, I attended two full day conferences/workshops on "Health and Safety" thus increasing my awareness of our responsibilities as Councillors. This resulted in a presentation by him to the Audit and Governance Committee (of which I am a member) and a few slightly shocked members when they realised their responsibilities in this area. Diana Vernon has recently sent an e-mail flagging up a responsibility in respect of fire safety in our properties. This is a subject we must keep pace with so we don't end up being faced with a considerable claim for damages if things go wrong

Partnership Working:

See above

Future plans – what are your aims/work programme for the year to come:

I fear I am running out of new ideas so would be grateful for any input; it is always difficult to continue at the pace one sets at the beginning of any project or job.

I hope to extend Domestic Violence and abuse training to supervisor/team leader level if and when budgets permit. This will enhance our commitment to our staff and as has been found in other bodies, help reduce short term sickness problems. This training could therefore be self financing. In 2010 through the good offices of Karen Jenkins we will be sending out a questionnaire to all staff to identify levels of Domestic Violence being experienced in EDDC. This will be based on a model used at Devon County Council. I will liaise with senior officers to ensure any information obtained will be acted on, not just filed.

I am impressed at the increased awareness within the Council (Members and Officers) of "Champions" and what they do. I am now mostly "in the loop" with any safety matters affecting EDDC although it has been a struggle to get to this position. I think there is an ongoing battle here for some Champions and the formal attachment of a "Champion" to a Portfolio holder may be of assistance to some. I know that without the help, support and advice of Cllr Jill Elson, Portfolio holder Communities, my job would have been much more difficult so my final thanks must go to her.