

Castle Point Public Meeting – Tuesday October 18, 2016

District Profile

Castle Point is a small borough covering an area measuring approximately 17 square miles, which is located in south Essex at the heart of the Thames Gateway. Castle Point is bordered by Basildon to the west and Southend to the east. Just over 60% of the land area in Castle Point is designated as 'Green Belt' and there are a number of important wildlife areas in the borough.

Castle Point comprises: Benfleet, Hadleigh, Thundersley and Canvey Island. The percentage of the population's 89,400 people living within these four areas is as follows:

Benfleet:	22%
Hadleigh:	14%
Thundersley:	21%
Canvey Island:	43%

Castle Point maintains a very high level of owner-occupied accommodation at 82.9%, which is significantly above the national average. However, this proportion has decreased by 5.6% compared to 2001, with a corresponding increase in private rented accommodation. The proportion of social housing in Castle Point is very small, at approximately 1,550 homes.

Within the borough, the proportion of people over the age of 65 is expected to increase to 30% by 2030. Young people (under 20 years) will continue to make up over 20% of the population. The under-15 age group is expected to decrease by 6% over the next five years.

The diversity of the population in Castle Point is not extensive. Approximately 95% of the population regards itself as 'White British'. The next highest ethnic group is 'Asian' at about 1.7% of the population. There are no particular concentrations of ethnic minority groups within the borough.

Hadleigh Country Park is a popular scenic location and overlooks the Thames Estuary. It is visited by both local residents and visitors from outside the borough. It is also the site of the ruins of Hadleigh Castle which was built during the 13th Century. The castle remains a popular site for visitors and the park was used during the 2012 Olympics for mountain bike racing. The facility is now open to the public.

West Canvey Marshes is situated on Canvey Island and has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Partnership work continues between Essex Police, Castle Point Borough Council, the RSPB and Natural England to maintain and secure this site.

Canvey Island has a sizeable tourist population during the summer due to its seaside location and has two very large “caravan” sites.

The first of these is “Kings”, which is exclusively for permanent residents who are over 50. The site is gated, with very secure access and almost no reported crime. The residential, properties are semi-permanent chalets rather than caravans. There are approximately 800 of these and they are priced above similar residential properties on the island.

The second is Thorney Bay Caravan Park, which contains a wide mix of residents, including: summer season tourists who bought plots many years ago, rented plots hired direct from the site, and permanent residents. Significant partnership work has been necessary to reduce the number of incidents at this location, which include: domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and criminal offences committed by a small cohort of transient residents. It is estimated there are about 840 plots on this site, 600 of which are rented.

Policing Structure and Resources

The borough of Castle Point forms half of the Rochford and Castle Point police district. Rochford and Castle Point police district, together with the Basildon and Southend police districts, make up the ‘South’ Local Policing Area (LPA).

Community Policing Team (CPT)

Castle Point consists of four neighbourhoods: Benfleet, Hadleigh, Thundersley and Canvey Island. The Castle Point and Rochford Community Policing Team (CPT) comprises an Inspector, 2 sergeants, 7 constables (which include a children and young person’s officer) and 6 police community support officers (PCSOs). The team are supported by six special constables and six ‘Active Citizen’ volunteers.

‘Active Citizen’ volunteers deploy within the community on crime prevention initiatives such as leaflet drops. They have provided high visibility in “hot spot” dwelling burglary areas, distributed crime prevention advice aimed at vulnerable people in supermarkets (purse thefts) and conducted shop visits, as it is coming up to Halloween, regarding the sale of eggs and fireworks.

The constables and support officers remain a point of contact for the community and work towards delivering the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) plan. There is one CSP for Castle Point and Rochford and its objectives are to: safeguard vulnerable people, reduce acquisitive crime (primarily burglary, robbery and vehicle crime) and to reduce ASB.

Officers also focus on the force control strategy and nominated officers are the single point of contact with regards to child sexual exploitation, immigration/modern slavery, street gangs (drugs and related violence), acquisitive crime and ASB.

Community policing officers are now based solely in Rayleigh police station, but cover both districts.

Essex Police has a very healthy working relationship with Castle Point Borough Council and there is extensive joint working and co-operation. The team are seeking to establish a physical “hub” location outside the police station where they will work together with partners to maximise the effectiveness of the numerous agencies who have an interest in reducing crime and ASB. This location is still to be decided, but discussion has taken place with both councils.

The CPT has also set up a brand new referral process with Castle Point Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS) for victims of crime who are in some way vulnerable. This process has been in place since mid-August and since launch 18 individuals have been formally referred for additional help and support.

Local Policing Teams (LPTs)

The Local Policing Teams (LPTs) provide a 24/7 service from within the district, attending emergency and routine calls from the community. The LPTs are co-located at Canvey and Rayleigh police stations and comprise three Inspectors, six sergeants and 54 constables.

There is one police station in use, which is on Canvey Island. It does not have public access.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID)

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) is currently based at Rayleigh due to the refurbishment of Southend police station. The CID comprises detective inspectors, detective sergeants and detective constables. They investigate the more serious crimes such as assaults of grievous bodily harm (GBH), fraud, robbery and dwelling burglary. They will move to Southend by early 2017.

Juno Team

The Juno Team is responsible for investigating domestic abuse cases. It is led by a detective inspector and comprises detective sergeants and investigators. The team provides a service for the district seven days a week and is currently based at Rayleigh, due to the refurbishment of Southend police station.

Castle Point Community Safety Partnership

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a joint responsibility upon specific agencies to work together, and with other agencies within the community, to develop and implement strategies to protect their communities from crime and help people feel safe.

As a leading member of the Castle Point and Rochford Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Castle Point Borough Council is firmly committed to tackling crime and disorder and reducing the fear of crime in the Borough.

Other statutory members are from the following key agencies: Essex Police; Castle Point and Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group; Essex County Council; Essex County Fire and Rescue Service; Rochford District Council

Each year the CSP must produce a Strategic Assessment from an analysis of community safety information and data across Castle Point and Rochford District.

This process identifies the main local priorities which the CSP will focus on over the next 12 months (April 2016 - March 2017)

- Acquisitive crime
- Safeguarding Vulnerable People, including domestic abuse and other hidden harms
- Anti-social behaviour

An annual Action Plan has been developed to tackle these priorities.

Community Concerns

Firearms incidents

There have been a number of incidents involving firearms on Canvey Island in July and August 2016.

A dedicated investigation team was set up by CID. The Community Policing Team was relocated to Canvey for two weeks to provide reassurance and to assist with enforcement activity.

Force support was provided by the Operational Support Group and Force Support Unit. They assisted in proactive patrols, targeting other offenders and executing warrants. Casualty Reduction Unit were also deployed, utilising automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) to target offenders using the roads, supported by their motorcycle team.

Two offenders have now been charged with attempted murder and remanded in custody. The expected trial date is February/March 2017.

Roscommon Way and vehicle nuisance in general

Vehicle based ASB in the area of Roscommon Way, Canvey Island, has been a cause for concern. However, sustained policing operations have significantly reduced the number of reported incidents. The police monitor social media to identify and combat any organised car cruiser events in the area, but these are relatively infrequent. Calls from the public regarding noise or bad driving behaviour are recorded and responded to on a case by case basis. The CPT continues to work closely with Castle Point Borough Council and other partners on this issue. Two CCTV cameras have been installed at Roscommon Way. The CCTV cameras have assisted in capturing and recording evidence of inappropriate driving behaviour. Officers from Roads Policing and Casualty Reduction continue to support the local CPT by visiting Roscommon Way and other known car cruiser venues most weekends. There have been a number of drivers reported for road traffic offences. The County Council has engaged with local partners to review the road network upon the island with a view to delivering a long term solution. Cllr Ray Howard hopes the completion of the road towards the sea front will resolve this issue as the road will then be used more frequently.

Northwick Road and the nearby surrounding residential areas suffer from nuisance motorcycles and one of the CPT Sergeants has attended the location with Cllr Godfrey Isaacs to identify long term measures that can be implemented – e.g. repair fences where access is gained. Pictures of offenders have also been circulated to try and identify them. A motorbike has been seized at this location. The “responsible petrol retailer” initiative is also on-going.

Flooding - Canvey Island

On Sunday 20th July 2014, heavy rainfall (75mm of rain fell within 24 hours) resulted in the severe flooding of many roads on Canvey Island and affected approximately 200 properties.

A similar incident of flooding took place on Saturday 24th August 2013, where 65mm of rain fell within 24 hours.

There was a co-ordinated response to these events by the Environment Agency, Essex County Council, Castle Point Borough Council and the emergency services, who have worked tirelessly since that date to tackle and resolve many issues identified as contributing factors. This extensive partnership work continues. Understandably, some public anxiety remains about the possibility of future flooding and whether drainage and pumping systems are appropriate, especially with the proposed building of new houses.

General level of crime/ASB on Canvey

Official crime figures show decreases in key areas such as house burglary, ASB and theft from vehicles.

There are 452 Essex Community Messaging subscribers, quite low when compared to other areas, and it is hoped that this number will continue to grow providing a flow of information between Essex Police and local people. The CPT works closely with the Echo, providing details of positive stories as well as requests for help. For example, a recent story reported the deployment of the mobile police station on the island and the deployment of additional police resources.

Examples of Problem Solving Initiatives

Thorney Bay Caravan Park

This area has been, and continues to be a priority to reduce crime and related ASB. There have been significant reductions because of police and partnership work.

Examples of partnership work include:

- A police drop in office has been open since September 2015 and has had up to 20 visitors in the hour it is open - used for information gathering and giving advice
- Quarterly steering group meetings with partners to disseminate, review and action intelligence
- All incidents on site are reviewed by the CPT and investigative ownership taken where appropriate - including known and persistent offenders, hate crimes and general ASB and crime
- Questionnaires/surveys are regularly conducted at family days
- ASB panel reviews and actions monthly
- Focus on offenders as these are often transient or staying with tenants. The tenancy list is shared with the police and any potential risks identified and action taken
- Conditions placed on residency and overnight visitors
- High visibility patrols
- Multi language leaflet drops to ethnic minority residents
- Referrals to Canvey voluntary service

Tackling a prolific young offender

A young offender was identified as being responsible for a large number of crimes, including burglary of business premises, theft and possession of a weapon, on Canvey. In addition to initiating prosecutions for the offences, and obtaining a criminal behaviour order to restrict the movement of the person outside his home, Essex Police worked closely with other agencies and family members identifying potential issues, and providing support and diversionary activities.

Following these interventions, the pattern of prolific offending has reduced, with the young person committing two offences in a two month period. Essex Police will

continue to pursue a joint approach to prevent and hopefully break the young person's cycle of re-offending.

Serious Crime Directorate Update:

In February 2015 two stolen vehicles; a BMW and an Audi were in convoy with another vehicle, a Renault Clio, when they activated ANPR cameras in the Canvey Island area. Officers located the stolen Audi and the Renault which were both stopped and the 6 people inside were arrested. The vehicles were seized and searched.

Inside the Renault was property which had been stolen from a burglary in Braintree and some cannabis. Within the stolen Audi, a V5 document for the stolen BMW was found. A search was conducted for the BMW and it was discovered the following day when the fire brigade reported a suspicious fire on Canvey Island; it had been burnt out.

Following an extensive investigation the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) authorised that 2 of the 6 arrested persons be charged with offences of handling stolen goods and possession of cannabis. They appeared at crown court in September 2016 and entered guilty pleas. They will be sentenced in October 2016.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Data

Castle Point Crime Comparison

The table below sets out the crime figures for Castle Point, comparing reports for 1st September 2015 to 31st August 2016 with 1st September 2014 to 31st August 2015.

Crime/Incident Type	# offences		# diff	% diff
	2015	2016		
ALL CRIME	3494	4095	601	17.2
Violence with Injury	384	463	79	20.6
Violence without Injury	480	760	280	58.3
Sexual Offences	95	97	2	2.1
Robbery	34	63	29	85.3
Dwelling Burglary	384	296	-88	-22.9
Other Burglary	253	303	50	19.8
Theft from Vehicle	237	182	-55	-23.2
Theft of Motor Vehicle	118	141	23	19.5
Theft from the Person	28	45	17	60.7
Theft of Pedal Cycles	72	59	-13	-18.1
Shoplifting	155	214	59	38.1
Other Theft	406	399	-7	-1.7
Criminal Damage (incl. arson)	462	530	68	14.7
Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents	2162	1826	-336	-15.5

Areas of note:

- All Crime has increased by 17.2% (601 more offences)
- Theft from Vehicle has decreased by 23.2% (55 less offences)
- Dwelling Burglary decreased by 22.9% (88 less offences)
- Violence without Injury has increased by 58.3% (280 more offences)
- Violence with Injury has increased by 20.6% (79 more offences)
- Shoplifting has increased by 38.1% (59 more offences)
- Robbery has increased by 85.3% (29 more offences)
- Anti-Social Behaviour has decreased by 15.5% (336 less incidents)

Violence without Injury

During the above reporting period, offences of Violence without Injury increased by 58.3% (280 more offences).

This category of crime includes harassment, assaults without injury, threats to kill, public order and malicious communications.

Malicious communications was added as a recordable crime last year and has had a huge impact on increasing the number of violence offences - this is often verbal abuse over Facebook.

Dealing with incidents of domestic abuse remains a key priority for Essex Police and high-risk cases are automatically allocated to the Juno Team. Standard and medium-risk cases are initially dealt with by LPT officers, but medium cases are

passed to Juno after 48 hours. The Chief Constable takes the strategic lead on this issue, which has seen improved partnership working.

The CPT works in close partnership with the licensing authorities to ensure the robust enforcement of conditions relating to licensed premises.

Violence with injury

An increase of 20.6% (79 offences). Essex Police has not identified a pattern or trend within these offences.

Robbery

There has been an increase of 29 offences, which is 85.3%. These have been a mixture of personal and business robberies, very rarely with serious injury. Some late night refreshment premises and supermarkets have been targeted on Canvey and Benfleet, with weapons used on occasion – hammer, knives and firearms being presented.

CID lead on these investigations and suspects have been arrested and charged. One man was charged with four street robberies earlier this month, another man is on bail for two other robberies and a man charged last year was also issued with a criminal behaviour order.

Premises robberies involving weapons are of great concern and crime prevention work has been on-going with businesses to encourage them to take more responsibility for their own crime prevention – e.g. by using a buzz entry system in the evening or only accepting transactions by credit/debit card in repeatedly targeted takeaway locations.

Burglary other

During the reporting period, offences of burglary other increased by 19.8% (50 more offences).

These offences cover a wide scope of offending and victims, including offences against shops, industrial units, sheds, and halls. Usually the modus operandi is significantly different from one type of offence to another. Burglary other remains a local priority and the CPT utilises community support and local intelligence to tackle this issue.

One of our most prolific local burglars was issued with a Criminal Behaviour Order after a successful prosecution.

Sexual Offences

There was a 2.1% increase in reported offences of sexual crime during the reporting period (2 more offences).

Random attacks on strangers are extremely rare. Many reported offences involve a known and/or named suspect, and a number are domestic related where offenders and victims have been in an intimate relationship with one another.

Essex Police predicts that the number of reported sexual offences will remain high and possibly continue to rise for the foreseeable future. This increase has been experienced both countywide and nationally, and appears in part to be attributable to a number of high-profile cases, under the banner of Operation Yewtree, which continue to dominate the media.

According to the Office for National Statistics, around 85% of victims who have suffered sexual abuse never go on to report it to the police, and therefore, such an increase in reported crime may be considered a positive indication of how trust and confidence in Essex Police is increasing.

The Sexual Offences Investigation Team which is based at Rayleigh provides an enhanced service to victims of serious sexual crime, working in partnership with internal and external stakeholders, including social care and the Sexual Assault Referral Centre.

Theft of motor vehicle (TOMV)

An increase of 19.5% - 23 offences. Recent trends have seen thefts of transit vans and motorcycles. These are usually taken to "chop shops" to be stripped and sold on and the issue is not unique to Castle Point. Four offenders from Tilbury were sentenced in October 2015, for thefts of Ford Transits after they were discovered at a lock up in Wickford. Another stripping location in the north of the county was discovered earlier this year.

Utilising automatic number recognition technology, proactive patrols at night and owners using tracking systems, are key ways of reducing offences and locating offenders.

Theft from the person

This offence has seen an increase of 17 offences - 60.3%. The number of offences is relatively small and usually involves an offender that the victim knows, such as family members or friends who have been in their property. Mobile phones thefts are also included in this crime category, and sometimes these have been lost and then reported as stolen because nobody has handed them in.

Shoplifting

An increase of 59 offences which is 38.1%. Due to the reduction in funding for local policing there is no longer a dedicated retail crime unit covering Castle Point and Rochford districts. However, Essex Police is working with the business sector to encourage shops to invest more time and money in reducing this type of crime. Nearly all of the reported offences are from major supermarkets, petrol stations or chemists. Where Essex Police identifies a prolific offender who has committed multiple shoplifting offences a CPT officer will take ownership of the crimes and investigate.

Criminal damage

The offence has increased during this period by 68 crimes - 14.7%.

Many are as a result of domestic abuse. The rest do not reflect any particular pattern. Any repeat victims or hotspot locations are usually investigated by CPT to ensure cohesive and consistent activity to identify offenders and to implement a long term strategy on reduction.

Your feedback is most welcome.

Should you wish to contact the PCC about this meeting, or any other matter you can do so through the following routes:

By email: pcc@essex.pnn.police.uk

By writing to:

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex
3 Hoffman's Way
Chelmsford CM1 1GU

You can learn more about the PCC's work at:
www.essex.pcc.police.uk

News alerts will usually be tweeted via the Essex PCC Twitter account:
<https://twitter.com/essexpcc>

Reporting Crime:

All criminal information and intelligence reported to Essex Police allows them to build a picture of criminality and emerging issues in the area, and therefore plan and respond to these more effectively.

Local policing teams will always act on intelligence received from the community. If you have information regarding any criminal activity please either call the force control room on 101, your local policing team, or contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Crimestoppers is a completely anonymous line where you can report any criminal activity.