



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

to
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING AS THE CRIME AND
DISORDER COMMITTEE
31 MARCH 2015**

A414 UNDERPASS SAFETY MEASURES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to make Members aware that a petition has been received relating to improved safety measures in the vicinity of the Mill Lane A414 underpass, Heybridge and inform them of the current safety measures being taken in relation to the serious sexual incidents which occurred in June 2014 and January 2015.

2. AREA FOR DECISION / ACTION

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The Mill Lane A414 underpass and associated footpath is a very busy access route to and from the town centre and adjacent supermarket, and it is used by a large number of residents from Heybridge and surrounding areas. This area is frequently used by young people as a school route and to access a play facility at Oak Tree Meadow. The most recent serious sexual incident which occurred in January 2015 has had a considerable impact on the local community and has raised the fear of crime for users of this footpath and parents of young children.

2.1.2 Members should note that two of the key priorities of Maldon Community Safety Partnership are:

- Maintain and Reduce Existing Low Levels of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB);
- Protecting Vulnerable People.

2.1.3 These priorities contribute to the Council's Corporate Goal of "Helping communities to be safe, active and healthy". Recent performance figures from Essex Police indicate an increase in serious sexual crime, however, it should be noted that Maldon remains one of the safest districts in the county and a number of these offences are historic and are linked to the national initiative Operation Yewtree. This matter was discussed by the Maldon Community Safety Partnership Responsible Authorities Group on 20 March 2015.

2.1.4 Officers at Maldon District Council agreed that Maldon Community Safety Partnership should play a lead role in addressing the concerns of local residents. The initial first step was for a multi-agency group to carry out a site assessment and make recommendations based on environmental design and crime prevention measures.

This assessment was carried out on 5 February 2015 once Essex Police had completed their forensic crime scene investigations. It was completed during the daytime and hours of darkness to ensure that officers could assess all issues in relation to the current design, fear of crime and measures for improvement. Recommendations in the assessment are graded a high, medium and low priority in terms of urgency and risk. They include improved lighting, CCTV and a reduction in the shrubbery for the area. Members should note that the shrubbery in the immediate vicinity was reduced by the Highway Rangers and completed on 11 February 2015. A copy of this assessment is attached as **APPENDIX 1**.

- 2.1.5 The Community Safety Manager also met the person leading the public call for action, Mrs Kelly Sanger, on site on 13 February 2015 to ensure that views of local people were taken into action. Members should note that this call for action has received significant local press coverage and an on-line petition was set up to support this requesting that Essex County Council make the area safe.
- 2.1.6 The Director of Customers and Community wrote to Essex County Council on 17 February 2015 attaching a copy of the technical assessment and requesting that they take action to make the land in their ownership safe in accordance with their duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. A response was received from the Director of Commissioning, Transport and Infrastructure on 12 March 2015. Whilst they responded stating that the faulty underpass lights were not currently maintained by their street lighting team they suggested that the matter was escalated to Maldon Highways Panel. An emergency agenda item was raised at the meeting which was held on 13 March 2015. The panel agreed to endorse £5,000 expenditure on a lighting scheme to make the area safer, however, there were discussions in relation to the on-going maintenance of the lighting.

3. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 3.1 This initiative will contribute to the Council's Corporate Goal of "Helping communities to be safe, active and healthy".

4. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Helping communities to be safe, active and healthy.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – None.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Maldon Highways Panel contribution of £5,000 and potential contribution from Maldon Community Safety Partnership reserves.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – As above.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Improved safety and natural surveillance of the location.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** That Members note the work of the Community Safety Partnership in relation to liaising with multi-agency partners and the public in attempting to make an area safe and thus reducing the fear of crime for its residents.

6. RECOMMENDATION

That Members note the contents of this report and consider how the Maldon District Council could play a role in making this area safer in terms of environmental design and crime prevention.

Background Papers: Technical Assessment – **APPENDIX 1**

Enquiries to: Spencer Clarke, Community Safety Manager, (Tel: 01621 875814).