

FVCPRS SUMMARY OF END OF SEASON REPORT 2017.

First and foremost, none of the events in this report would have been possible without the financial support received from Felixstowe TC over the past twenty two years. Their grant is always put towards the insurance cover for the lifeboat and the five – million PL cover. After all these years our finances still remain tight and it is only with public support and careful management that we manage to survive. During 2016 SCDC helped by appointing consultants to raise money on our behalf through national funding and whilst this has been appreciated the grants received have been ring fenced and cannot be used to sustain the service's annual running costs of £20,000 which is our most vital need.

2017 was one of our busiest years in all aspects, not just rescue. Volunteer's gave talks and presentations on the service and sea/beach safety to some thirty schools, and various other groups. We gave twenty one media – press, radio and TV interviews mainly on sea/beach safety, fishes royal and the rise in immigration incidents which featured on Sky TV and the BBC's Inside Out. One of our most time consuming tasks occurred in May when the Whale carcass came ashore in Pier Bight. 'Volunteers' crew had become involved in three separate Whale sightings prior to this incident and were requested by Dover/Humber Coastguard to take photos, obtain measurements, ascertain the types of Whales and possible causes of death. When the carcass came ashore 'Volunteer' was tasked to tow it offshore some ten miles which was late prohibited by DEFRA, so then reverted to keeping a marine exclusion zone for public safety. When the carcass was eventually disposed of we were requested by SCDC to remain on scene to give weather and tidal flow advice and to later assist police with crowd control.

By far our biggest non-rescue task was providing overall sea safety cover and a full marine risk assessment for all maritime activities during the Felixstowe – Armed Forces Weekend in June. In strong winds some sixteen of our volunteers assumed responsibility for the safety of four vintage pulling boats and twenty Dutch re-enactors with little or no open sea experience and, no lifejackets who had to be towed from Levington Marina to Felixstowe and back on each day. These difficulties were averted over the two day event even though 'Volunteer' was called to the assistance of one Dutch pinnace that was in grave danger of being swept under the pier, to capsize with its five crew when it lost its rudder. During this same event 'Volunteer' being a CAA approved 'Crash Boat' was busy again during the Air Display when tasked by Dover Coastguard to assist a 30 ft sloop in difficulties off the Deben Bar. During the evening 'Volunteer' maintained a marine safety exclusion zone for the Firework Display.

Operations commenced on 11th January when the service was put on Emergency Flood standby, by the Suffolk Resilience – Gold Command. Seventeen volunteers spent seventy-two hours of their free time on alert during sleet and snow showers and winds of Gale Force 8 with 'Volunteer' being tasked afloat and eleven hours on active service. Mobile Teams assisted police by patrolling beaches from Landguard Point, the View Point, Main Beaches to Felixstowe Ferry. The biggest danger during the hours of darkness being the large numbers of onlookers putting themselves in grave danger by being on the beaches or promenade with large waves coming ashore. Fortunately only a minority of people ignored warnings from police, coastguards and

ourselves with most taking 'selfies' or even Wave Dodging, and with one young lady going to hospital with hypothermia.

The service undertook 54 full ten hour days of marine patrols not including the 13 occasions when we were put on Flood Surge standby ashore. Our volunteers gave some 1,362 hours of their free time to the community in which time our patrol lifeboat 'Volunteer' covered 3, 873 miles on routine patrols and rescues, being tasked by Police, Coastguard and UKBF on 42 occasions. Patrols to sensitive areas were increased due to the rise in local Immigration Incidents and with this in mind, SOP's have been written for any IBE – Immigrant Boat Encounter which we expect rather sooner than later.

The service attended 38 emergency casualty situations and 81 downgraded incidents involving 187 persons and 5 dogs. 'Volunteers' crew were directly responsible in saving 8 lives to include 3 attempted suicides, thus breaking our previous record of 7. Another life was saved by one of our off duty team who rescued a young lady from the Ipswich Wet Dock one late evening in August. The service received its second prestigious Suffolk Search & Rescue award in October and we have very recently learned that another of our Coxn's will be receiving the RHS Award.

Examples of service: 19 craft were towed in, 37 speeding or dangerous behaviour incidents, 3 Fishes-Royal, 2 missing / deceased person searches, 37 Project Kraken / Security, 8 UKBF immigration incidents.

The longest tow in distance was 15 miles, and longest rescue distance was 16 miles.

Three Brief Rescue Narratives:

'Volunteer' was tasked to assist a small inflatable yacht tender with 3 persons onboard reported as being overwhelmed and swamped by large waves. 'Volunteer' was on-scene within 6 minutes and found the crew in the partially deflated dinghy up to their waists in water with a very distressed 5 year old girl. All were taken onboard 'Volunteer' where the youngster was treated for hypothermia by our paramedic and then all were returned safely ashore to friends.

'Volunteer' tasked in rough conditions, Gale 8 – Severe 9. Rough / very rough seas to assist a 38 ft sloop reported in difficulties some 6 miles off Orford Ness and in danger of being blown onto an offshore shoal and wrecked. 'Volunteer' arrived on-scene 31 minutes later only to find the sloop's crew very unwell and unable to assist themselves. With difficulty in the large seas, a towline was passed and the sloop towed away from the shoals. But with darkness coming on a larger lifeboat was requested, however there was a two hour delay as it was having difficulty launching in the onshore conditions. Eventually the lifeboat arrived and 'Volunteer' was forced to put a man onboard the sloop to assist with the tow rope, however in the 'foray' the crewman was lost overboard and spent an interesting six minutes in the 5m waves before he was recovered. The sloop was later safely towed into Harwich.

'Volunteer' on the last patrol of the season was tasked immediate to two attempted suicides at Harwich Breakwater. Both casualties were recovered from the water, treated onboard and taken to awaiting paramedics and police at the Town Quay.

Finally, we have carried out 34 resort equipment checks and reported 9 lifebuoys or throw-bags missing or damaged.

John Cresswell 1st Coxn / Ops Manager

'IN SALUTEM OMNIUM'