

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 30 September 2014

Subject: Safer, Greener and Transport

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Waller

Recommending: That the Report of the Safer, Greener & Transport Portfolio Holder be noted.

Community Safety

Community Trigger

As described in my last Report to Council, the Community Trigger provisions in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 come into force on 20 October. These provisions, also known as the Anti-social Behaviour Case Review procedures, introduce simpler and more effective powers to tackle anti-social behaviour, providing better protection for victims and communities.

New responsibilities are given to relevant bodies including district councils to review their responses to complaints of anti-social behaviour when victims believe that agencies have not taken appropriate action. There is a duty to undertake a case review following a request and when a case meets a locally defined threshold.

Safer Essex has agreed to develop a consistent County-wide approach across all the agencies involved in the legislation, providing victims with a coherent and effective response. A county-wide threshold of three incidents of ASB within the last six months has been set where the victim considers that inadequate action has been taken, and this threshold can be reduced when the ASB is considered to be motivated by prejudice.

The Council's public relations team are publicising the new laws, with relevant website links, in conjunction with Essex Police, and there will be a public meeting to promote them. EFDC's Community Safety Manager is the single point of contact for the District and can provide further information on request.

Violent crime incidents

Members may be aware that during August and September, three serious crimes took place either within or linked to the District. In two of these incidents our Community Safety team was able to assist the police in identifying alleged perpetrators. In one case we were able to help identify passengers picked up by a taxi in Epping who later allegedly attacked and robbed the driver when they reached their destination. CCTV also proved helpful in the case of a stabbing in the early hours where the victim was found in Epping High Street, causing it to be closed for an extended period for forensic investigation purposes. The third serious incident occurred at Woolston Manor, Chigwell, where a man was shot; neither the victim nor the alleged perpetrator is from the District.

Electric blanket testing

Portable appliance testing including electric blankets, and free home safety fire checks, are currently being offered across the District, with EFDC working in conjunction with Trading Standards and Essex Fire & Rescue. Free checks are available to anyone aged over 65 years or suffering from physical or mental impairment. Bookings should be arranged through Trading Standards on 0845 6037626.

Safeguarding

Essex Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards have reviewed the assessment criteria for the annual safeguarding audits of statutory partners. These will be completed online for the first time, with a return deadline of January 2015. A longer completion timeframe has been introduced this year to give agencies more time to address additional new criteria including a range of policies and strategies, as well as the inclusion of all relevant documentary evidence.

Since May, when appointments were made to the Council's new Safeguarding Officer and Administrative Assistant posts, a huge amount of work has been undertaken to identify gaps in current practice and procedures, to develop new policies and strategies and to assess the training and developmental needs of staff across the Council. Some of the gaps have been addressed through the staging of more full day Safeguarding training sessions for staff and by the development of mini training/awareness raising sessions for contractor staff, including 'toolbox talks' for housing repairs teams.

Twenty five elected members have undertaken the in-house training provided but unfortunately, due to a lack of participants, the training arranged for August had to be cancelled. Further member training sessions will be arranged for November to enable those who have not yet participated to do so.

I must remind all members that we have a duty as a Council to be fully conversant with the various safeguarding issues which may arise from contacts with local residents. Unless members have undergone training, we shall not meet the requirements set within the 'governance' section of the forthcoming audit. Safeguarding is also included on the Council's risk register, and training inadequacies will drive up the threat level confronting this authority, so the matter must be taken seriously.

I shall report back on the findings of the safeguarding audit in the New Year.

Countrycare

Countrycare has hosted several events since my last Report.

For children, Countrycare has attended two more 'Play in the Forest' days hosted by Community Development, organised an animal 'Tracks and Signs' morning at Bobbingworth Nature Reserve and held a very well attended 'Teddy Bears Picnic' on Linders Field in Buckhurst Hill.

For adults, Countrycare organised its annual moth and bat night, held this year at Bobbingworth Nature Reserve. Twenty seven people attended, plus three experts and staff. The event was a valuable exercise, as a night time survey of the Reserve has not previously taken place.

All members of staff attended a flood safety awareness course run by the Royal Life Saving Association for the Council and are now fully trained in understanding open water hazards when they work on ponds and streams in the District on the weekly volunteer tasks and any other events hosted by Countrycare.

A Countrycare staff member represented the Council at the Tree Council seminar on the effects of Ash Tree Dieback in non-woodland settings. A presentation of how the landscape will be affected was given to the Epping Forest Tree Wardens at their autumn meeting. Seven of the Tree Wardens will be attending the East Anglian Tree Warden forum to be held in Braintree in early October.

Two work experience students spent time with Countrycare prior to going on to Writtle College, Chelmsford to study aspects of countryside management.

Countrycare has been working with Sheering Parish Council to manage a small area of woodland adjacent to Sheering Recreation Ground for the enjoyment of local residents. A management plan was agreed and work has started to make footpaths through the wood safe and accessible and to remove several dangerous trees. Countrycare will lead a guided walk around Sheering on 28 September to show the work and look at veteran trees in the parish.

A fence at one end of Roughtalleys Wood in North Weald which had been badly damaged by vandalism was replaced with a new one by Countrycare volunteers.

Additionally, volunteer days in August saw work carried out at Foster Street Burial Ground; All Saints Church, Epping Upland; Epping Green Millennium Garden; and Old Shire Lane, Waltham Abbey. In September, volunteers have also been active at Home Mead Local Nature Reserve; Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve; and Willingale Road Allotments, Debden.

Car Parking

Council Car Parks Survey

Ahead of the car parks strategy and tariffs review, a survey was carried out between 28 May and 31 July. The survey questionnaire could be accessed via the Council website and was circulated to all town and parish councils, Town Centre Partnerships and One Epping Forest partners. Information was also included in an edition of the *Forester*, and Alpha Parking Limited carried out a face to face survey in the car parks from 24 June to 4 July.

I intend to bring a Report to Cabinet in November, with a view to seeking approval of a revised car parks strategy.

New pay and display machines

An invitation to tender process has taken place to renew the pay and display machines in the Council owned car parks as some of them are 25 years old and replacement parts are becoming more difficult to obtain. Modern machines are also capable of providing a great deal more usage data to operators than their predecessors.

Five companies were invited to tender, but only three did so. The tenders are currently being considered, and an update for members will be available in due course.

Buckhurst Hill Parking Review

The formal public consultation on the proposed changes took place in June and was conducted by Essex Highways. Once all the responses had been reviewed, a meeting took place in July between Essex Highways, EFDC officers and Buckhurst Hill ward members, resulting in final decisions on new parking restrictions. The necessary traffic orders are at present being made prior to implementation.