

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 26 July 2016

Subject: Safer, Greener & Transport Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Waller

Recommending:

That the report of the Safer, Greener & Transport Portfolio Holder be noted.

Community Safety

Changes to working arrangements with Essex Police

Our Community Safety team is working well with the Community Policing teams, established under the new Essex Police structure, and a 'virtual hub', designed to ensure maximum cooperation, now operates between Epping Forest and Brentwood councils on the one hand and Essex Police on the other. This arrangement is generating a good exchange of information around operational issues and includes a new process whereby there is a daily call briefing with police to carry out a review of significant incidents over the previous 24 hours, providing a valuable forum for discussion of any planned resource or operational activity.

Additionally, the Community Safety team is now an integral part of the district police tasking meeting, which is held every two weeks and is carried out by call conference, saving officer time travelling to a police station. There is also hot desking capacity in the Community Safety office, which is being used regularly each week by the district police Inspector, Community Policing team Sergeant, Police Intelligence Officer and Integrated Offender Management officers. This is having a very positive effect in terms of joined up working and highly effective intelligence sharing.

Since the new policing arrangements have been rolled out over the last year, it has been noticeable that the two Council Anti-Social Behaviour Investigators have seen a significant increase in workload, resulting in a 33 per cent uplift in the first half of this year compared with 2015. They have a current workload count of 320 live or completed cases this year, including investigatory work for neighbourhood disputes, meetings with victims and perpetrators and compilation of reports to support the serving of injunctions and public space protection orders.

Crime and Disorder Analysis

Based on the model of activity undertaken by the West Local Policing Area Analyst, based and managed at the Council for over five years, Essex Police are now providing permanent full time analytical support to all of the Community Safety Partnerships across Essex. The police are currently recruiting additional analysts for the two remaining policing areas, and the analyst that we currently host is in the process of transferring to Essex Police, retaining responsibility for the West LPA and continuing to be based at the Civic Offices. This is

considered to be a win-win outcome as we shall continue to benefit from the excellent work of the analyst while funds are released for other community safety initiatives.

Domestic Homicide Review

I reported in April that I had begun the process to establish a Domestic Homicide Review following the death of a Theydon Bois woman. In my capacity as Chairman of Epping Forest District Community Safety Partnership and in accordance with statutory procedures, I informed the Home Office that we considered that a review was required to take place. Subsequently Liz Hanlon, a former senior officer with Hertfordshire Constabulary who chairs Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, has been appointed to chair the review, and John Gilbert, a former director with this Council, has been appointed as report writer. I am delighted that we have secured the services of two individuals who are so well qualified to perform these roles.

The review panel has met to deal with initial arrangements but, at the request of Essex Police, will not meet again until after the conclusion of court proceedings for murder against the alleged victim's husband, due to commence at Chelmsford Crown Court in November.

Meanwhile, we also considered the circumstances surrounding the death of a Buckhurst Hill woman who was tragically killed at a hotel in Waltham Cross in December 2015. Because this case might also have met the criteria requiring a Domestic Homicide Review to be set up, I attended three hearings at St Albans Crown Court, but the evidence and the judge's sentencing remarks indicated that those criteria were not met in this instance. Nevertheless, there are disturbing features which require further investigation, and I very much welcome the fact that partners in Hertfordshire have agreed to establish a multi-agency review to establish what lessons might be learned for the future.

Safeguarding

The Safeguarding team continues to be very busy with local cases, including many relating to adult hoarders. Although hoarding is considered by some to be a lifestyle choice, many people find themselves living in this way due to trauma, bereavement or other life event that causes them distress and which leads to obsessive and compulsive behaviour. Most of the local issues of hoarding and resultant complications are identified through the Council's housing teams and our Environmental Health Officers, who may be alerted to concerns relating to the presence of vermin or foul odours emanating from properties. Following an initial visit, officers will make a judgement as to whether conditions justify a need for action, in which case steps can be taken to enforce a complete clean and clearance of the property. However, this is done in consultation with Essex County Council social care team and mental health colleagues, due to the complexities of the hoarding condition and potential need for support before the property is cleared, whilst it is taking place and afterwards, to help prevent reoccurrences of the problem. Where possible, the Council provides temporary accommodation for the individuals concerned if they do not have the opportunity to stay with family or friends.

Countrycare

Since the last report Countrycare have had 13 more volunteer working parties in Buckhurst Hill, North Weald, Ongar, Bobbingworth and Waltham Abbey, in addition to joint tasks with Essex Wildlife Trust at Hawksmere Spring in Stapleford Tawney and Loughton Town Council at Willingale Road community orchard.

The work parties continue to be well attended. In the first half of 2016, a total of 383 volunteer days were given, an average of over 15 people per task - a new record number of

volunteers for Countrycare. The annual volunteer walk took place on 9 June in fine weather, the volunteers enjoying a five mile walk around Roydon and the Glen Faba lake and nature reserve.

An event for children was held at Linder's Field, Buckhurst Hill on 1 June. The theme of the event was hedgehogs, with 19 children and their parents having a fun educational morning playing games connected with hedgehogs. Abigail Oldham and Kevin Mason gave a presentation in Sheering on 12 April looking at the work of Countrycare and explaining the work that has taken place at Sheering Copse. Kevin Mason organised a training session for the district Tree Wardens in Gernon Bushes, Coopersale on the subject of diseased trees. On behalf of the council, Kevin Mason also attended the Tree Council conference on ash tree dieback in non-woodland settings held in Coventry on 19 April.

The ponds in the Civic Offices car park and Nazeing Triangle were surveyed by Abigail Oldham and Nicola Ceconi over five days in May for great crested newts. The Civic Offices pond still has a healthy population of newts. Finally, the special roadside verges in Sheering, Beauchamp Roding and High Laver have all been surveyed to ensure they retain their status as nature reserves.

Energy efficiency and fuel poverty

Environmental Charter

The Council's Green Working Party has developed an Environmental Charter which states the Council's commitment to 'green issues' under the headings of 'Climate Change', 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions' and 'Sustainability'. Attached to the Charter is a plan of realistic but stretching actions that will achieve the Council's commitments under each heading.

The Working Party's existing work plan already includes day-to-day 'green' activities which can be added to and fed into the actions to demonstrate the Council's progress against its commitments. The Council's Management Board has endorsed the Charter, and the Neighbourhoods Select Committee has recommended it to Cabinet for approval.

Essex Energy Switch

In 2014 I agreed that the Council should actively support the Essex Energy Switch initiative that was developed in partnership with Essex County Council. The aim of this was to encourage consumers to consider changing to providers of cheaper energy by making it simpler to switch. There was no cost to the Council, and we were reimbursed for the time spent by officers assisting in the administration of the scheme.

In last year's Energy Switch 52 households in the District switched provider. The average savings by those that switched was £265.69. Another auction took place in May and as a result 43 residents chose to switch, with an average saving on this occasion of £307.57

A further auction will take place towards the end of this year. As before, it is likely that use will be made of the Library network, the Contact Essex helpdesk and the websites of participating districts and boroughs to help residents submit paper submissions if they wish. I will keep members informed of the outcome.

Parking

Council car parks

Under the Council's adopted parking strategy, which includes a commitment to improve CCTV systems and install LED lighting in all Council car parks. I am pleased to inform

members that CCTV systems are being upgraded on a priority basis and that in the first phase, car parks in Ongar will get have CCTV systems installed. Assessments for conversion to LED lighting are currently being carried out and I shall be updating members when more information becomes available.

I am also happy to report that the Council has once again been awarded the Park Mark® status for all its car parks. This is a prestigious award and is part of the Police Crime Prevention Initiative which aims to reduce crime and the fear of crime in car parks.

As members are aware, the Council is leaving the off street element of the North Essex Parking Partnership from 31 March 2017 and will again assume responsibility for the management of its car parks. The procurement for the provision of this service is well under way and officers, with the assistance of consultants RTA Associates, are drawing up detailed plans to issue the necessary tender documents in the coming months.

I would like thank the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group which continues to provide valuable support in this process and I look forward to their continued assistance.

Loughton Broadway Parking Review

Work on the Loughton Broadway Parking Review has been phased to provide that in the first instance a number of schemes will be implemented to address immediate safety concerns. This will be followed by an area wide assessment of the impact on local parking of some of the large infrastructure development schemes being planned in the Broadway area. I shall meet with the relevant members in the coming weeks to consider the proposals.

TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) scheme reductions

Twice a year I am able to nominate TRO schemes to the Joint Committee of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) to begin the process towards implementation. Although a number of schemes have been implemented, the list of pending schemes is very long, with over 100 currently listed for consideration within Epping Forest District. I support NEPPs request that the list be reviewed with the intention of making it deliverable within a realistic timescale. On my behalf, officers have consulted all relevant ward members and recommended that the list be reduced. I shall present the reduced list at the next Joint Committee meeting of NEPP in October 2016.