

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 September 2016

Subject: Safer, Greener and Transport

Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Waller

Recommending:

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

Community Safety

There has been a drive by the Assistant Chief Constable to introduce policing hubs across Essex to promote joint working between the police and community safety teams. In Epping Forest, a virtual hub has been established because the police operational base remains at Loughton while community safety officers work out of the Civic Offices in Epping.

EFDC officers have enjoyed an excellent working relationship with local police officers over the last decade, and the virtual hub model has been employed to develop an even closer working partnership between our community safety team and the local Community Policing Team (CPT). This includes a daily morning telephone call with the CPT Inspector, when an outline of issues of concern from the previous 24 hour period is received, and Council officers are informed of any planned policing operations or activity which may impact on the district during the following 24 hours.

EFDC officers also participate fully in the District Police Tasking process, including a facility to join a conference call with the police every fortnight to evaluate and plan activity that addresses the Community Safety Partnership Plan priorities for Epping Forest. In addition, we host the CPT Inspector in the Council Offices on one day per week and provide a hot desk for the Police Integrated Offender Management Officer – a factor which is significantly helping to reduce re-offending.

A further very successful development made possible with the support of the Council's ICT team has been the introduction of a facility for police officers who work with EFDC regularly to log in to police systems and access data via the Council's wi-fi system - an invaluable benefit in terms of enabling police officers to work seamlessly with the Council's community safety team.

West Local Policing Area Analyst

The analyst post that EFDC has hosted on behalf of the West Local Policing Area for the last six years within our community safety team has recently transferred to Essex Police Headquarters, as part of a new county-wide analyst team. I am pleased to say that we have retained hot-desking facilities in the community safety team office and hope that the analyst will be based with us around one day per week.

I am delighted to report that prior to her transfer, the analyst received a letter of recognition from the Epping Forest District Police Commander, Chief Inspector Denise Morrissey, with regard to her performance in support of Operation Raptor. This operation is designed to

identify and disrupt gang activity and arrest offenders, and the analyst, Kim Stalabrass, has provided complex gang activity data in relation to Epping Forest District which has greatly assisted the police in tackling the problem.

CCTV

Following Cabinet's recent approval, I am pleased to report that a new member of CCTV staff has been successfully appointed to support the continuing CCTV maintenance programme and the roll out of new corporate CCTV initiatives. Police vetting checks are under way and the staff member is anticipated to commence employment during October.

In order to speed up communications with Essex Police, the CCTV team are applying for a licence to use police radio airwaves. This will provide a more efficient and more immediate ability to communicate with police on rapidly developing incidents. The Council's Information Sharing Agreement with Essex Police has recently been amended to reflect this development.

The team have undertaken a considerable amount of work with Housing staff over recent months, and new CCTV was recently introduced in Springfield, Waltham Abbey, due to persistent acts of fly-tipping. To date, cameras have captured 17 different incidents of 'dumping' on the estate, and details have been passed to Neighbourhoods officers for investigation. I am pleased to say that fly-tipping which had been taking place in the communal bins area, has now all but ceased.

CCTV requests in general have increased slightly on this time last year, with the forecast anticipating that we shall exceed 300 downloaded video images from our CCTV sites across the district.

As part of the Council's CCTV project for local car parks, new CCTV systems will be installed at car parks in Banson's Way, Ongar and Traps Hill in Loughton by the end of October. Two separate contractors have been appointed through a tender process. Oakwood Hill depot is now fully operational with CCTV re-used from Langston Road, and includes installation of a CCTV camera for the MOT inspection area to comply with VOSA requirements. Limes Avenue Yellow Block has had some remedial work carried out to provide better coverage of the area, and Green Block is currently at the design stage for a new system including Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR).

Longer term projects include upgrading Epping High Street, Pelly Court, Epping and the Burton Road development in Loughton as a condition of the site receiving Secured by Design accreditation. Demand for rapid deployment systems remains high, with cameras deployed in Loughton and Waltham Abbey.

The imagery from EFDC's public space systems is currently being used to support prosecutions for offences of commercial break-ins, dwelling burglaries, theft of vehicles, assault and criminal damage.

Safeguarding

It has been identified that many of our safeguarding referrals since 2014 include elements related to mental health issues. One incident in particular involved a multi-agency action group in protecting an elderly and frail tenant from a very serious risk of harm on the part of her neighbour. In response, a pilot mental health 'first aid' course is being arranged for Council team managers on 12 October, to provide a better understanding of the problems encountered. The local police team have also nominated an officer to attend this course. If this is a success, further courses will be rolled out in 2017.

A pilot safeguarding reporting scheme has been launched, to encourage our repairs teams and contractors to refer safeguarding concerns, as it has been found that a range of concerns have been picked up through these areas of work.

Following changes to safeguarding training delivery in Essex, our safeguarding team will be taking over the delivery of all in-house safeguarding training and it is anticipated, that we will be able to provide a more tailored and relevant course that focuses on the roles of Council staff. The team have also created an e-Safety Policy which is now available and the Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are currently in the process of being revised and updated.

A protocol for staff dealing with threats of suicide and self-harm has also recently been developed and has been shared with other local authorities in Essex as a model of best practice and guidance for frontline staff.

Safeguarding referrals appear to be increasing each month, and in August the safeguarding team received 34 concerns, mainly from colleagues, but also from members and the public. As our team develop greater expertise, it is allowing them to make successful challenges to partner organisations when they believe they have not acted appropriately. I can assure members that they are tenacious when gathering information for cases and representing the interests of our more vulnerable residents.

Anti-social behaviour

I have previously referred to a serious ASB case involving one of our ASB investigators, the Safeguarding and Housing teams and the police and West Mental Health team. The investigation was complex and involved a very real and serious risk of harm on the part of a neighbour to an elderly house bound lady. The actions taken to protect her were successful, producing a very positive outcome to the case. I am very pleased to report that the actions of Paul Southgate, our ASB Investigator, have been recognised by the West LPA Commander, Chief Superintendent Sean O'Callaghan, with a citation reading 'West LPA Command Team wishes to formally recognise Paul Southgate of Epping Forest District Council for the professionalism and dedication shown in managing the risk around a male with mental health issues who presented a serious danger to members of the public. We thank you for your continued commitment and contribution towards protecting and serving Essex.'

The pressures and demands placed on our Community Safety team are considerable, and it is welcome that exceptional work is recognised in this way.

Countryside

Since the last Report one member of staff has left and a recruitment process is under way to appoint a replacement, anticipated to start at the end of September. Since the last meeting volunteer working parties have been to North Weald, Waltham Abbey, Ongar, Epping Green, and Loughton including a joint task with Loughton Town Council at Willingale Road Community Orchard. Volunteering continues to be popular and well attended.

Several events have taken place. A River Dipping day on the Roding attracted 23 children. They learnt how to kick sample to discover what was in the river and also played Nature Detectives trying to work out who killed the White Clawed Crayfish via the clues on the banks of the river. The Teddy Bears' picnic at Linder's Field Local Nature Reserve was attended by 30 children who went bug hunting and acorn collecting, made wildlife face

masks and dragonfly finger puppets, decorated head bands with leaves, played a teddy bear nature quiz and took part in a scavenger hunt.

Moth Night took place at Willingale Community Orchard. Twenty-eight people attended including some very enthusiastic children mad about moths and bats. Twenty-five species of moth also showed up and it only rained a little. Countrycare had a presence at the North Weald Airfield Show day on 17 July. The stand received a lot of attention because of the 'name this tree' game, for which two trees were given away as prizes.

Countrycare has just won its fifth Living Landscapes Award from the Essex Wildlife Trust. This is for the work undertaken at Sheering Copse, a site owned by Sheering Parish Council and managed by Countrycare for the last two years. The award is given for the creation of a site that is good for wildlife, good for the local economy and good for people. It involved creating some glades in the very dark areas of the wood to encourage wildflowers, repairing and improving footpaths, making the site safe and planting some buckthorn for the brimstone butterfly. The work, in which I was pleased to take part, was carried out by Countrycare volunteers, and the award was presented on 10 September at the Essex Wildlife Trust's Annual Members' Day.

Trees and Landscape

Monday 12 September saw the inaugural meeting for a new Trees and Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework for the district, hosted by Epping Town Council. This will be the first of a series of meetings covering the district as a whole, the next being in Ongar on 10 October. The aim is to ensure that the principles of protection and enhancement of the natural environment, which will be at the heart of the forthcoming draft local plan, will be extended to a new strategy and action for trees and GI. We see this as a plan owned by the community as a whole, rather than the Council alone - hence the extensive programme of prior consultation to achieve the greatest possible buy-in from all sectors of the community, including business and landowners as well as residents.

I am particularly pleased to have been asked to take on the role of Trees and GI champion for the district.

Energy Efficiency

Environmental Charter

The Council's Green Corporate Working Party developed an Environmental Charter which states the Council's commitment to 'green issues', along with a plan of realistic but stretching actions that will achieve the Council's commitments under each head. The Charter was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 1 September and will now be communicated to the public via the Council's website.

Carbon Footprint

The annual carbon footprint assessment of the EFDC buildings and transport has been completed for the 2015/2016 financial year.

Overall, we have managed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 331 tonnes (carbon dioxide equivalent gases) from the 2014/2015 financial year. This is in part due to the updating of lighting to LED and the completion of the window replacement project at the Civic Offices, making the building more energy efficient. Next year we do not expect to see such a drop, as part of the carbon savings was due to the fact that it was not a particularly hot summer in 2015 so less energy was used on air conditioning. Also, Waltham Abbey

Museum was undergoing refurbishment which meant its energy use was abnormally low for the year.

The Council has reduced its carbon footprint year on year since the 2008/2009 base year figures, and has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by over 1000 tonnes since then. The full report is on the EFDC website.

Parking

Council car parks

The Portfolio Holder Advisory Group on the Council Car Parks met on 8 September and received updates on the implementation of the Council's Car Parking Strategy. I am pleased to inform members that CCTV systems will be upgraded on a priority basis in Basons Lane and Pleasance car parks in Ongar.

I am glad to report that Chip and Pin payments in all our car parks will be enabled shortly.

In my last Report I reminded members that the Council is leaving the off street element of the North Essex Parking Partnership from 31 March 2017 and will assume responsibility for enforcement in its car parks. The procurement process for the provision of this service is well under way and a positive response has been received from the market. Officers remain confident that a good private sector partner for the delivery of off street car park enforcement and associated functions will be secured.

Loughton Broadway Parking Review

Steady progress is being made on the Loughton Broadway Parking Review and in the first instance a few small schemes will be implemented to address immediate safety concerns. An area wide assessment will then be carried out to assess the need for more comprehensive parking restrictions. I shall continue to liaise with the relevant ward members to ensure that full account is taken of their input.

TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) schemes

In my last Report I advised members of the need to reduce the large number of schemes Epping Forest has nominated to the Joint Committee of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP). Officers have, on my behalf, consulted ward members and recommended that the list be reduced, omitting those schemes for which there is not support or which are unlikely to be implemented in the foreseeable future. Having reviewed all the responses, I shall be submitting a revised list of schemes to the next Joint Committee meeting of NEPP on 20 October.