

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 25 February 2021
Subject: Housing & Community
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Holly Whitbread

Recommending:

The report of the Housing & Community Portfolio Holder be noted.

Community Resilience:

The team now sits alongside the Contracts and Technical and Commercial and Regulatory Services. The team is continuing to work on updating policies and introducing new processes where required. Workloads remain high but steady across the ASB and Enviro sections of the team.

Environmental Enforcement:

In the last 6 weeks, the Environmental Enforcement Officers have dealt with 913 service enquiries, compared to the same period last year of 754 – almost 20% increase in workload.

Notices served;

- 3 noise abatement notices
- 30 storage and presentation of domestic waste notices
- 38 Community Protection Warnings regarding the disposal of waste
- 1 Community Protection Warnings loud music and amplified sound.

7 Fixed Penalty notices;

- 2 Fly tipping,
- 1 Littering
- 3 Failure to produce documents regarding to waste carriers' licences or waste transfer notes
- 1 Failure to comply with a Community Protection Notice.

The team have had 2 successful prosecutions;

Sentencing hearing for a prolific fly tipper (Benham Dehghani of Ilford) which occurred between November 2017-March 2018 resulting in;

- 10 year Criminal Behaviour Order, preventing him from acting as a waste carrier;
- 9 month imprisonment (suspended for 12 months);
- 3 month curfew 7pm-7am

Mr Dehghani also was disqualified from driving for 12 months and ordered to pay the Council's prosecution costs of £2600.

The second case involved Mr Salinder Minhas of 3 Alderton Close, Loughton who was prosecuted for fly tipping waste near to his house between 19-30 April 2018, and failing to take all reasonable measures to ensure his waste was transferred to an authorised person,

and failing to attend an interview with the Council as required under S.108 of the Environment Act 1995.

Previously Mr Minhas pleaded not guilty but changed his plea mid trial having heard the evidence of the Council's Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer. He was given a Community Order with 200 hours of unpaid work to be completed within 12 months. He was ordered to pay £600 towards the Council's prosecution costs together with a Victim Surcharge of £85

Anti-Social Behaviour:

The team have been working on Closure Orders for two different properties. In one the tenant is vulnerable and has been cuckooed by drug dealers, a common trend where there is a vulnerable tenant. The term derives from the idea that the cuckoo bird takes over a nest. Following a stabbing at the property at the beginning of the month that was drug related, the team are currently in the process of applying for a Closure Order which will safeguard the tenant and prevent people going to the property, if successful and the order granted, anyone attending the property could be arrested.

The second Closure Order relates to an Epping property where the residents are experiencing serious nuisance and disorder from their neighbours. Various social care referrals have been made to safeguard the affected residents and if successful in securing the order, it will also prevent anyone attending the property and stop any nuisance occurring.

There has been target hardening in the Broadway, Loughton involving meeting contractors on site to gate off an area, meeting with the local college and providing advice to residents.

The team have also been investigating a rough sleeper that has been causing anti-social behaviour within the Buckhurst Hill area. Investigations have been around, accumulation of waste, urinating and defecating in the area as well as being verbally abusive to passers-by. A prosecution file has been prepared and the case will be in Court at the end of April 2021 for breach of Community Protection Notice and we will make an application for a Criminal Behaviour Order.

The new Sanctuary scheme has been rolled out within the district; the scheme is around property security measures for victims of domestic abuse. Referrals can be made from any agency and can be for any property type since the role out in March we have received 2 referrals.

On the 29th March an inaugural Gangs Advisory Group meeting is being held for the district, the group membership includes a range of different professionals attending with the purpose of the group to case manage gang nominals, share intelligence and safeguard vulnerable people.

The CSP have commissioned the 2 Johns to deliver Walk Online training to Year 5 and Year 6 students in the district. The training is tackles issues of internet safety and exploitation. The sessions are 22nd-25th March. There will also be a parent awareness session on 25th March in the evening.

At the beginning of the month, the Senior ASB Officer, Melissa Faux and Community Police Sergeant, Neil Ross delivered a Coffee with Cops presentation to members.

The team have issued 7 Community Protection Warnings for various ASB related issues.

Safeguarding

Due to restrictions regarding home visits there are a number of cases that are continually 'rolling over' from month to month at present, however, the Senior Safeguarding Officer (SSO) liaises closely with officers on cases that are assessed as more urgent and/or complex,

especially when there maybe risks of significant harm caused by tenants to themselves or others.

One example of the work of the SSO;

- Following the death of a tenant that had along with her husband suffered from mental health issues and some mobility issues where concerns were raised that the wife was perpetrating domestic abuse against her husband, it became apparent that there may have been opportunities that had been missed. The Councils Designated Safeguarding Lead and Lead Officer raised the issues with ECC's Director of Adult Social Care and although they were happy with their team's practices, agreed that a Multi-Agency Learning Event should be held later in the year to review the case. An excellent result and demonstrates that all agencies are keen to work collaboratively and be proactive to ensure that any gaps are identified, and best practice procedures are developed to benefit our residents.

We have seen a major rise in domestic abuse referrals and complex mental health cases that reflects the national picture and reports from charities/agencies working in these areas. These cases can be very complicated to address and there is no 'one-size fits all' type of response, the SSO has been working with frontline EFDC Staff to provide advice on the best course of action in each case.

One instance related to a resident placed in a B&B who was stating he was going to 'murder people there.' The SSO called a meeting with the Senior Housing Officer to carry out a dynamic risk assessment and check against Council held information. The resident had warning markers for possessing an offensive weapon and mental health illness and was not taking his medication. It was assessed that his aggressive comments represented a plausible and concerning threat that was referred to the MHT for an urgent review.

CCTV:

There have been 26 CCTV Requests submitted over the past month which is an 26% increase more than the previous month.

- 20 Police related
- 6 Internal (EFDC)

The Team have actively worked with the Police to identify suspects involved in the following incidents;

- HSBC Bank Loughton, window broken.
- Racially motivated incident of verbal abuse and damage to vehicle at Limes Farm Estate Chigwell.
- Stabbing incident in Waltham Abbey Hillhouse area.
- 30+ youths engaging in a fight involving a weapon (machete), The Broadway Debden.
- Vehicle attempt to hit pedestrians, The Broadway Debden.

Assistance has been provided to the Environmental Enforcement Team & Housing Officers regarding;

- Homeless person Defecating in the subway in Lower Queens Road Buckhurst Hill.
- Reports of suspected drug dealing in Birch View Epping.

Two Rapid deployment cameras are in operation at present;

- 1 in Loughton to observe COVID regulations and;
- 1 in Roydon in response to repeated fly tipping in country lane.