

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 29 July 2021
Subject: Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Aniket Patel

Recommending:

That the report of the Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Executive Summary

The following report provides an update on progress in the following areas:

Community, Culture & Wellbeing

Adult Inclusion Healthy Lifestyles Project

The Community, Culture & Wellbeing service has been awarded £100K from the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group to develop and pilot a healthy lifestyles project for adults with learning disabilities across West Essex. Working in collaboration with Essex County Council, the funding will be used to employ an Occupational Therapist and specialist support officer who will work directly with clients to initially ensure they attend their NHS Health Checks. Bespoke support will then be given to enable clients to identify positive activities and wider services they would like to become involved with. Resources will ultimately be deployed to provide practical help to ensure easy access to a range of stimulating, healthy, enjoyable activities to improve health and wellbeing, along with mentoring to support independent living. The project will also see the recruitment and training of volunteers to become “buddies” to provide sustainable long-term support for adults with learning disabilities across Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford.

Suicide Prevention Support

Public Health Community Grant Funding, which is overseen by the Epping Forest Health & Wellbeing Board, has been awarded to Mind in West Essex to support the further development and expansion of a virtual Suicide Awareness Hub for Epping Forest. Through the Hub, Mind will recruit members of the public who wish to be ‘Suicide Aware Friends’. Volunteers will receive training to feel confident to start a conversation with someone who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts and be able to signpost them to vital services and support. Once trained by Mind, volunteers will be encouraged to be visible and active in the community.

“Project You”

“Project You” is a new co-facilitated mental health and physical activity project being rolled out by Rosie Pike, the Council’s Health & Wellbeing Officer and Jo Parker, a Mental Health Practitioner from the NHS.

Using funding secured from Active Essex, the programme kicked off at Leverton School in Waltham Abbey on 6th July. Sessions will also be offered on Zoom to reach a wider section of the community and to accommodate those who do not yet feel ready to attend face-to-face sessions. The project delivers on the key priorities of the Be Well Action Group with sessions involving physical exercise including; Pilates, Circuits, Boxing, Walking and Stretch and also mental health workshops themed around anxiety, stress, sleep and mindfulness.

Football V Fat Programme

A Football v Fat Programme has launched in Shelley Ward in Ongar and is available for anyone who wants to lose weight whilst playing football. At the start of each session, each player is weighed, and their BMI recorded, allowing for each participant's weight loss journey to be tracked and for support to be provided around, for example, choosing healthy food alternatives and general healthy lifestyles. Over the past 7 weeks players have lost a collective 20kg! This is a huge achievement and has improved everyone's confidence as well as morale. Players have said they love the session and enjoy the supportive, encouraging environment the programme provides.

Walking in Nature – Dementia support

Facilitated by the Council, the Epping Forest Dementia Action Alliance is delighted to announce that it has secured the accredited status of 'Working to become a Dementia Friendly Community' for a second year.

The Community & Culture Team is building on the Dementia Friendly Communities Programme in Waltham Abbey by piloting several different activity sessions based in or around the Epping Forest District Museum. "Walking in Nature" is a bespoke walk for people affected by dementia and includes an opportunity to visit the exhibition galleries. Walks run every two weeks on a Wednesday and are alternated with a seated movement session called Dance Connect that will use a variety of music from the last seven decades to stimulate memories, discussion and get toes tapping!

Community Gardening Projects

In partnership with the Land Management & Estates team, CCW staff are working on a number of projects as part of the 'More Than Bricks and Mortar' initiative. Feedback from participants and volunteers clearly evidences reduced feelings of depression and anxiety and a decrease in stress and continues to encourage a sense of community and increased physical activity. The programme aims to build community cohesion and sustainability and thriving communities where people want to learn, work and live.

In Ninefields Square, Waltham Abbey residents have been supported to establish two new sensory zones with an array of plants being sown to help stimulate the senses. The spaces are aesthetically pleasing and require very little maintenance.

Pupils from Hill House Primary School are participating in a recycling project, making flower displays to enhance the beauty of the zones. The new sensory gardens are growing well thanks to support from the Ninefields Residents Association.

The Longfields Allotment in Waltham Abbey involves residents aged 4-68 years. The group are working towards hosting open days and food tasting sessions.

The Shelley 'Mindfulness Meadow' is an area of housing land situated on the Shelley estate and close to Cripsey Brook. Staff are working with residents to create an area of calm and reflection. Grow packs containing seeds and instructions have been made available for residents to 'grow their own' at home and plants will be transferred to the meadow creating a sense of place within the community. Pupils from Ongar Primary

School are currently working with Community Development Officers to make wild seed bombs for the site. 150 children have attended workshops. Staff have also worked with residents to develop a new community planting initiative around the Shelley shops. Planters were constructed for the green space near the shops which have been promoted in the community to encourage resident involvement in creating and maintaining the raised beds.

New raised planters and herb gardens have been established at Sheltered Housing Schemes including; Jubilee Court in Waltham Abbey and Hyde Mead House in Nazeing. Residents participating have given positive feedback. The next scheme to take part will be the Chapel Road scheme in Epping.

A community allotment has been established in North Weald. Raised beds are now filled with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Staff have worked with pupils from St Andrews Primary School to design a reflection garden. The school has raised funds for the garden to be created.

Epping Forest Youth Council

Three Youth Councillors have been co-opted onto a strategic group to work with Essex County Council's Youth Service to inform commissioning decisions in relation to local services for young people. Additionally, two Youth Councillors have been elected to represent the Epping Forest district on the County Council's Young Essex Assembly.

The Youth Council are currently working on a personal safety project for local young people following peer feedback and a direct approach from Essex Police. Building on the "We R Safe" initiative, resources including a film called "Ripples" will be produced. The film will focus on the effects certain incidents can have on individuals, their family and friends and provide clear advice and support information. Youth Councillors are working directly with Victim Support and Essex Police in the production of the film.

"The Boys – Holocaust Survivors in the Epping Forest District" associated events programme.

In support of Museum's current exhibition, a successful programme of engaging talks for adults was rolled out via Zoom throughout May, June and July. Working closely with the Jewish community in Buckhurst Hill and Loughton, online cookery classes for children demonstrated how to make Challah Bread. Patchwork quilt workshops were run which involved replicating the "memory quilt" created to celebrate the lives of The Boys. A primary school music lesson resource has been developed with the Jewish Music Institute and the Essex Music Education Hub and recordings of pupils singing will be edited into a video, shared with schools and played as part of the exhibition.

Angela Cohen (the mother of Judge Robert Rinder) and David Vincent, the BBC Director from the Bafta winning programme 'Who Do You Think you are', addressed the Epping Forest Youth Council and the Youth Council are now leading on a family heritage oral history project. The diversity of Council staff is being celebrated through a project called "Our Roots".

Epping Forest District Museum and Education and Outreach Service

Since the Museum was able to reopen on 17 May, over 1000 visitors have been through the doors to visit The Boy's exhibition in a safe and socially distanced way.

The Museum's education service continues to be in high demand with schools. Throughout the pandemic sessions were adapted to be delivered via Zoom. Whilst these sessions continue in line with demand, school visits to the Museum have also resumed. In total, since April 2021, the service has engaged with 1874 pupils.

Museum Rationalisation Project

The Rationalisation Project Team has reviewed (Phase 1) and researched (Phase 2) all objects in Store 1 at the Museum, a total of 1717 items. A further 1358 objects have been through Phase 1 in Store 2. Phase 1 has also begun in Store 3 as well as at the offsite store, The Crate in Loughton.

Six new project volunteers have been recruited to support this work and all existing volunteers are back on site following the relaxing of Covid measures. Full support and training is provided to volunteers and feedback has captured the fact that volunteering is a huge support for those who have struggled with feelings of loneliness or isolation as a result of Covid lockdown measures.

Following Steering Committee meetings and Portfolio Holder sign-off, items have started to leave the collection when they have been deemed to be better placed elsewhere. This has included 10 items that have found new homes as part of CCW's local community allotment projects.