

Report to the Council

Committee: Full Council
Date: 19 December 2023
Subject: Community & Wellbeing
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Smruti Patel

Recommending:

That the report of the Community, Health & Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Warm Places Epping Forest

Epping Forest Social Spaces transformed back into Warm Places on Monday 6 November. The Warm Places initiative started in 2022 to provide a free, safe, warm and comfortable space for those who need it throughout winter. Several venues continued to offer a welcoming space through the Spring and Summer months for residents to meet old friends and make new ones, play games and get access to different services.

Many new Warm Places have opened up across the district, with venues offering refreshments (some providing hot food), activities such as board games and free Wi-Fi. This valued initiative not only provides a physical place for residents who are feeling extra pressure to heat their homes but also offers a friendly space to help reduce social isolation. Full information can be found via the following link: <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/cost-of-living/warm-places/>

Stay Safe & Well This Winter community events.

Stay Safe & Well community events are a key part of the Council's contribution towards the delivery of the Epping Forest Health & Wellbeing Strategy. Events in Loughton and Buckhurst Hill during October proved popular with local residents. Around 100 people attended the events, which were aimed mainly at older residents, and featured information stands, informative talks and health checks, all designed to help residents stay safe and healthy during the winter months. Covid and flu vaccinations were administered, and health checks were undertaken. There were seated exercise sessions and Arc Theatre Company presented an interactive performance themed around scamming.

Partners offering advice and support on the day included Essex Police, East of England Ambulance Service, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, NHS Pharmacists, St Clare Hospice, Epping Forest Foodbank, the Alzheimer's Society, Epping Forest Dementia Friendly Communities, Crimestoppers, VAEF, Carers First, Essex Wellbeing Service, Age Well East, Safer Essex Road Partnership, Neighbourhood Watch, U3A and Social Prescribers. Feedback from both events showed that over 91% of attendees were encouraged to become more active, 94% felt more confident about keeping safe in their home and community, 94% thought the theatre production would help them to avoid being scammed and 100% found the information stalls useful and relevant.

A further two events are scheduled for Spring 2024 in Sheering and Ongar.

Longfield Community Allotment, Waltham Abbey

£1,900 of Home Office Safer Streets funding has been secured to facilitate the clearance of an allotment plot in Waltham Abbey in readiness for the community to take over. Clearance work was completed in September and staff are working with interested local residents and groups on the project. Engaging with nature, learning new skills, sharing horticultural knowledge with others, and forging meaningful friendships are just a few of the benefits of this work.

Cost of Living Youth Conference

The Epping Forest Youth Conference is a biannual event which is organised and hosted in the Council Chamber by Epping Forest Youth Councillors as part of their second year in office. Supported by the Community Development & Wellbeing Team, Friday 17 November saw the district's nine secondary schools send delegates from all year groups to the event. Over 100 teenagers attended on the day.

This year the theme was 'Let's Talk About Money,' which linked to the Youth Councillor's project about the cost-of-living. Guest speakers included experts from the financial world and educational services talking about the impact of the cost of living on teenagers and their families, money management and the importance of budgeting, debt guidance and young people's financial wellbeing. There was a lively debate, Youth Councillors updated schools about their work and encouraged pupils to stand in the forthcoming Youth Elections.

Broadcast Junior

The junior school version of Broadcast, which is an interactive, educational theatre production, will be delivered to pupils in Years 5 and 6 across eleven schools in and around Loughton and Ongar. Broadcast Junior covers social media safety, TikTok dares and meeting people alone. Arc Theatre has also been funded by the CSP to deliver the 'Unlimited' counter-hate performance programme, with teacher training for three schools in the district: St Andrews in North Weald and Moreton Primary schools, and the Year 7 pupils at The Ongar Academy. Through creative workshop activities and discussions, young people look at how to celebrate unity in diversity while sensitively exploring and challenging a range of extremist narratives.

Nazeing Outreach Youth Work

The Team has secured £1,380 from the Community Safety Partnership to commission the delivery of 12 weeks youth outreach work in Nazeing. This was in response to Community Champions reporting anti-social behaviour concerns in the area. The Red Balloon Foundation completed the work on behalf of the Council and are due to launch a permanent youth club at St Giles Church Hall.

Limes Farm Colts

The Limes Farm Colts football project in Chigwell is running successfully and continues to grow through partnership working with the Limes Farm Community Group, Colebrook Royals FC, and the Council. Over 40 children are benefitting from the sessions on a Tuesday afternoon and evening. Funding totally £3,332 has been received from Active Essex, and new funding to ensure sustainability will be sought for April 2024 onwards.

Dementia Friendly Communities

A Dementia Information Webpage was launched on the Council's website in October.

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/community/dementia/>

Due to the Alzheimer's Society stepping back from the dementia friendly recognition scheme, the Dementia Friendly Communities Group (DFC) decided to create their own logo. Coopersale

& Theydon Garnon Primary School pupils took part in a competition to design this. In October, group members and people with lived experience chose the winning design. Adaptions are being made by the successful pupil to create the final version.

Christmas Memory Train

On 6 December a pre-Christmas trip on the Memory Train between Ongar and North Weald was enjoyed by 80 Epping Forest residents living with dementia and mild cognitive impairment. Santa met travellers at Ongar station to distribute gifts and joined the passengers for a jolly trip to North Weald. This is the fourth event of its kind that's run and it was made possible by a collaboration between Epping Open Gardens, Epping Ongar Railway, and the Council.

Multiply Funding

The Community & Wellbeing Directorate received £10,000 of funding to support Essex County Council with the delivery of the Multiply Programme in the Epping Forest district over a seven-month time frame (August 2023 to March 2024).

The Council's role in this government funded project is to act as an advocate and coordinator to ensure local partners are working together and that residents' groups have access to the delivery partners, ensuring those in need have the opportunity to engage in the project. The project includes basic numeracy courses, understanding finance courses, cookery and maths, gardening by numbers, and maths for parents to support with their children's homework. The Council has been recognised for best practice with this pilot.

Let's Cook

Partnering with a local Primary Care Network (PCN) dietician, officers will be delivering cookery programmes to families on a low income. Participants will receive a free slow cooker to use at home. After the pilot in January 2024, the programme will be rolled out to residents with different health diagnoses, for example, those with type 2 Diabetes, and tailored to individual conditions.

Epping Forest Community Champions

The volunteer Community Champion team has increased to 23. Four new Community Champions have come on board to help represent Ongar, Abridge, Epping and Waltham Abbey. The Community Champions have recently volunteered at the following events: the launch of the "Greater in Spirit, Larger in Outlook" Museum exhibition, Stay Safe & Well this Winter events in Loughton and Buckhurst Hill, the Ninefields Training, Recruitment and Skills Fair and an Emergency Planning Recruitment event. Upcoming events include the Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre 5-year anniversary celebration and the Museum's Cavalcade of Light activities.

On 26 September the Community Champions attended the Communities Scrutiny Committee with a presentation on their Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) work.

Officers have been supporting Sheering's Community Champion with funding applications to establish a youth club and Epping's new Community Champion is working with officers to establish an intergenerational gardening project with Ivy Chimneys Primary School.

Ninefields - Robert Wood Johnson Place-Based Project

As part of the continuing Ninefields Place-Based Project, a survey has been undertaken with residents to gather information themed around employment, skills and training aspirations. Over 400 responses were received and analysed.

The information gathered will inform the development and roll out of a range of training opportunities in the area to address the skills shortages identified. To begin this approach and

promote existing opportunities a multi-agency Recruitment, Skills & Training fair was delivered at Waltham Abbey Sports Centre on the 30th October.

Social, Active, Strong

The Social, Active, Strong Service continues to support older residents to improve their strength and mobility and live independent lives. The service is so successful that additional classes have been added in Loughton and Buckhurst Hill to meet the increase in referrals.

West Essex Disability Inclusion Project

The West Essex Disability Inclusion Project will be delivering a Christmas Party for all the children and families involved in the project on the 14th December at the Civic Offices. This year has been the most successful yet with the Project running more activities and supporting more children with disabilities and their families than any of its previous years.

Primary Care Network Health Inequalities Projects

Staff supported the Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell (LBC) Primary Care Network to deliver a Health MOT event at New City Collage on the 28th November. The event involved local residents aged 50+, who had not had a health check in the past five years, attending the College to have blood pressure and health checks, and to also access a range of support services.

Staff are also working with the Epping North Primary Care Network by supporting them to help residents with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. Specifically identified residents will be supported to access winter warmth support via the Community Hubs in Epping and Waltham Abbey. Both of these initiatives are part of a joint approach on the part of the Council and the NHS, to reduce health inequalities.

Epping Forest District Museum

September saw the opening of the “Greater in Spirit, Larger in Outlook” exhibition at the Museum. The exhibition has seen over 1000 visitors to date. The exhibition was externally funded by Arts Council England and has enabled Epping Forest District Museum and Saffron Walden Museum to review objects in their collections relating to different cultures of the world. Local schools continue to visit the Museum, with 1400 pupils accessing the formal education service from September until mid-November.

On Friday 24 November, the Museum took part in the Cavalcade of Light event. This annual event takes place in Waltham Abbey and celebrates the turning on of the Christmas lights in the Town.

Recently the Museum had a mystery-shop visit by a Visit England assessor. The Museum scored an overall 89% with 100% for cleanliness and customer care. The Museum was described as “a high-quality facility as experienced by two different assessors on previous visits. It is a small district museum, and everything is very well presented and interpreted, cleanliness throughout is excellent.”