

## ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 17 February 2009

**Subject:** Community Wellbeing Portfolio

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Syd Stavrou

**Item:** 7(d)

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### **Recommendation:**

**That the report of the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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### **Safer Communities**

Automatic Number Plate Recognition devices – Chigwell Road Policing Unit have reported seizing a significant number of vehicles for no insurance/licence. This reflects the success of the funding awarded by the Strategic Partnership towards purchasing the devices. The devices have also been successful in gathering intelligence on the vehicle movements of known criminals

Crime Reduction – year to date figures (up to the end of January) are 225 under profile. To date, we are on track to achieve our overall 5% crime reduction target for the District.

EFDC Safer Communities team are leading cross border initiatives with our neighbouring authorities in an attempt to reduce cross border crime. Other proactive schemes are also being promoted to tackle local crime hot spots as and when they occur.

Joint Area Action Groups – minutes are now available for viewing on the Council's website.

District Commander – Our new District Commander is Chief Inspector Alan Wray.

### **Furniture Exchange Scheme**

Members may remember the Lighthouse Furniture Exchange Scheme that closed because of Health and Safety issues at its Town Mead Depot premises. This scheme had operated successfully between February 2007 and July 2008 as an outreach project under Brentwood's Lighthouse Scheme.

As it was obvious there was a need for such a service in the District, and especially so in the present economic situation, exploratory talks were entered into with various interested parties. Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) offered to start up the scheme under their auspices and on 5 February 2009 the Cabinet agreed to seek £20,000 from the District Development Fund for 2009/10. towards the project. Suitable premises have been identified in Waltham Abbey and VAEF are actively looking at other funding sources to advance the scheme.

## **Grant Aid Policy Review**

The last major review of Grant Aid Scheme policy was carried out in 2003/4. Members are advised that a further review of grant aid policy is being undertaken during the current Council year. Draft proposals are being circulated to Group Leaders and independent members for discussion and comments. It is hoped that the final document will be ready for submission to Cabinet on 20 April 2009.

## **Severe Weather – 2 and 3 February 2009**

Although Council Services were disrupted during the week commencing Monday 2 February as a result of the severe weather conditions, contingency arrangements were put into place to lessen the effects.

Emergency arrangements were put into place to cover telephone operators who could not get to work on Monday 2 February.

Whilst the Civic Offices had to close early on 2 February to enable staff who did get into work to return home safely I am pleased to say that the Council was able to maintain its out of hours emergency service on an extended basis from early afternoon and throughout the night.

The Civic Offices opened as normal from Tuesday 3 February onwards.

North Weald Airfield was able to provide assistance to the WRVS by supplying a 4-wheel drive vehicle and driver to help with the delivery of meals on wheels on Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 February when the weather conditions were at their worst.