

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

**Subject: Safer, Greener & Highways**

**Date: 27 September 2012**

**Portfolio Holder: Cllr G Waller**

**Item: 6**

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### **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Safer, Greener & Highways Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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### **Community safety**

Making use of partnership funding, the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership has been able to appoint a new Data Analyst for a 12 month initial period. This postholder will be able to analyse crime data and trends and allow the Partnership to make important decisions on future resourcing. She will also be able to disaggregate the data for the Epping Forest and Brentwood policing division, so that we can view the data for the Epping Forest district alone. Meanwhile, we only have access to data for Epping Forest and Brentwood combined, and on that basis I can report that for the period between April and mid August, the target for all crime has been bettered, although that for domestic burglary has been marginally exceeded.

Epping Forest CSP was informed on 10 July that a homicide in which the victim was a female resident of Buckhurst Hill had occurred at Loughton and that it appeared to meet the criteria for commissioning a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR). Following initial investigations which showed that the establishment of a DHR was indeed justified, I formally notified the Home Office that we would be taking this step, and the first meeting of the DHR Panel has been set for 1 October 2012, with the intention of appointing an independent Chair and agreeing Terms of Reference for the Review. Under statutory provisions, the DHR is the responsibility of the Community Safety Partnership and will require considerable input from officers within the Safer Communities Team.

The renewal of the CCTV system in Debden Broadway, funded by the Epping Forest District Council Town Centre Enhancement Budget, was completed in mid August, and there are now 64 cameras transmitting images wirelessly to the Safer Communities Team at the Civic Offices. This system has already been used successfully to identify two fly-tippers who are now being investigated by EFDC Neighbourhood Officers. The Council has also funded a fourth camera at Epping High Street to cover the area surrounding the Station Road junction. The Safer Communities Team can arrange demonstrations of the CCTV systems for Members on request.

Following an extensive investigation conducted by EFDC Anti-social Behaviour investigators, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service and Essex Police Neighbourhood Policing Team into a series of bin arsons in this area, a 17 year old female appeared at Chelmsford Youth Court on 27 July, having pleaded guilty. A male aged 17 was also arrested, charged and convicted, and has since moved from the area. After sentencing, the Court heard an application from the Council's investigators for the granting an Anti-social Behaviour Order, and a two year ASBO was granted, prohibiting the female from using threatening, insulting or abusive words or behaviour or inciting others within the area of Epping Forest District.

Reported domestic violence is a growing problem throughout the country, including Epping Forest. The Safer Communities Team is placing a full page advertisement in a new District GP health guide, with distribution commencing at the end of October and continuing for a full year. As well as GP practices, copies will be placed in health centres, clinics, Citizens Advice Bureaux and Libraries, with the advertisement directing concerned readers to local services available in the

District and also to national support agencies.

A free electric blanket testing service provided by the Council produced a good response from local residents, and those who took advantage of this facility can now be reassured that their blanket is safe to use during the coming winter months.

## **Countrycare**

Since the last Council meeting I have visited almost all the Local Nature Reserves within the District and have had opportunities to see for myself the excellent work which is being carried out to maintain and enhance the habitats provided for plants and wildlife. I also spent some time with the volunteers working at the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve (LNR), a site of Special Scientific Interest extending to 160 acres which is the largest surviving area of traditionally managed river valley habitat in Essex.

Over 50 different volunteers have been mobilised by Countrycare this year, and they comprise a superb asset providing a high degree of leverage to complement the work of the staff and to maximise the impact of their activities. Josh Russell, the youngest volunteer, aged 20, received the Jack Petchey volunteer of the year award of £200 which will be put towards hedgeplanting in North Weald, close to where Josh lives.

Talks have been given to local societies including pensioners' groups, and several successful environmental education events have taken place. As many as 38 species of moth were recorded at a moth and bat night held at Epping Upland All Saints Church.

The Environment Directorate has also now agreed an internal recharge to Countrycare for the maintenance and enhancement of the former Bobbingworth Tip. This will allow the site to be managed to a standard which will potentially enable it to be designated as an LNR in the future.

## **Highways and parking**

The new Highways Panel eventually met for the first time on 6 September and County Councillor Gerard McEwen was appointed Chairman. As the result of a decision made then to consider a wider range of potential schemes, a further meeting was arranged for 18 September and a subsequent one for 2 October. I shall arrange for the outcomes of these meetings to be placed in the Members' Bulletin. Members should note that the outcomes of Panel meetings will also be reported to the Safer, Cleaner, Greener Standing Scrutiny Panel.

Concerns around the Parking Reviews continue. I have reported previously that the Epping Review has been completed. However, despite the team's best efforts to carry out consultations and engage residents with the proposed changes, it has proved difficult to avoid some disappointments. I am keen to learn the lessons of the Epping Review and am working with Buckhurst Hill members to improve the way in which their local scheme is implemented, with the objective of carrying it out in a manner which avoids widespread changes but addresses key problem areas. Loughton Broadway Parking Review will commence once the Buckhurst Hill Review is completed, as already agreed by Members.

I would like to remind Members that the enforcement of on street parking restrictions will transfer from the Council to the North Essex Parking Partnership on 1 October 2012. I shall ask for further details to be provided in the Members' Bulletin.