

# ***Report to the Council***

**Subject: Safer, Greener, Highways Portfolio**

**Date: 23 April 2013**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor Gary Waller**

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**Recommending:**

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

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## **Safer Communities**

The work of the panel undertaking the Domestic Homicide Review, chaired by former councillor Mrs Ann Haigh, has continued, with the most recent meeting held on 4 April. The Panel has now received all of the Individual Management Reports from relevant agencies, and subject to a meeting which has already been arranged with a police officer from Scotland (where an incident involving the perpetrator and the victim had occurred), should shortly be able to start drawing some conclusions. These will be submitted to the Home Office in due course, with the intention that they might make a positive contribution to understanding how such tragic fatal events occur and how they may perhaps be prevented in the future.

Working with the Community Safety Partnership, the team ran an event for year 10 pupils at Roding Valley High School entitled 'Prison! Me! No Way!'. The children were able to experience at first hand what it is like to be in a prison cell or a custody vehicle, as well as hearing from serving and former prisoners about the realities of life behind bars. The event was attended by the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, Nick Alston, who commented on its effectiveness and the obvious benefits of endeavouring to steer young people away from criminality. Representatives from other schools attended and it is hoped to hold further events of this type. There is a video presentation of the event which I would recommend Members to watch, available on the Council's website at <http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/news/2013/04/essex-pupils-locked-up-to-learn/>

Our Anti-Social Behaviour investigators remain busy dealing with serious complaints, and continue to be successful in court when seeking ASBOs against those people causing very real difficulties to the communities where they live. By way of example, a Safer Communities ASB investigator attended Chelmsford Youth Court on 22 March where he made application for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order on conviction against a 16 year old female formerly of Crossways, Loughton. After a lengthy hearing, the court granted the ASBO which lasts 2 years and which prohibits the offender from: (1) engaging in conduct, or inciting or encouraging others to engage in conduct which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress including the use of insulting or abusive words, actions or gestures within Epping Forest District; and (2) entering Sainsburys plc, Loughton.

The Council's Safer Communities team, together with the local police, have joined forces with several of the District's garden centres to launch a series of Garden and Perimeter Security advice leaflets. This action is part of the 'Lock 'em Out' campaign which gives basic security advice for the home and developed from close working with the District's police partners as part of a series of measures to drive down house

burglary. The initiative has also been adopted by Brentwood and Harlow districts and may soon go Essex wide.

The team were also successful in dealing with an incident at Buckhurst Hill, where graffiti was sprayed over a wall near the shops. A Safer Communities ASB investigator pursued an investigation to identify the persons responsible, and the investigation commenced by securing EFDC CCTV images of the offender. Enquiries were made with local youths and eventually information was received which indicated the identity of the individual concerned. A case of criminal damage was reported to Essex Police and working with the local police Youth Officer, an 11 year old boy was interviewed in the presence of his mother and admitted the offence. In view of his age, a full admission to the offence and the remorse shown for his actions, the boy was dealt with by way of Neighbourhood Resolution (out of court disposal). This was on the understanding that compensation for the damage was paid to EFDC. I am happy to say that £90, the agreed cost of the damage, has now been paid in full.

### **Vehicle parking**

The Epping Parking Review is all but complete, with minor snagging items being completed by Essex Highways. This means that we can move towards implementation of the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review. A meeting with ward Members has been arranged for 17 April to discuss the preparatory work that has been carried out and to ensure that the plans fully comply with agreed objectives.

At the meeting of North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) on 10 April I nominated nine parking schemes for implementation in the District. At the time of writing it was unclear how many of these schemes will be realised as part of the next tranche.

I am pleased to announce that the Council has been successful in gaining the Park Mark award for all 19 of its car parks. This is a prestigious award, supported by the Home Office, and its achievement means that every Council car park has been vetted by the police and assessed as having measures in place to create a safe environment for users and their vehicles.

Investigations including user surveys have taken place to consider options for resolving the current problems relating to the Council's Epping car parks. These owe their origin to the substantial tariff increases, implemented on 5 January this year, in the station car parks operated by NCP on behalf of London Underground Limited. Tariffs in those car parks are now either £5.00 or £6.00, whereas the long stay charge for the Council's own car parks remains at £2.80, the absence of increases during the past four years reflecting the Council's determination to recognise the financial pressures bearing down on its residents. The unintended consequence is that very many of the parking spaces are taken up by commuters, restricting their availability for shoppers and visitors, and this in turn puts local retailers at a disadvantage. I intend to discuss possible solutions with Epping councillors and hope to provide an oral update to Council.

### **Sustainability and energy efficiency**

A food waste trial at the Civic Offices is due to take place shortly, and staff who will be involved have been informed what can and cannot be disposed of in the food only bins. Staff have also been given an explanation as to where the waste will go once it has been collected. A commencement date for this trial is due in the very near future.

The Government has reinstated mandatory HECA reporting for local authorities, in line with the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995. The main body of EFDC's report was written in collaboration with other Essex councils, and an appendix was then added, outlining the actions proposed to improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock. Our report was submitted by the due date of 31 March, and was also published on the Council's website in compliance with the legislative requirements. A decision is due to be made on the next steps and on whether we should prepare a fuel poverty strategy for the District.

## **Countrycare**

The Easter holidays marked the first of Countrycare's kids' events, starting with a very cold but nevertheless successful scavenger hunt at Roughtalley's Wood Local Nature Reserve for children aged between 4 and 11. There followed a Community Development event at High Beech, which included some bug hunting.

Another 200 trees were planted by volunteers at Bobbingworth Nature Reserve (former landfill site), and these included not only a Jubilee Oak, given to Countrycare as part of the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Fields Award, but also a sapling from the Bowthorpe Oak at Bourne in Lincolnshire, almost certainly the oldest oak in England at over 1000 years, with the sapling given to Countrycare by a local tree warden.

Countrycare has also worked with local councils to improve some of their sites for wildlife. At Swaines Green two volunteer days were devoted to cutting and raking Lovelocks Meadow, owned by Epping Town Council, to open up the meadow from blackthorn and bramble and to encourage the growth of wild flowers. In collaboration with Loughton Town Council, a further two volunteer days were spent cutting back bramble at Willingale Road Allotments to free up the trees on the site and open up the grassland area; the grass was cut and raked to help encourage the growth of wild flowers, and litter was also removed. And work was carried out for Chigwell Parish Council at Chigwell Allotments to clear the area around a hedgerow to encourage growth, with a view to more hedgelaying in winter.