

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 September 2015

Subject: Safer, Greener and Transport

Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Waller

Recommending:

That the report of the Safer, Greener and Transport Portfolio Holder be noted.

Community Safety

The team continues to support victims of domestic abuse and those with other vulnerabilities. A pilot scheme has just been introduced whereby a retired police trained Crime Prevention Officer works in a voluntary capacity with the Council's Community Safety Officer in dealing with medium risk domestic abuse referrals from Safer Places. The first case has just been referred and successfully completed, highlighting other risks to the victim which had not previously been identified. A risk management plan was implemented and physical security support supplied. A further referral was taken from an EFDC housing team, involving an elderly lady with significant health issues who was the victim of ASB. The Community Safety Officer again worked with the volunteer Crime Prevention Assistant to help the lady with physical security measures, and this has greatly improved her quality of life.

Volunteer Police Cadets

The Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) scheme - one of the first in Essex – commenced on 22 September at the Limes Centre, Chigwell, with 20 young people participating. The VPC training will take place on a weekly basis between 6.30pm and 9.30pm, and the young people aged between 13 and 18 years of age will take part in a broad programme of activities offering them a tremendous experience.

CSP Analyst Post

I am pleased to state that, following a successful recruitment process, we now have our Crime Analyst in post, in a partnership with Essex Police, covering the West Policing area including Brentwood, Epping Forest and Thurrock. The Analyst is based in our Community Safety Team at the Civic Offices and is currently acquiring access to Essex Police systems, a process which is taking some time as a result of a major change affecting data recording, requiring re-training of the entire police workforce. However, it is anticipated that the Analyst will be fully trained in the new systems by November and will have been able to start work on the Epping Forest Strategic Assessment by then. It is hoped that she will be able to access police systems remotely, providing flexibility in terms of working locations and without being dependent on access to a police station.

Anti-social Behaviour

The two Council ASB investigators have experienced a 10 per cent increase in workload over the last year and this, combined with the recent announcement from Essex Police that they will in future only deal with the 3 per cent of recorded ASB cases that are assessed as 'high risk', is likely to increase their workload further. The investigators are making full use of the new tools and powers available under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 and now have delegated powers to issue Community Protection Notices, which are designed to deal with ongoing problems or nuisance which is negatively affecting the local community's quality of life.

Evidence is being compiled for a possible Public Spaces Protection Notice in the vicinity of Debden Broadway. Consultation is about to begin with all residents, businesses and others who may be affected.

The ASB Investigators have obtained the Council's first interim ASB injunction against a tenant involved in persistent anti-social behaviour, which has so far proved effective in moderating the behaviour.

Investigators are working in partnership with Essex Police in obtaining a first 'Premises Closure Order' for the District. The premises are described by police as a 'crack den', and the initial process of obtaining an order has commenced. The case is complex, involving a number of different legal strands including obtaining an ASB injunction and possession proceedings, supported by the deployment of portable overt CCTV.

Limes Farm

Following the shooting at Limes Farm in early July, two men were arrested for being in possession of, and discharging a firearm. Immediately after the incident, our Community Safety Team organised a meeting with Essex Police and the Metropolitan Police representing the neighbouring area of Hainault, as well as housing officers from both the Council and relevant housing associations. An action plan was drawn up from this meeting, with the main aim of settling the unrest and concern that had been seen amongst residents in the area. The consensus was that an engagement intervention was needed, and a meeting was therefore called with Chigwell Parish Council, attended by the Leader of Council, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, officers and myself. At this meeting, it was agreed that all partners would contribute funding towards the appointment of Parkguard, a uniformed organisation with a high level of experience in working with communities suffering from crime and disorder.

This funding has enabled the delivery of regular patrols and engagement activity with people living on Limes Farm and has been very successful in reducing fear and anxiety across all age groups. In addition, Parkguard have detained a number of persons in relation to drug related offences, have been able to allay fears arising from the recent shotgun incident and have helped to reduce ASB and other criminal activity during the summer holiday period. The funding for Parkguard is sufficient to cover reduced patrols leading up to Hallowe'en and bonfire night, and officers are currently considering longer term options for Limes Farm.

Safeguarding

Through the implementation of our new arrangements for safeguarding, we are now able to monitor the level of safeguarding concerns that staff raise each month with the safeguarding team and the number of referrals that the Council makes to Essex Social Care. I shall therefore be able to provide an overview of these statistics in future reports. In August the safeguarding team received 17 concerns, as follows;

- 5 x children only concerns (where children were victims);
- 11 x adult only concerns (where adults were victims), and;
- 1 x concern that involved both children and adults

From these concerns, 11 new cases were referred to Essex Social Care, 2 updates were sent to agencies where the victim/perpetrator was already known, 3 cases were not referred and one case was not deemed a safeguarding concern.

Countrycare

Countrycare has continued with its well attended regular volunteer days, including a couple of days' work for Harlow Council on the Stort Water Meadows. One of the days saw volunteers from three different groups come together to help restore this important wildflower meadow.

The volunteer days are a staple part of Countrycare's activities, and it is worth setting out those which have taken place since July:

Thursday 2 July: All Saints Church, Nazeing. A new compost bin was built and areas of the wildflower meadow were cut and raked up. 14 volunteers attended.

Thursday 9 July: Roughtalleys Wood LNR, North Weald. The paths and glades were cut and raked, bramble was cleared from around the pill box, wood chip was bagged up ready for use at Bobbingworth Nature Reserve and logs were used to finish marking out the woodland path. 18 volunteers attended.

Thursday 16 July: Weald Common Flower Meadow LNR, North Weald. The hedgerow by the road was cleared around, areas of the meadow were cut and raked, ragwort was pulled from the meadow and bramble was cleared at the far end of the site. 19 volunteers attended.

Thursday 23 July: Millennium Garden, Epping Green. Three quarters of the site was cut and raked. Some areas were left uncut for invertebrate habitat. 14 volunteers attended.

Thursday 30 July: Foster Street Burial Ground. The compost bin was turned, and some of it used to spread along the roadside hedgerow, and the grassland area was cut and raked. 18 volunteers attended.

Thursday 6 August: Stort Water Meadows, Harlow. The site was cut and raked, and the arisings were removed. 27 volunteers attended.

Thursday 13 August: All Saints Churchyard, Epping Upland. The churchyard was cut and raked, and the arisings put onto the compost bin. 18 volunteers attended.

Wednesday 19 August: Home Mead Local Nature Reserve. The meadow area was cut and raked up; four volunteers attended.

Thursday 20 August: Bobbingworth Nature Reserve, Moreton. The area between the trees had been strimmed and was raked up, two bat boxes were installed, tree labels were put up and the hedge along the northern side of the site was cleared along. 13 volunteers attended.

Thursday 27 August: Thornwood Allotments, Thornwood. The meadow area was cut and raked up. 16 volunteers attended.

Thursday 3rd September: Norton Heath LNR. Bramble was cleared and raked, and young silver birch was pulled. 14 volunteers attended.

Tuesday 8th September: Willingale Road Allotments, Loughton. The meadow was cut and raked up; five volunteers attended.

Thursday 10 September: Old Shire Lane. The meadow was cut and raked up. 12 volunteers attended.

Bug hunting and pond dipping events were attended by a total of 87 children on four occasions. Countrycare attended two shows over the summer: North Weald Airfield Battle of Britain 75th Anniversary Day and Epping Forest Burial Park's Working Woodland Day. Flyers and walks leaflets were handed out and kids' activities were available.

Countrycare's annual moth night was the best yet. Held at Chigwell Meadows, 22 people turned up and helped to identify 43 species of moth. On 9 September 13 people enjoyed a guided walk around Theydon Bois and Theydon Garnon.

Parking

Council Car Parks Strategy

Following the introduction of the revised tariff in July, new pay and display meters have been installed in all car parks, and revised arrangements have been made for the visitors' car park at the Civic Offices, as a result of which more spaces are available for short stay visitors to the Council.

The Parking Strategy, approved by Cabinet in February of this year, incorporates the installation of new CCTV systems and enhanced lighting. A business case for Invest to Save funding is being made for replacing existing lighting with more energy efficient LED lights.

The Portfolio Holder Advisory Group on the Car Parking Strategy continues to provide advice and support. I very much welcome the help given in implementing the new Strategy.

Parking Reviews

The majority of the signing and lining work for the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review has been carried out, although some areas have proved difficult due to commuter parking. Essex Highways intend to carry out the remaining works during evening hours when there are no commuter cars.

Once all work on the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review is completed, it will be possible to start work on the Loughton Broadway Parking Review. I intend to meet the local ward members in the very near future to consider the way in which this project should be carried forward.

ePetition

I have to report to Council that an ePetition has been submitted by residents who are concerned about parking in Rounton Road, Waltham Abbey. By the end of the allotted time period of 12 weeks, it had been signed by 14 persons. This matter will be investigated.