

Report to the Council

Date: 20 February 2007

Subject: Community Wellbeing

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ms S Stavrou

Item: 6 (d)

Recommending:

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

NAPs and JAGs

Our crime and disorder team are presently implementing the Home Office driven Community Engagement Strategy. This involves Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPS) and Joint Action Groups (JAGS). Essex police have been tasked with setting up a NAP that will initially be at Limes Farm. These action groups will eventually be driven by residents with advice and guidance as required from police and councillors. Whatever the NAPS cannot resolve can be referred up to the JAG. This will meet every Monday at 2.00pm and will consist of a team of relevant organisations (still being decided) who can provide additional problem solving skills. They will have the ability to co-opt people or group representatives onto the JAG as necessary and will look at prioritising issues raised by the NAP. It is expected that NAPS will be set up in any area of the district with identified problems of crime and disorder or anti-social behaviour.

Limes Farm Community Policing

Essex Police and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership have responded positively to Councillors and residents' concerns. The CDRP has allocated £3,500 to enable Essex Police to make a visible statement of intent that they are policing the locality. As this part of this "high profile" policing it has been suggested a blue lamp be fitted outside the Community Policing Building (as per all police stations), new signage to the exterior and notice boards to promote initiatives especially through NAPS and JAGS. The interior will be refurbished with new carpet, data cables and laptop to allow report writing and access to Essex Police databases from the office, new desks and chairs and PAC access control to allow response teams and other departments to access the office. The aim of all these improvements is to increase police officers' time on Limes Farm, and through the visibility of a high police presence, to reassure residents on the estate and reduce opportunities from crime.

These recommendations are with the Western Division Utilities for costing and hopefully with some of our CDRP funding and the BCU fund, we hope to have it implemented soon.

Good Neighbourhood Schemes

One initiative recently introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-Ordinator is the introduction of Good Neighbour Contracts for EFDC. These act like an Acceptable Behaviour Contract and are linked to tenancy agreements. Their purpose is to diffuse

neighbour disputes by encouraging a more responsible manner. This is proposed to work in conjunction with the mediation scheme that is funded through the CDRP.

Graffiti

EFDC's Graffiti Project has been a victim of its own success. Due to the number of graffiti incidents being reported, and actioned, there has been an overspend of the graffiti budget. This is being currently quantified and it is hoped that funds can be found to enable the deficit to be covered, and the service continued. As part of the Council's duty to provide best value, an investigation is being carried out to find a way to reduce the cost of removing each incident and obtaining better value for money within the budget.

In the meantime the Crime Reduction Team are recording all graffiti calls and tasking PCSOs to photograph each incident. We now have a dedicated Police Sergeant who is collating all the evidence and looking to prosecute offenders. The removal of graffiti plays an important part of reducing the fear of crime in the District. Graffiti and litter are two of the most important visual indicators residents use to evaluate a safe community environment.

Concessionary Fares

Bus Passes need to be renewed from April 2007, and to date the majority of the bus pass renewal letters have now been despatched.

Grant Aid

Progressing routinely. Councillors are now being invited to comment on Grant Aid applications within their wards. Some £13,000 remains in the current grant Aid Budget up to the new financial year if the present tranche of applications are approved.

Emergency Response

Pandemic Flu

I reported to Council in December 2006 that officers were reviewing the Council's business continuity plans in relation to the likely effects of pandemic flu.

Significant progress has since been made.

A Pandemic Flu Corporate Contingency Plan has been produced which sets out a strategy for how the Council will manage the effects of a pandemic on the organisation to enable us to continue to provide services to the community. The plan covers such issues as:

- Identifying and prioritising critical services - refuse collection, benefit payments and the 24 hour Careline Service are examples;
- The redeployment of staff resources to support critical services;
- The provision of information to Staff, Councillors and the Community;

- Infection control measures within Council establishments and welfare arrangements for staff;
- Assistance to the West Essex Primary Care Trust as part of a multi agency response to the community.

An internally organised business continuity workshop was held on 22 January and attended by Senior Managers from all Services, Councillors Mrs Collins, Knapman and myself.

The purpose of the Workshop was to raise awareness about pandemic flu and through the medium of a table top exercise explore the issues that would face the Council during the period of a pandemic when as many as 40% or more of the organisation, staff and Councillors, would not be able to perform their duties for several weeks.

The results of the exercise are currently being analysed by the officers and will be used to strengthen the corporate plan and individual Service plans.

General information about pandemic flu and the Council's contingency planning has been circulated to all staff and Councillors through the Council's email network and the Members Bulletin. Further updates will be provided as and when appropriate.

No one can predict when the next flu pandemic will occur. Medical experts say it is a case of "when" and not "if".

The purpose of our contingency planning is not to be alarmist but to ensure that the Council is as prepared as it can be to maintain its critical services, its community leadership role and contribute to the wider multi agency response.