

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference: C-037-2017/18**  
**Date of meeting: 7 December 2017**



**Portfolio:** Safer, Greener and Transport

**Subject:** Proposal for increased Policing or 'uniformed' presence in the District

**Responsible Officer:** Julie Chandler (01992 564214)

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### **Recommendations:**

- (1) That further discussion takes place with Essex Police to fully determine the options and implications of the Council funding two police officers as part of a hybrid model of operation to improve levels of policing in the District;**
- (2) That, as a short term measure, Parkguard security company be appointed to provide regular uniformed patrolling of the District during the period 2 January 2018 to March 31 2018, subject to further review, and that Sections 5 and 10 of the Council's Procurement Rules be waived accordingly;**
- (3) That a recommendation be made to Council for a Supplementary Estimate of £25,000 in the current financial year (2017/18), to cover the costs of (2) above; and**
- (4) That appropriate budget provision be made for the commissioning of a service on a longer-term basis from 2018/19.**

### **Executive Summary:**

Over the last 18 months, the Council has seen a significant increase in the number of youth nuisance incidents in the district and cases of general anti-social behaviour (ASB) amounting to 10% more than in the previous year. In addition, the level of recorded crime and violence has increased. It appears that this has been a result of the reduction in Essex Police resources from 2015/16, which has seen the number of community police officers in the Epping Forest District reduced by about 50%, together with the sale of Waltham Abbey and, proposed sale of Epping and Ongar police stations and the closure of custody and front office facilities at Loughton Police Station.

Recent examples of the escalation in serious youth nuisance and ASB problems include incidents over Halloween and in Waltham Abbey and Epping, where large groups of young people have behaved in intimidating and threatening ways, which has led to the council's Community Safety Team using a range of powers including closure orders, injunctions and Community Protection Notices (CPNs). Although these particular issues have been addressed very well by the Council's Community Safety Team, working closely with the Community Policing Team, there is a real problem across the whole of the District and this has caused unrest and concern amongst many of the District's communities.

The Leader of Council and Portfolio Holder for Safer, Greener and Transport therefore requested the Assistant Director (Community Services and Safety) to investigate potential options to address these ongoing issues in the District and this report considers the main options.

In consultation with the Portfolio Holder, the following potential options have been investigated:

1. EFDC to commission a private security company who are accredited by the local police service under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) (Uniformed Organisation) to undertake regular patrolling and targeted work;
2. EFDC to pay for a number of additional Police Officers for the district, who would be employed by Essex Police, but tasked through the Council's Community safety Team.
3. A hybrid of options 1 & 2 above, plus provision of a range of youth engagement work.

This report provides details of the costs and implications of each option and recommends a suggested way forward..

#### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

With an evident lack of visible policing within local communities in the District, groups of young people and other adult individuals are gaining confidence in their ability to disrupt communities, intimidate other local residents and committing crime. It is recognised that these problems will continue to escalate unless action is taken to engage with perpetrators and challenge anti-social behaviour with the ability to impose enforcement sanctions when necessary.

#### **Other Options for Action:**

To do nothing, or for the Council to lobby the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner to provide additional policing, from funds accumulated through the sale of Police Stations in the Epping Forest District.

#### **Report:**

##### Background

1. In 2015/16, the Chief Constable of Essex Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner published a new blueprint for the provision of police resources across Essex, which included a complete re-organisation of how police resources would be deployed across the county. This was as a result of a projected £63 million cut in police grants by 2019/20.

2. One of the main elements of the new blueprint was a significant reduction in police officers across the County including in the Epping Forest & Brentwood area; this saw the number of community officers reduced by 19, leaving an establishment of one local policing and partnership Inspector, two Sergeants, ten Constables and ten PCSOs across the two areas. A growth post has just provided a Constable working from Brentwood covering rural issues across both districts.

3. In addition, Waltham Abbey, Epping and Ongar Police Stations were closed pending being sold and Loughton Police Station had custody and front office facilities closed and remains the sole operational policing base in the District. The nearest front office facility for the District is now located at Harlow Police Station.

4. Since the implementation of the new policing arrangements, we have seen a gradual increase in the number of incidents of youth nuisance across the District, particularly in Waltham Abbey and Epping. This has included anti-social behaviour and threatening behaviour towards members of the public.

5. In addition, a comparison of all recorded crime in the rolling 12 months to September 2016 compared to September 2017 shows a rise from 7,712 offences to 9,122 offences, an increase of 18.3%. This includes a range of new and emerging issues include 'mate crime', whereby older and other vulnerable people are targeted in order to commit financial and other abuse.

6. During the period October 2015 – September 2016, the Council's Community Safety Team recorded 376 ASB investigations. The period October 2016 – September 2017, saw 409 investigations, which represents an increase of 10.5%. In addition, in 2017, the Community Safety Team has recorded seven applications for ASB Case Reviews (Community Triggers), of which two met the threshold for further action (both at Hillhouse, Waltham Abbey). This compares to just one application in each of the previous 2 years.

#### Examples of Youth Nuisance

7. In Epping, earlier in the year, reports were made to the Council of a large group of young people at the lake in Theydon Grove, who were taking 'legal high' drugs and intimidating local residents. The Community Safety Team worked with the Council's Countrycare team to clear the area of shrubs and bushes, in order that the site was visible from the road and linked with the local Community Policing Team to identify the key ringleader. A visit was then made to the young person's home, his parents spoken to about his behaviour and a Behaviour Contract drawn up.

8. In Waltham Abbey, several incidents arose when the Hillhouse Community Centre was boarded ready for demolition as part of the re-development of the site for the new leisure centre. Young people were reported climbing onto the roof of the centre and also on the roofs of local flats adjacent to the site. CCTV was deployed immediately by the Council, but this was destroyed straight away by youths and security patrols by Parkguard were therefore commissioned.

9. A Strategic Action Plan was developed by the Community Safety Team in conjunction with the Police, which has seen a range of interventions applied to the area, including the deployment of Parkguard to patrol Hillhouse and Ninefields in general. However, following further issues of intimidation, threatening behaviour and hate crime towards local residents, several perpetrators were jointly targeted by the Community Safety Team and the Police and were arrested, where evidence permitted. The imposition of bail conditions prohibiting them from the area alleviated some of the problems which had been experienced.

10. As part of the Action Plan, the Council's CCTV Officer commissioned the production of a special protective cage for a CCTV camera and this was installed at the site at the end of September. This has been a deterrent to the youths, although they

continue to congregate elsewhere in the area. Also, targeted work was arranged for the Halloween and Fireworks period.

11. It has been evidenced that this joint and strategic working between the Council, Police and Parkguard has been successful in significantly reducing youth nuisance and ASB at Hillhouse; so much so, that local residents who were original complainants, have contacted the Council and thanked officers for the great improvement that it has made to their lives. However, as a longer term solution to ASB in this area, work is also in progress to install a secure door with voice entry to access the flats and stairwells above the shops at Hillhouse, in order to prevent general access, and anti-climb solutions to prevent youths from getting on to the roofs.

12. As stated, these are not the only areas where youth nuisance and criminal activity has escalated in the District, albeit on a range of scales, and it is evident that the lack of police resources has left an opening for some young people and others, to cause problems and distress in their communities.

13. This includes incidents elsewhere in the District, including Loughton, where a resident was recently robbed at knife point, highlighting the seriousness of the escalation in crime across the District. It is therefore suggested that a regular, additional uniformed presence - whether by a security company or additional police officers- would serve to reduce these random attacks and general ASB issues, due to a greater visibility of 'policing' in the community.

14. Whilst the main role of this new resource would be to help prevent ASB and other local criminality, there are a range of other benefits to the Council of providing such a service. If it was to employ Police Officers, who would be fully warranted, the Council would be able to use this resource for a wide range of enforcement work, for which it currently has to rely on the Community Policing Team. Often this work is held up due to the lack of availability of Police Officers, but if the Council was able to task its own police officers, they could be utilised for the following Council work (although this is not an exhaustive list):

- To assist Council Officers serving court papers on high risk individuals
- To provide support and effect 'entry' to properties for the Corporate Fraud Team
- To support the eviction of violent tenants
- To provide 'cocooning' work where burglaries take place
- To support planning enforcement, illegal developments etc
- To support officers dealing with issues of land drainage, contaminated land, private water supply etc
- To support officers conducting property inspections in regard to tenant issues and Council Tax recovery
- To support the Environmental Enforcement Team for illegal gypsy and traveller encampments
- To carry out enforcement action by arresting persons breaching closure orders, injunctions or criminal behaviour orders.
- To enforce Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) which are not currently used due to the lack of ability to enforce.
- Ability to stop vehicles and ascertain ownership, with a power of seizure if justified
- Ability to check individuals and ascertain name and address to determine if wanted or are a danger to the public
- Ability to issue on the spot fixed penalty notices

- Ability to arrest offenders through targeted operations and patrols and deal with them to the point of prosecution
- Power to stop and search for weapons, drugs or stolen property

15. The Cabinet is therefore asked to:

- Note the following options that have been rejected; and
- Consider the potential options and agree the recommendation proposed.

#### Options Considered but Rejected

16. As a starting point, the employment of additional PCSOs was considered and rejected. This was on the basis that Norfolk Constabulary is currently reviewing the use of its 150 PCSOs because the cost of a PCSO is only £1,800 less than a Police Constable and they have limited enforcement powers, as opposed to fully warranted officers. Having identified an unparalleled growth in complex crime in their County, they are considering replacing PCSOs with Police Officers and other civilian staff. If they proceed with this approach it is likely that other forces may follow this.

17. The use of existing staff, including Environment and Neighbourhood Officers and Community Safety staff, was considered thoroughly, but rejected for the following reasons:

- These officers are already working to capacity and with the ongoing increase in the level of youth nuisance, ASB and fly-tipping across the District, it is suggested that these resources will be stretched even further.
- Both teams already operate a 24/7 call out service over 365 days of the year for CCTV emergencies and noise complaints.
- EFDC staff have limited powers of enforcement.
- Service resilience would be dependent on regular staff availability during daytime and evening hours.
- Staff would need to be trained in risk management and personal safety and liveried vehicles and uniforms would be needed.

18. The following three options are however considered potentially viable for the Council's needs.

#### **Option 1. EFDC to commission a private security company who are accredited by the local police service under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) to provide regular, uniformed patrols of the district;**

19. The Council has previously employed the services of Parkguard Ltd who are a CSAS accredited private security company. From experience of using this company the following observations can be made:

- (a) Parkguard staff are fully trained and CSAS Accredited;
- (b) The service is resilient due to the number of staff employed by the organisation;
- (c) The service is uniformed in a style very similar to the Police and has a high visibility profile;

- (d) The Council has successfully used Parkguard for a range of patrolling and targeted work across areas of the district over the last 10+ Years;
- (e) Neighbouring authorities including Broxbourne Borough Council and Lea Valley Park utilise Parkguard on a regular basis and also find them to provide a good, cost effective service
- (f) Parkguard has the ability to increase resources and provide Dog Patrols and a range of other services, if the security service needs enhancing;
- (g) The company also has a good reputation for its positive engagement with young people through its outreach youth provision.

#### Financial Implications

20. Parkguard has a range of prices depending on what services are provided. However, for a double crew, liveried vehicle and dog (where needed) this would be approximately £125,000 per annum for 47 hours per week, or £92,665 for 36 hours per week. There would also be flexibility in how this service could be provided, including adding youth intervention and targeted work etc.

21. The advantages of using/employing CSAS accredited staff are set out in the Home Office document 'Community Safety Accreditation Scheme Powers' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-safety-accreditation-scheme-powers>.

22. The Council has commissioned the services of Parkguard on an adhoc basis over the last 10 years to address key issues in the district, including as a response to community unrest after stabbings and shootings at Limes Farm and more recently, to address youth nuisance and ASB in Waltham Abbey. All of this work has been funded through a range of budgets, as available, but a targeted service could be managed more effectively. NB. Several Parish and Town Councils have commissioned Parkguard for a range of security services over the last two years.

#### **Option 2. EFDC to pay for three Police Officers, who would be employed by Essex Police, but would be a dedicated resource for the Council under a Service Level Agreement, and tasked and deployed by the Community Safety Team.**

23. A dedicated Police resource for the district could provide the most impact across the District's communities, at a similar cost to a security company, but with full powers of arrest. The officers would be tasked according to local priorities each day, but would also be available to support Council officers in specific work as identified in the main body of this report.

24. A Service Level Agreement would be drawn up between the Council, Essex Police and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner based on a similar agreement currently used for policing of Lakeside Shopping Centre in Thurrock. The SLA would specify the Council's requirements for the posts and it is suggested that this would be on the basis of a three year pilot. It is however understood that there is a clause in the Lakeside agreement that, should an emergency arise elsewhere in Essex, the Chief Constable has authority to redeploy the officers to the emergency and this would also apply to any police officers paid for by the Council.

## Financial Implications

25. Each Police Constable would be at a cost of £55,000 to the Council per annum, including on-costs. It is understood that the costs of a Sergeant would be approximately £75,000 pa. Therefore, the Council could choose to have a Sergeant and two constables at a total cost of £185,000 per annum.

### **Option 3. A hybrid of Options 1 & 2, plus Youth Engagement work**

26. The Council could consider a hybrid of the two options, which could include two Police Officers, plus a security company to be commissioned to undertake targeted work such as dog patrols or youth engagement. In addition, the Council could invest more funding in its targeted work in schools such as Crucial Crew and Reality Roadshow with the opportunity to bring in specialists in online safety and gangs work. The following provides a breakdown of costs for these options;

<b>Two Police Constables</b>	<b>£110,000</b>
<b>Security company targeted work</b>	<b>£ 35,000</b>
<b>Enhancement of Crucial Crew/ Reality Roadshow</b>	<b>£ 15,000</b>
<b>Total (pa)</b>	<b><u>£160,000</u></b>

## Potential Drawbacks of Commissioning the Police or a Security Company in the District

27. It could be perceived that the Council is replacing the responsibility for the police to provide the service.

28. Essex Police could become reliant on EFDC to pick up the costs for a core policing function which should be funded from precept.

29. There is a risk that Essex Police could reduce the number of their own officers dedicated to EFD because of the deployment of funded officers or security staff.

## Summary

30. Having considered these options, the following recommendations are made:

(1) That the Council employs Parkguard Security Company to undertake short-term patrolling and youth engagement work across the District for the period January to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2018, to the value of £25,000 (rec. 3.), which would be subject to subsequent review. A Supplementary Estimate is required for this funding as identified at recommendation 4. of this report and the Council's Procurement Rules need to be waived, as this could take the commissioning of Parkguard above the threshold, above which at least three quotations would be required

(2) During this period, officers will have a further dialogue with Essex Police, to fully determine the costs and implications of funding additional dedicated police officers and this discussion will seek:

(3) Clarification of cover arrangements for EFDC funded police officers, in relation to sickness, training and annual leave;

(4) Confirmation of likely abstraction rates;

- (5) Clarification of tasking and tasking management of the EFDC-funded police officers;
- (6) Guarantees that general policing levels will remain in line with the establishment formula for the area;
- (7) Consideration of requirements for specialist equipment storage required e.g. CS Gas, Taser, uniforms and vehicles; and
- (8) Development of a draft Service Level Agreement for consideration by Members.

**Resource Implications:**

As identified in this report.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

Essex Police receives a Precept to provide Community Policing within the Epping Forest District and is responsible for the governance of local policing.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

This report relates wholly to Community Safety.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

Consultation with internal EFDC colleagues and local Police Inspector.

**Background Papers:**

None.

**Risk Management:**

It has been identified that youth nuisance and anti-social behaviour are becoming more prevalent in the district and this report seeks to provide options to assist with the reduction of risk within local communities of the district. Anti-social behaviour has been identified as a priority of Epping Forest District Community Safety Partnership every year in its annual Strategic Assessment since 2008.

**Equality Analysis:**

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided at Appendix 3 to the report.