

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 31 July 2018

Subject: Safer, Greener & Transport

Portfolio Holder: Councillor S. Kane

Recommending:

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

Countrycare

Since the last report Countrycare has worked on 10 different sites with its volunteers.

There were a few more visits to Bobbingworth LNR than usual as we have created a bee bank in the shape of a grass-snake. The bee bank is made of gravel and will heat up in the sun to attract 'basking' invertebrates such as dragonflies, butterflies and shield beetles.

Work has started on the St John's/Tower Road site that we are sharing the maintenance of with Grounds. Our area will be managed as a wildflower meadow. Two days so far have been spent cutting, raking and weeding this area.

In Linder's Field LNR we built a 'habitat tower' which has a hibernaculum in the basement for slowworms, a ground floor with two hedgehog apartments and a first and second floor for bug accommodation.

We have held many children's events. An Easter Scavenger Hunt (16 kids), A Hedgehog Day (12 kids), Pond Dipping at the Burial Park (10 kids), bug hunting with the North Weald Beavers (14 kids), and bug hunting with Ongar Rainbows (14 kids).

Countrycare has worked with two schools. We spent a day in Chigwell Row Wood with 24 pupils from Chigwell School looking to gain knowledge and experience of ancient tree and woodland management. We also participated in some workshops with St John's Primary School Epping (led by Yan Tan Tethera, storyteller) who were learning about nature, creating wildlife habitats, participating in faerie tale stories and naming the wild area on the site.

A guided walk took place in Upshire which was attended by 30 people.

Countrycare has given two presentations about Nature Reserves in the local area. One to the Loughton Guides and the other to the Lindsey Ladies. These reached a total of 50 people.

The Tree Warden Scheme has been going well and we have jointly produced a leaflet explaining the health benefits of trees and recommending 'tree bathing' or Shimrin Yoku. The leaflet is being displayed in doctors' surgeries, hospitals, libraries, health food shops, and is on the Countrycare website and that of the Tree Council. The Tree Council is using our leaflet as a case-study of what can be achieved by a Tree Warden group.

A day was also set up to learn about CAVAT, a method of putting a monetary value on trees. This was attended by 25 Tree Wardens and consisted of an indoor presentation and an outdoor practical session putting it into practice.

Two members of staff attended the annual Tree Warden Conference where the way forward for Tree Wardens was discussed and where there was the opportunity to swap experiences and ideas with other Tree Warden Coordinators.

Two members of staff took an exhibition stall to the Epping Town Show and networked with various local groups about possible joint events in the future.

Survey work has been continuing with reptiles at Willingale Road Community Orchard, where there is a medium population of slowworms, butterfly surveys at Church Lane and Bobbingworth LNRs and floral surveys of our Special Roadside Verges. This data contributes to national records for research into changes in the environment.

In our spare time we recruited for a two-year Countryside Assistant post (to free up resource for the Local Plan) and a permanent Countryside Assistant to replace a retiring member of staff. The temporary post has been filled and is settling in well.

Parking

Visitor and Staff Travel Plan:

As part of the Transformation Programme work has commenced on Travel Plan. First phase of this project consists of gathering data about current travel habits. An all staff consultation has been carried out to ascertain current travel to work arrangements. This information will enable us to develop the second stage which will consist of options for future arrangements. We will be looking at sustainable modes of transport as well as flexible and agile working to allow staff and customers to access our services differently. This will enable us to achieve the maximum benefit of Transformation.

Loughton Broadway Parking Review:

Following a meeting with local Members the proposals for parking restrictions for phase 2 of the Parking Review have been finalised. Officers of *North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)* are now finalising the formal Traffic Order for advertising locally. It is a legislative requirement that any objection has to be individually assessed and responded to. I shall update Members once all responses have been received and assessed by NEPP.

North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP):

At the most recent meeting of The North Essex parking Partnership on 21 June 2018 it was agreed to set aside £50,000 for implementation of 3PR School Parking Initiative across the Partnership. This is a great initiative and with minimal costs road safety around schools can be improved.

At a previous Council I reported that some of the parking restriction scheme requests on our list date back many years and it is not always clear that sufficient local support exists. I am arranging meetings with Members to review schemes in their Ward with a view to remove any that are no longer required, due to changed circumstances, I shall continue these meetings to ensure our list is up to date.

At the next meeting of NEPP in October we will have the yearly opportunity to nominate our six schemes. Officers are collating the scheme list for our District and once we have all the

schemes ranked in the order of NEPP score, as per previous practice, I shall consult with the Members in whose Ward are the highest scoring schemes.

On the 8th July 2018 the following schemes became and live and are now enforceable, Milton Street Waltham Abbey, Stonards Hill, Epping, Cleall Avenue, Waltham Abbey, Oakwood Hill, Loughton, Algers Road, Loughton and High Road Buckhurst Hill.

Park Mark Safer Parking Scheme:

On the 11th/12th April a member of the parking team accompanied the Park Mark Safety Officer as our Park Mark Award was up for renewal for all our car parks across the Epping Forest District.

The Park Mark Safer Parking Scheme is a Police Crime Prevention Initiative and is aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. This award is awarded to parking facilities that have met the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the police. We are delighted to announce that we have secured the Park Mark Award for a further 2 years and it was also noted that the assessor said that these car parks were some of the cleanest he had visited.

The DVLA have carried out our first audit since we took back the off street parking enforcement in March 2018 and we achieved a green light.

On May 6th 2018 Ongar Town Forum hosted a very successful Petanque Day which took place in The Pleasance Car Park which they had the use for the day. The car park was swept and cleared and ready for use again on the Monday morning. The event was so well received that they have already asked for permission for next year.

On Friday the 18th of May Essex County Council and Essex Police were working in the Epping Forest district to target road traffic offences such as mobile phone use, not wearing seat belts and no insurance.

We gave them permission to use our car park in Ongar, next to the library to pull these vehicles into. This is an example of a highly visible community safety event which has in the past taken drug dealers and burglars off of the streets while tackling local road safety matters.

To compliment this they also had the fire service and road safety staff engaging the public outside of Greggs in Epping and children from a local school speaking to drivers that are speeding outside of their school.

The results of op Nash are as follows

- 95 x No Seatbelts
- 33 x using Mobile Phone
- 5 x Careless Driving/Riding
- 2 x No insurance
- 2 x DOWL
- 3 x Section 165's
- 19 x Excess Speed (SL)
- 3 x Other Offences

A total of 13 people were stopped on School Speed Watch, with the highest recorded speed being 55mph in a 30 limit.

Car Park Tariff Review:

It is time to review parking tariff in our car parks. We have to strike a balance between the needs of short and long stay visitors, shoppers, workers and businesses. Due to the high demands in our car parks, especially those near the Central Line stations, we have to be innovative and avoid a blanket approach. I am hoping to bring a report to the 6 September Cabinet which will set out the revised parking charges.

Community Safety

Update on the new Community Safety Hub:

The introduction of the three dedicated Police Officers within the Community Safety Team is already proving to be very successful, with the team making several arrests for theft and an arrest for a drink driving offence. There has also been an evident reduction in the number of burglaries across the district, which could also be contributed to the visibility of the officers in key locations where crime has been high. A quarterly and more detailed report on these successes will be presented through Overview and Scrutiny.

The Community Safety team office has been completely refurbished in line with the Council's wider accommodation review and agile working requirements, and has recently passed a joint health and safety inspection on behalf of police federated ranks and Unison representing police support staff. This office conversion is a pilot for transformation and a range of learning from this will be implemented as the wider council accommodation review is rolled out.

I am pleased to report that Police IT systems are also running smoothly and the office is certainly operating as an integrated, multi-agency Community Safety Hub, with an effective tasking process to ensure work allocated meets the Police and Crime plan and Community Safety Partnership Plan priorities.

Although the team will be tasked according to key priorities in the district, exceptions to core tasking have already included support to council officers where there have been threats or intimidation to staff, in order to prevent a breach of the peace. Service areas across the council can submit an online tasking request for support from the officers, which is considered by the hub.

I was very pleased to have the honour of providing the opening address for the official launch of the Community Safety Hub on 20th July, which included the unveiling of a plaque by Dame Eleanor Laing and speeches from Roger Hirst, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, and Andy Prophet, Assistant Chief Constable of Essex police. The new hub is seen as best practice in Essex in terms of the collaborative approach to tackling crime and disorder.

Anti-social Behaviour and Safeguarding:

The taking over and controlling of vulnerable people's homes by cuckooing, continues to be a real problem in the district and it is carried out by ruthless, cold and calculating criminals who generally prey on the elderly and people with mental health problems. A cuckooed premises almost always results in an increase in volume crime locally, in an order to feed the need for illegal drugs. This is putting pressure on council front line services, especially Community Safety and Housing, in dealing with these cases, which require evidence to be obtained, extensive enquiries to be made and the best course of intervention and assistance to adopt for the victims. Inevitably, the most effective intervention is premises closure to restrict unwanted visitors to the property.

Our ASB officers have successfully obtained another Closure Order on one of our properties in Barrington Close, Loughton in order to protect the vulnerable resident from attempts at exploitation and cuckooing. Our dedicated police team are carrying out regular checks to ensure the order is being complied with and will be in a position to arrest persons breaching the order, without reasonable excuse. This dedicated enforcement aspect is a significant benefit in policing the order, making it far more effective in reducing crime and ASB levels affecting residents in the locality. (Once a Closure Order is granted it lasts 3 months and gives Housing the grounds for absolute possession of the property should this be considered the most appropriate action. This is a decision which is not taken lightly and is considered at our regular multi-agency ASB Local Action Group meeting).

ASB officers have also been working with Housing and Safeguarding on a case in Loughton, where a female tenant has been causing significant levels of ASB. A decision had been made to commence possession proceedings for the property. However, during investigations it was established the tenant was suffering from serious mental health problems and was self-harming. This culminated when one of our ASB officers, concerned for the tenants' safety, visited her, only to find she was ready to commit suicide. Arrangements were made for the tenants' mother to take her to hospital where she received treatment. She is also now receiving professional support and has improved and possession proceedings have been suspended, and the tenant is working with her support workers. This was a timely intervention that may otherwise have had tragic circumstances.