

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 26 July 2016

**Subject:** Governance and Development Management

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor R Bassett

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**Recommending:**

**That the report of the Governance and Development Management Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **1. Development Management: Income**

### **Building Control**

Building Control's income for June 2016 is £46,488 (Budget £40,790) an excess over budget of £5,698.

It is particularly encouraging that the income for the first three months of this financial year of £147,985 means BC have already achieved 35% of their year's budget (compared with 2015/16 32%).

This supports the end of year projection of £462,625 (Budget £425,000) and comprises of three months actual £147,985 plus nine months budget £314,640.

### **Development Control**

Development Control's Income for June 2016 is £63,605 (Budget £52,900) an excess over budget of £10,705.

The income for the first three months of this year is £147,985 and indicates that DC have achieved 30% of their budgeted income for the first three months of this year. One of the key issues is that both 2014/15 and 2015/16 were record years regarding DC Income. It is recognised that to continue to improve and exceed previous years actual turnover is very difficult to sustain.

However DC have shown a degree of resilience with the first three months actual income at £236,191 and nine months budget £620,620 indicates that it may be possible to end the year with a projected income for DC of £856,811 as compared with the 2016/17 budget of £800,000.

## **2. Legal Services**

### **Prosecution for Illegal Eviction**

This case has been fully reported in the Bulletin but I draw attention to it again here as it highlights the breadth of work the Council undertakes, demonstrates productive cross-directorate working and sends an important message to landlords that the correct procedures must be followed when ending tenancies. The fines, the costs and the

implications of a criminal record for the landlord provide a strong deterrent for this type of behaviour.

The Council successfully prosecuted Alexandria Kenna of Oakwood Hill, Loughton for illegally evicting one of her tenants last December 2015.

Ms Kenna rented out rooms in her house at a rate of £475 per calendar month including all utilities. The Taiwanese tenant, who is a student, moved in during October, signing a 6 month agreement.

The tenant refused to pay a rental increase of £50 towards the electricity bill, because she had signed a 6 month agreement which included utility bills. Ms Kenna told her that she had to leave that day, threatening to throw her possessions out in the street, took her keys away and shouted at her. At one point Ms Kenna locked the front door refusing to let anyone in or the tenant out until the tenant had emptied her room and moved her possessions downstairs.

The tenant was in a desperate situation, she had no family here to help her and no money to find alternative accommodation as Ms Kenna would not return her deposit or rent that she had paid up until 16<sup>th</sup> December.

In coming to their decision, the Magistrates concluded it had been a thoroughly unpleasant incident for the tenant who would have it found highly intimidating and frightening. The claim for the additional money for electricity use had been unreasonable.

The court imposed a fine of £275, costs of £447.50, a Victim Surcharge of £28 and of their own volition; they ordered that compensation of £100 be paid by the landlord to the tenant for her distress.

### **3. Corporate Fraud**

In the first quarter of 2016/2017, the Corporate Fraud Team have been instrumental in stopping 7 Right to Buy applications, one involving suspicions of money laundering. In one of these cases, the property has been recovered from the tenant who surrendered the tenancy shortly following a visit from one of the team investigating his RTB application.

In this area alone, the RTB discount saved is approximately £545,000 whilst the approximate value of the preserved rent revenue streams is around £321,000.

A further 5 properties have also been recovered due to the team's intervention, one being a highly sought after property designated for use by the elderly. In this case it was discovered that the tenant was actually living in Spain and allowing her son to live at the property. The approximate savings made here is around £108,000.

The team have investigated an application for a disabled facilities grant (worth around £30,000) which was ultimately stopped due to the investigation discovering the applicant had considerable assets which had not been declared (including regular payments from a company she had recently sold).

Proceeds of Crime investigations have been initiated on 4 cases including an illegal subletting case, 2 false housing applications and a suspected joint tenancy / RTB fraud.

The team have also set up the newly formed Eastern Corporate Fraud Group designed as a forum for local authority counter fraud practitioners in Essex & Suffolk to come together to share good practice, training etc. The group had its inaugural meeting at North Weald Airfield on 30<sup>th</sup> June with meetings planned every quarter.

In addition, one of the team, Bruce Heubner, has been interviewed by BBC Radio 4 for a programme investigating the right to buy scheme and its vulnerability to fraud and abuse and what is being done to combat it. Bruce was able to highlight a successful case in our District and this Council was mentioned several times in a positive light as leading on this type of fraud prevention and detection.

#### 4. Elections

The Governance Select Committee has agreed a review of the processes for the May District and Parish Elections and June EU referendum within its work programme, with a report due to the 29 September 2016 meeting.

#### 5. Public Relations

The Battle of the Somme Commemorations culminating on 30 June/1 July involved extensive out of hours communications via social media and radio. The council contributed four radio interviews to the BBC:

- Peter Charman (EFDC) – Drive Time Thursday 30 June
- Colin l'Anson (EFDC) – Breakfast Show Friday 1 July
- John Duffel (Royal British Legion at North Weald) Breakfast Show Friday 1 July
- Alison Mitchell (EFDC) Breakfast Show Friday 1 July

14. By prior arrangement with the BBC, Epping Forest District Council provided overnight photography of the vigil which was featured on the BBC Essex Homepage.

The screenshot shows the BBC Essex Local Live website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, a search bar, and links for News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, TV, Radio, and More. Below this is a red banner with the word 'NEWS' and a 'Find local news' button. The main content area features a large image of a vigil with people holding candles. A live broadcast player is visible, showing the title 'BBC Local Live: Essex' and the time '01:07:29:16'. Below the player, there is a 'Summary' section with the text 'Updates on Friday, 1 July 2016' and a 'Live reporting' section by Jack Warren. A 'Get involved' button is also present. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'An extract from a Somme soldier's diary' with a timestamp of 10:49. The text in this section reads: 'One of those who survived the Somme was L/Cpl George Mitchell from Woodford. His granddaughter, Alison Mitchell, has been marking the centenary today at North Weald where she read an extract from her grandfather's diary.'

15. Heart FM also included EFDC commemorations in its news coverage.

16. Following the success of a video interview with a visitor to the Control Tower exhibition earlier in the week, the Council shot and uploaded two more videos to You Tube during the vigil. These were used in conjunction with photography to support extensive social media output resulting in some of the most impressive proactive (ie good news) reach achieved on Twitter and Facebook. Further video material is available for a final video.

17. Responding to social media comments, Councillor David Stallan made his social media comments as Vice-Chairman, posting his own response that it was his privilege to take part and to remember the fallen.

18. The Epping Forest Guardian carried extensive coverage of the North Weald vigil and service, taking photography directly from the Council's Flickr account and media releases issued straight after the service.

19. Several members of the public who attended the commemoration have also posted their own pictures of the service with much of the focus on the reconstruction of a WW1 trench. While commemorations across Essex were part of the national picture, the trench built by members of the Airfield Operations Team and the presence of airfield staff in uniforms of WW1 soldiers added a 'unique selling point' to the EFDC output and undoubtedly contributed to the widespread media coverage.

20. While You Tube, Flickr, Facebook and Twitter provided powerful communications platforms, the Council's website provided the foundation of background material, information and coverage with 854 views. Access is available to the website articles via the following links:

- [Somme vigil and Centenary Commemoration](#)
- [Memories stirred at Somme exhibition](#)
- [Join our Somme Centenary Commemoration](#)
- [Battle of the Somme Commemoration](#)

21. North Weald Operations Team also has one of the Council's most successful social media profiles and contributed significantly to the corporate output provided by Public Relations.

**Somme Commemorations Social Media Statistics:**

Date	Message Summary	Media & Reach (Impressions and Posts)		
			Twitter	Facebook
30-06-16 1pm	Join us for our #Somme100 Commemoration @NWAirfield tomorrow. Service starting at 7.30am <a href="http://ow.ly/wEac301Nbpr">http://ow.ly/wEac301Nbpr</a>	Pic	546	91
30-06-16 8.05pm	Sound check @NWAirfield before #Somme100 Commemoration Service at 7.28am tomorrow <a href="http://ow.ly/ZS3C301OkXA">http://ow.ly/ZS3C301OkXA</a>	Pic	618	261
30-06-16 8.13pm	Peter Charman spoke to Dave Monk @BBCEssex of his great uncle who died 1916 <a href="http://ow.ly/Bj8U301OlhO">http://ow.ly/Bj8U301OlhO</a> starts 2:25:20	Pic	2066	172

30-06-16 9pm	Dusk descending over @NWAirfield for #Somme100 commemoration <a href="http://ow.ly/G2Aq301Or4I">http://ow.ly/G2Aq301Or4I</a>	Pic	1325	2193
30-06-16 10pm	Vice-chairman Dave Stallan lighting the brazier at the start of Epping Forest district's all-night vigil #Somme100	Pic	1385	2656
30-06-16 11.22pm	Keeping warm at the #Somme100 all-night vigil @NWAirfield	Pic x2	623	3818
01-07-16 12am	#Somme100 If I should die/think only this of me/that there's some corner of a foreign field/that is for ever England <a href="http://ow.ly/KK0S301ONaB">http://ow.ly/KK0S301ONaB</a>	Text	301	67
01-07-16 12.04am	Great set of First World War poems by @poetrybyheart at <a href="http://ow.ly/IHFz301ONzX">http://ow.ly/IHFz301ONzX</a> #Somme100 #harrowing #humbling #heartening	Text	292	723
01-07-16 3.29am	Hypnotic flames dance away during Epping Forest district's all-night vigil #Somme100	Video	530	1595
01-07-16 4.20am	Trench lit up by #Harlow lights and @NWAirfield Control Tower during #Somme100 all-night vigil	Pic x2	2768	2069
01-07-16 4.30am	Dawn approaching for #Somme100 vigil <a href="http://ow.ly/8RaZ301P5Jj">http://ow.ly/8RaZ301P5Jj</a> #nearlythere	Pic	474	134
01-07-16 5am	Video of Corporal George Mitchell's memoir on the 2nd Battle of the Somme - <a href="http://ow.ly/wM1U301P6wp">http://ow.ly/wM1U301P6wp</a> read by Peter Charman for #Somme100	Video	545	1659
01-07-16 5.30am	Dawn breaking over #NorthWeald - just 2 hours till H hour #Somme100	Pic	591	475
01-07-16 6am	Early bird? Come to @NWAirfield for 7:28am today for our special #Somme100 service, we'd love to see you there!	Pic	747	142
01-07-16 6.05am	It's gone 6am, we kept the flames alive all night @NWAirfield! Remembering the fallen on 1 July 2016 for #Somme100	Pic	501	4365
01-07-16 6.10am	It's gone 6am, we kept the flames alive all night @NWAirfield! Remembering the fallen on 1 July 2016 for #Somme100	Video	1598	
01-07-16 12.11pm	A moment of reflection for #Somme100 @NWAirfield <a href="http://ow.ly/A0ja301PKuD">http://ow.ly/A0ja301PKuD</a>	Pic	493	1617
01-07-16 12.50pm	Listen to @peter_charman in a moving interview with @DaveMonkShow about his great uncle who died in #Somme100	Radio link	731	166
01-07-16 2pm	Listen to Colin and John's interview with @RobWestEssex @NWAirfield #Somme100 starts 36:40 <a href="http://ow.ly/qNil301PPAI">http://ow.ly/qNil301PPAI</a>	Radio Link	493	
01-07-16 4.01pm	A huge #Thankyou to all that joined us for our #Somme100 early morning service @NWAirfield <a href="http://ow.ly/mtPo301PMpX">http://ow.ly/mtPo301PMpX</a>	Pic	857	931
01-07-16 7.01pm	Couldn't be with us this morning? Check out our #Somme100 #photography <a href="http://ow.ly/8Sk4301PL1g">http://ow.ly/8Sk4301PL1g</a>	Pic	796	639
Totals			<b>18,280</b>	<b>23,773</b>

Twitter Retweets – 49

Twitter Likes – 38

Facebook Shares – 72

Facebook Likes – 259