

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 July 2017

Subject: Safer, Greener & Transport

Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Waller

Recommending:

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

Community Safety

Operational Demand

The Community Safety Team is currently experiencing a sustained and significant level of demand on its resources to respond to a wide range of incidents across the district, including several very serious events.

Limes Farm

Members may be aware of the recent stabbing at Limes Farm, which was unfortunately carried out in front of several local residents and their young children. Community Safety have therefore been on site at Limes Farm since the incident, working with housing staff and other agencies to help reassure residents and give them the opportunity to talk to officers. The team also identified a counsellor to work with some of the young children who witnessed the crime and experienced trauma as a result. Accommodation was made available at the Limes Centre to allow this valuable work to be carried out.

An urgent interim injunction excluding a male from his property at Limes Farm has also been granted by the court, in order to protect residents of Council properties from continual harassment, threats and abuse. A full hearing is due to follow. Linked to this, Community Safety have issued four Community Protection warning letters to perpetrators associated with the ringleader.

Anti-Social Behaviour

ASB investigations are in progress in relation to a prolific offender who is currently victimising residents in Epping. In the last few weeks, our investigators secured an interim injunction against the offender, who has a high propensity for violence, through personally serving court papers on him where he lives. This was followed up with an urgent injunction to protect one of our tenants, which was secured jointly by Housing, Community Safety and Legal. Our ASB team are now working with the Community Policing Team on a joint criminal investigation into his activity. The Council's CCTV footage was used in this case, as it provided excellent imagery of the assault on one of our tenants who is a vulnerable victim with learning difficulties. A full county court hearing took place on 10 July and I am pleased to report that the Judge granted a full injunction under Anti-Social Behaviour legislation with additional conditions to exclude the man from his home and immediate locality with a power

of arrest. This has sent a clear message to our tenants and the public that the Council will take positive action through the courts when justified.

A further and second injunction with power of arrest has been granted against a male who has previously been, and is now again, victimising his elderly and infirm neighbour in Waltham Abbey. This is a long running, time consuming and complex investigation which has required careful multi-agency collaboration.

Members may also be aware that one of the Community Safety Team investigators, whilst recovering a council property which was being used as a crack house was required to assist a police officer who was working with him. The officers had evicted two males trespassing on the property when both were found to be wanted persons. The lone police officer attempted to arrest one of the males, but the other ran away from the scene. However, the arrest was not straightforward, as the individual was high on drugs and violently resisted arrest. The officer therefore called on our investigator to lend assistance in physically restraining the male. As a result, our officer sustained cuts and grazes as well as ripped clothing, and the offender's blood contaminated his clothing and footwear. The offender was later found to have hepatitis C and our officer was then required to have a blood test which thankfully proved negative. The offender has been charged with assaulting our officer, criminal damage and resisting arrest and will appear at court once forensic tests are returned on suspected class A drugs found on him. I think this demonstrates the potential hazards and risks our frontline staff experience on a daily basis.

Modern Slavery

Community Safety have recently worked with the Council's Private Sector Housing team and Loughton Community Policing Team following intelligence that was shared by residents, regarding concerns about the activity of Eastern European occupants of a house in Buckhurst Hill. Police obtained a search warrant for the property and, together with an officer from Community Safety, carried out a raid on the premises. Three persons of Romanian nationality were arrested for offences of people trafficking, facilitation and modern slavery. Working with Private Sector Housing, the owner of the property has been located, informed of the situation and was horrified at the way that their property had been used. Evictions of the remaining occupants are likely to follow.

Secured by Design

I would like to draw Members' attention to the Police Secured by Design home website, where there is an excellent article showcasing the work of our Community Safety Team, in conjunction with the police, to design out crime on new building projects. This has been highlighted as best practice nationally and will also feature in a film produced by ITN at the forthcoming Association for Public Service Excellence conference in September. The film includes footage of Paul Gardener working with Heather Gurden, who is the Strategic Designing out Crime Officer at Essex Police, and an interview with Alan Hall, Director of Communities, conducted in Epping High Street.

CCTV Footage requested for Insurance Claims

There has been a steady increase in calls for CCTV footage to assist insurance claims for vehicle collisions and fail to stop cases, which is supporting the Council's income generation. Police based at Loughton station have also recently started using the Loughton CCTV system to provide prosecution evidence for motoring offences in the area. To date, this has resulted in at least three separate charges.

Working with partners

We are currently supporting Genesis Housing Association with CCTV coverage in relation to ASB by providing and managing one of our mobile CCTV systems on their behalf. Since its installation, the CCTV has captured a significant number of images of youths causing anti-social behaviour, which Genesis Housing can now address. This arrangement has been very successful for the housing association and has enabled the Council to secure a small amount of revenue income. We hope to expand this service in the future.

CCTV

Images from high resolution CCTV covering one of the Council's housing properties in Epping has enabled the Council to secure a court injunction on a male who let his dog attack another dog owned by a council tenant, whom he then assaulted.

The CCTV in Epping High Street captured individuals conducting a transaction involving a £5,000 Rolex. This turned out to be a distraction theft, and vehicle registration and images of the suspects were provided to the police, resulting in arrests made shortly afterwards in the Midlands area, where the goods were also recovered.

Other notable incidents captured on the Council's CCTV:

- An assault at North Weald shops where a male was kicked to the ground.
- Suspected drug dealing at Limes Farm.
- Criminal damage to a business premises in North Weald.
- Male captured on CCTV trying to have indecent images of children developed. An arrest was later made, in conjunction with Met officers. (Loughton)
- CCTV recorded the injury of a child who was impaled on a shrub stem at Birch View, Epping, resulting in the need for hospital treatment. An EFDC Health and Safety Officer investigated and no claim against the Council has been made as yet. CCTV shows the child was skylarking and tripped over, landing on the sharp shrub.

Countrycare

Since the last report, Countrycare has held some varied volunteer project days on thirteen different sites in the District. Bobbingworth saw more trees being planted to gap up a hedge where the hunt was entering the site, and our team also worked on a hedge that was overrun with bramble, and mulched the trees. Reserve furniture, benches and interpretation boards have been given a varnish at Roughtallys Wood and Bobbingworth. We teamed up with Essex Wildlife Trust to mow and rake Hawkesmere Springs. Other sites worked on include Abbots Wood in Waltham Abbey, Springs Pond Wood, Ongar Orchard and Norton Heath.

The Nazeing Triangle Project continues, and a day was spent with volunteers planting coir matting with pond plants at the edge of the pond. A handrail was put on one side of the boardwalk and a disabled access path was constructed to access the dipping platform. All staff went to propagate phragmites (large perennial grasses found in wetlands) from Bobbingworth, to be planted in the pond at Nazeing.

On Bobbingworth Nature Reserve, Countrycare held a bio-blitz on 3 July, but unfortunately there was not enough time in a day and an evening to blitz the whole site. The unfinished results are 64 species of plant (not including the trees) and grasses, over 40 species of moths, four species of bee, several grasshoppers, a strong presence of bats, mainly Soprano and Common Pipistrelle, and a good population of slowworms.

Countrycare has published three new walks leaflets: 'Roydon', 'Epping and Theydon' and 'Moreton-Magdalen Laver'. They are available to download on the Countrycare section of EFDC website and as hard copies in EFDC reception.

Butterflies at Church Lane LNR and Bobbingworth are being monitored as part of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. A first for Church Lane occurred recently when a Marbled White was found for the first time on the site.

Five events have been held so far this summer. Hedgehog Day, held at Greenacres Burial Park, and with their help, was enjoyed by 25 children. The Woodford Brownies spent an evening bug hunting and pond dipping after making bumblebee homes. The Ongar Rainbows played bug games, made butterfly feeders and went bug hunting on Bobbingworth Nature Reserve. Twenty five students from Chigwell School spent a day in Chigwell Row Wood helping to rake the glades, make bird boxes and survey the veteran trees. A lifewalk that took place in Ongar was attended by 30 adults.

Trees and landscape

Work has continued to build a partnership comprising organisations committed to delivering a greener future for the district; the Tree Council, which established the tree warden scheme, is the latest to seek to join us. I was pleased to attend the annual meeting in Theydon Bois of Green Arc, which has since 2004 sought to enhance and expand opportunities for the public to access and enjoy green infrastructure in the area from the northern and eastern suburbs of London, across Essex and into Hertfordshire. A Charter for Trees, People and the Natural Environment is in preparation, and I hope to present this for approval to Cabinet shortly.

Members may be aware that Chris Neilan has developed a methodology, CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees), which enables a financial value to be attached to trees, providing a means of managing them as public assets. It is designed not only to be a strategic tool and an aid to decision making in relation to the tree stock as a whole, but also to be applicable to individual trees so that the value of a single tree, which may for instance be under threat, can be expressed in monetary terms. Forest Research, the research arm of the Forestry Commission, have completed the draft of the paper on CAVAT, of which Chris Neilan is co-author, and this will now be undergoing peer review prior to publication later in 2017.

Conservation

The team comprises two full time positions: both Conservation Officers deal with developments within conservation areas and works affecting listed buildings and their settings, as well as locally listed buildings. The Senior Conservation Officer has returned to working full time since completing a part-time Postgraduate Certificate in Historic Conservation over a period of nine months.

Since the start of the year, on average, the team have dealt with between 40 and 50 development control consultations per month (along with other enquires from both colleagues and members of the public more difficult to quantify), in addition to pre-application submissions and a number of enforcement cases relating to conservation areas and listed buildings on which advice is given.

Both officers also work on guidance documents and character appraisals when time allows. Currently the Senior Conservation Officer is working on the new Buckhurst Hill Conservation Area Character Appraisal for one afternoon per week. When workload allows, the Conservation Officer is working on updating the Council's Traditional Shopfront Guidance

and a 'factsheet' for new listed building owners. The Senior Conservation Officer provides input to the Local Plan as and when required, and this work is expected to increase as further site selection work is carried out.

Parking

Off Street enforcement

As I have reported previously, mobilisation of the NSL Limited contract for enforcement and associated activities in Council car parks was successful and the new service commenced from Saturday 1 April 2017. All the data relating to back office operations has been successfully migrated from NEPP to EFDC. Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) have been out issuing Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to contravening motorists, and enforcement at weekends has been improved. This has helped with the through flow in car parks which will, I am sure, benefit the town centres.

Loughton Broadway Parking Review

Traffic Regulation Orders for the first phase of the review comprising: Oakwood Hill Road, Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate, Honeycroft, Lenthall Road, Rectory Lane, Chigwell Lane, Colson Road and Torrington Drive have been formally published and adopted. Enforcement at these sites will commence next month. Following that, work on the second phase of the scheme encompassing the wider area will commence.

North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)

Last time I reported that the following five schemes were approved at the meeting of the Joint Committee of the NEPP on 30 March: Abridge Road, Theydon Bois, Stradbroke Grove/The Meadway, Buckhurst Hill, Tidys Lane, Epping, Stonnards Hill, Epping and Milton Street Waltham Abbey. Officers will now carry out detailed site surveys and prepare preliminary designs which will then be consulted upon. Because the process involves statutory requirements including advertising and consultation, and there are also resource pressures as schemes have to be fully funded by NEPP, implementation could take up to 18 months.

Car Parking Strategy update

Work at Traps Hill car park has been completed, and it now has new LED lighting and CCTV systems. Basons Lane and The Pleasance have already had new CCTV installed, and in Queens Road Lower Car Park in Buckhurst Hill the CCTV has been upgraded. The next three car parks to be upgraded are: Quaker Lane, Cornmill and Darby Drive in Waltham Abbey.

Traffic Regulation Orders will be published shortly for the new car parks, one in Burton Road and two on the Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate. The access road along the Burton Road Car Park will be converted to pay and display and permits. This will improve road safety and create more parking for shoppers and visitors to The Broadway.