

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2021  
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES  
AT 7.00 - 9.30 PM**

<b>Members Present:</b>	J Lea (Chairman), , H Brady, S Murray, C Nweke, S Rackham, J H Whitehouse and D Wixley
<b>Co-opted Member:</b>	W Marshall
<b>Other members present:</b>	R Brookes, S Kane, A Lion, A Patel and H Whitbread
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	I Hadley, D Plummer and K Williamson
<b>Officers Present</b>	N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), J Gould (Service Director (Community & Wellbeing)), S Lewis (Customer Services Manager), Pellegrino (Heritage & Venues Team Manager), R Perrin (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer), N Ross (Police Officer), C Wiggins (Directorate Specialist – Technical Services) and J Nuth ((interim) Housing Strategy Manager)

**12. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman reminded everyone present that this meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

**13. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

**14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

**15. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the notes of the meeting held 15 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record subject to item 3. Declarations of Interest (b) replacement of Epping Reuse Centre with Epping Forest Reuse.

**16. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference and the Committee' work programme for 2021/22.

**17. COMMUNITY SAFETY TEAM EFDC FUNDED POLICE OFFICERS 6 MONTHLY UPDATE.**

The Directorate Specialist and Community Safety Team Sgt N Ross gave a six-month report on the work and range of operations of the Council's funded Police team, including a operation synopsis of work carried out in the District.

There had been 20 tasking requests in 2021, to date and the most significant work had been partnership working to respond to a county lines drugs supply in Waltham Abbey. (Details attached in the presentation).

Other highlights included;

- Supporting council officers with joint visits at licenced and business premises highlighted to be committing COVID legislation breaches;
- Supporting Environmental Health with the initial site visit at a House in Multiple Occupancy (HMO) where there had been a potential threat, harm and risk to staff. The visit had been conducted without incident and the EHO was able to secure sufficient evidence;
- A site visit with Planning Enforcement and Community Resilience at a venue where the occupant presents risk to staff;
- Site visits and representation at professionals meeting in relation to a high-risk homeless person. The Team also conduct the arrest of the same subject for breach of Criminal Behaviour Order;
- The planning and preparation for community policing resources for the local election process. In addition to providing police cover throughout the two additional count days;
- Targeted patrols and activity around three specific locations which were subject to anti-social behaviour and required a medium to long-term problem solving approach, which were still ongoing. This had resulted in arrests, seizures of nuisance vehicles, stop/searches, service of Community Protection Warnings and enforcement of any EFDC-lead orders;
- A report of a fraud in progress (elderly victim, bank cards reported stolen and police send a taxi to collect). The team identified the subjects vehicle and tracked it via ANPR to the M11. Appropriate tactics were put in place to prevent a pursuit and the funded officers arrested the offender. The investigation was still ongoing but this was a significant and rare arrest to catch an offender at a live fraud;
- Two arrests following a pursuit with cloned vehicle which was found decamped in Buckhurst Hill. The two men who were linked to organised crime were stopped nearby and the police dog located car key and illegal cloning equipment nearby;
- Following an attempted burglary in Loughton the subject made off in a van which then made off from officers. The funded team officers located the offender hiding in bushes and arrested him. He was charged and remanded for burglary offences; and
- Following a series of distraction thefts in the district whereby victims had their Rolex watches stolen, the team reviewed CCTV and identified the offender's vehicle. By chance two suspects were sighted, that matched the description parked on Epping High Street paying close attention to pedestrians. The team made the arrest of both suspects, who remain under investigation at time of writing.

The Committee asked the following question;

- What was a closure order and can they be applied to both Council and private properties? Stg Ross advised that they can be apply to any property which prevents only the named person(s) entering the property excluding emergency services and council staff. The Directorate Specialist advised that a closure order was a really power and important tool in preventing crime and disorder in properties in the district. There were also weekly partnership meetings with the Neighbourhood Housing Teams which allowed any issues to be flagged earlier.
- What were the sanctions for the youth offenders mentioned in the presentation? The Directorate Specialist advised that officers had to be mindful, that some young people may be victims as well as perpetrators that have been exploited and forced in this position. Stg Ross advised that sanctions depended on the mitigating circumstances.
- Were there any other areas of concern in the District? And was there or plans for a Community Policing Panel in the District? Stg Ross advised that there other areas in the district but the example provided in the presentation showed how the partnership working functioned well. The Directorate Specialist advised that she would enquire with the Insp T Mitchell, the Community Policing Team with regards to the a Community Policing Panel for Epping Forest.\*
- Had any of the Closures Orders been refused? Stg Ross advised that the team had never had any refused. The Directorate Specialist advised that the EFDC Policing Team's work had been flagged up as best practice in Essex.
- Why could the gangs who used Cuckooing not be stopped? And was it possible to trace back the drugs to the original source? The Directorate Specialist advised that due to covid there had been a massive backlog in courts, for offenders on remand as well as achieving courts date for closure orders. Stg Ross advised that loads of work went on to get up stream in the drugs trade, which happened at all levels.
- Was there a way of anonymously reporting information to the Police? Stg Ross advised that information could be submitted online, by phone or text to Crimestoppers as well as using the QR code (attached in the presentation).
- How many Police officers were within the Team and in the Community Resilience Neighbourhood Team? The Directorate Specialist advised that there 3 fully funded Police officers within the Community Safety Team with a fourth position out for recruitment. There were three ASB officers and 5 Environmental Enforcement Officers with one vacancy.

The Community & Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder commented on the partnership working of the EFDC Community Safety Team and EFDC funded Police and successes.

The Housing Services Portfolio Holder commented on the added value the services provided for the District and the push to try and achieve a Police presences within the Community Hub in the Civic Offices.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee noted the 6 monthly update.

\* Response from Inspector Tom Mitchell received following the meeting.

'We are moving away from coffee with cops and police lead engagement and instead trying to attend/piggy back engagement events that are already in existence e.g. a coffee morning, xmas market or something that your team arrange, such as ASB Awareness events.

The reasons are we weren't getting many people coming to coffee with cops and if operationally we can't attend then we aren't letting people down or disappointing them as much as they were going to the event anyway rather than a specific visit to meet officers

The plan is to move towards more engagement as we enter the Covid Recovery Period.'

## **18. MUSEUM COLLECTIONS PROJECT - RATIONALISATION**

The Team Manager for Heritage and Venues presented a report on the Museum Collections Projects and the rationalisation.

The report set out the problems the museum was facing due to the breath of the collection, documentation, storage, suitability and relevance to the museum and it's audience. The full capacity meant that there was no expansion space to address any gaps in the collection highlighted in the Collections Development Policy. The Council also needed to ensure that the collection had been thoroughly audited in order to comply with Health & Safety regulations.

There were 5 guiding principles that had been agreed and adopted for the rationalisation project and along side the project process and Museum Association Guidelines.

The Committee noted the following success to date;

- that the Museum was currently being recognised across the industry as undertaking a fully ethical and high standard project;
- Articles on the project had been featured in industry magazines, online web resources and the team had been asked to speak at various conferences;
- The team had uncovered some fantastic stories in the collection which would not have been discovered if the project had not been undertaken;
- Objects were being stored and cared for better;
- Documentation and information about each object had improved which also, in turn, supported the current work to improve the Museum's documentation database and allowed the collections to be made accessible online;
- The project has the full support of key groups including the Waltham Abbey Historical Society who supported the setup of the Museum in the first place.
- The audit had highlighted objects and collections that required further work and support. A bid for £120,000 from Arts Council England had been made, to support work on the Museum's Ethnographic Collection. A further external funding bid would be submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support a partnership project with the Lea Valley Regional Park and Historic England on material relating to the Abbey Church; and
- So far 10 new volunteers had been recruited for the project with a total of 19 volunteers currently supporting the project. To date, collections volunteers had contributed 556 hours working on this specific project, equating to nearly £5,500 investment into the district.

The Committee asked the following questions;

- Could historians and/or collectors be given the chance to purchase items before disposal was considered? The Team Manager for Heritage and Venues advised that the Museum Association had a strict code of ethics which governed the process of disposal. This would allow for the sale of items although the core aim was to ensure that most items stayed within the public domain. The only time an item may be disposed of, would be if they contained hazardous materials or were dangerous damaged.
- Would anything be disposed of that had not gone through this process? No.
- What happened to items that have a legal requirement attached to them? The Team Manager for Heritage and Venues advised paper work has to be completed for every donation which would stipulate the Museums conditions. If an item had been purchase with external funding, there may be conditions which would be looked into. Furthermore, if an item had been deemed no longer required and had been donated in the last 20 years the donor would receive a letter to confirm what was happening with the donation.
- How would the museum advertise the stories that were being discovered throughout this process? The Team Manager for Heritage and Venues advised that through social media the Museum had started sharing the stories and they were in the initial stages of planning an exhibition next year in core gallery that will display some of the objects as well as explain the process the museum has undertaken.
- What was the general storage capacity? The Team Manager for Heritage and Venues advised that this project would improve the amount of storage available and allow for areas of the collection that were missing to be improve and continue collecting items from this time for future generations.
- How long would the project take? The Team Manager for Heritage and Venues advised that this project would always be an ongoing process where new items were added to the collection. The initial 2 year timescale would audit and research the items, with the more timely matters of transfer unrequired items following.
- How did the volunteers approach the museum? And how many have them stayed and what training was involved? The Team Manager for Heritage and Venues advised that some volunteers saw the advertisement through social media, the Council's website and through a specialised website for Museums. All of the volunteers had received the specialist training required and they had all remained.
- Did the museum have it's own conservators? The Team Manager for Heritage and Venues advised that although the museum did not have a conservator, they would seek external funding for items that required specialist conservation.

The Community & Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder commented that it was good to see how many volunteers they had attracted.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee noted the process, reasons and update on the Museum Collect Project.

**19. CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATE**

The Service Manager for Customer presented a Customer Service update on the following areas;

- What the Customer were telling the Council;
- Complaints;
- Performance for Customer Satisfaction & Complaints;
- What worked well; Training;
- the Multi-Channel Digital Platform;
- Corporate External Communications;
- Members Technology & Members Contact Process Review; and
- the Digital Inclusion project.

She advised that social media continued to grow as an interactive communications resource as customers reported day to day issues such as fly tipping and littering with the website being the most effective and efficient means of accessing Council Information. The number of formal complaints had reduced and the overall customer satisfaction was 66%. It was noted that complaints resolved with the SLA was 89% and first point resolution was 49% although the customer contact centre had been severely impacted by resourcing issues.

At the Civic Offices the Welcome Lounge had opened on 19 July with the general footfall beginning to increase and the Community Hub had opened on 13 September.

The Broadway Cash Office continued to see a strong usage of cash payments in addition to the kiosks in Waltham Abbey and Epping. This would be taken into consideration for the report on future options for cash paying customers.

Plans were in progress for the launch of a news app – provisionally titled District Matters and following a soft launch in September, the app would provide a digital platform for the Council to share its own and third party news content from partners and other relevant stakeholders.

Members were advised that in absence of a full Members Portal, an interim single access point via the website was being developed and would include all the main links that Members may need. Furthermore once a Team Manager for Members Services had been recruited, a working group would be set up to progress the Digital Inclusion Programme.

The Committee asked the following questions:

- Was there anything place to assist with the recruitment of staff such as terms, salary? The Service Manager for Customer advised that people were either not moving or a counter offer was made to retain them with a national trend of vacancies. In additional to this, the Customer Services team had experience a number of long term absences.
- When would the Members Portal be launched? The Customer & Partnerships Services Portfolio Holder advised that they were due to launch the Members Portal, which contained links to the various frequently ask questions, members contact form and access to Mod.gov. The link could be found at the bottom of the EFDC website home page. It was also noted that the Member Contact Form could be accessed directly from members i pads.
- Were there lessons to be learnt from the residents use of cash payments? The Service Manager for Customer advised that this data would be taken and included in a report which would be presented to Members in October 2021.
- Did the reference to 65 Complaints, mean formal complaints? The Service Manager for Customer advised that was correct.

- What was the customer journey for residents who make a formal complaint to the Chief Executive? The Service Manager for Customer advised that it would be logged by the Customer Complaints and Satisfaction Manager and logged and then allocated to the relevant specialist officer and should receive a response within the service level agreement.
- What was the trend for Customer Services? The Service Manager for Customer advised that unfortunately she did not have the capacity to analyse the data because of the resourcing issues, although some services were taking calls back into their service to assist with the call waiting times such as issues involving waste. Regarding phone calls that were not being answered, this issue would be flagged with the Leadership team to enable officers to understand the problems that may be occurring.
- Would the issues be reported back to Members once the resourcing issue had been resolved? The Service Manager for Customer advised that once the Team Manager for Members had been recruited, focus groups would be held with Members to understand what Members' needs were and what information they would like to receive. It was noted that KPIs for Customer Services would now be reported to Stronger Council Select Committee, in line with other services areas.
- Could more information be given on the 13 waste complaints? The Service Manager for Customer advised that she did not have the details although all of the complaints had been dealt with by the waste department and Biffa.
- Whether the desk ratio was correct? The Operation Officer advised that the building capacity was a 4:10 desk ratio although there were a number of alternative meeting rooms and work spaces which brought the ratio up to 6/7:10. This equated to the same number of people in the building as before and the issue about staff being in the building was more around staff returning to work following the pandemic.

The Committee made a number of comments which included;

- that there were major issues with contacting the Council for both members and residents, in particular where action was required urgently. In addition to the way in which members were required to now report issues. The Customer & Partnerships Services Portfolio Holder advised that there were a number of issues that had affected the service which included the changes in the building through the transformation process, covid sending staff to home working before everything was in place, recruitment issues and the telephone system was not designed to provide the link between services. He stated that he was aware that a solution required both online services and a call centre for both residents and members and he was working to resolve these issues.
- That the term 'the Civic' which had previously been discussed at another Select Committee and that many members were not happy with officers using this term when either the Civic Offices or the Community Hub were discussed.
- That a discussion was required around what type of remote working was appropriate for meetings because of technical and sound issues when presenting to Members.
- That the rural residents would not benefit from either the Community Hub in Epping or other two proposed in Waltham Abbey or Loughton because of the poor transport links. Could there be consideration for a mobile version of the hub to visit the rural areas? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that the Community Hub approach did not have to rely on footfall but brought a number of services together for a collaborative outcome for the resident. There was a scoping exercise being carried out across the District

for Community and Wellbeing services and this would look at what services were being provided and how they were being articulated back to members. Following this, officers would be able to determine where there were gaps within the district and look at solution.

## 20. REVIEW OF THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Community and Wellbeing Director presented a report on the Housing Allocations Policy which was due for renewal in April 2022. The report set out the proposed major changes for the Allocation Policy 2022-2027 and the next steps for the stage 2 consultation.

The review had highlighted evidence-based issues and opportunities for inclusion in the Housing Allocations Policy in the following areas.

1. Defining the Priority Bands – To attribute clear identifiable needs level to each band and review the criteria for each band.
2. Priority Date – To prioritise bids for accommodation based on the applicant's band and then in date order that they had joined that band, rather than when they joined the Housing Register.
3. Medical Categories – To have three medical categories which included band A - emergency medical need; band B - urgent medical need and band C - moderate medical need.
4. Domestic Abuse – To incorporate the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 into the Housing Allocation Scheme.
5. Homeless Households – To award priority band B to homeless households that the Council had accepted a duty to rehouse under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
6. Homeless Households - To afford homeless households the opportunity to bid for suitable properties in accordance with their priority banding, on the understanding that they would be made a direct offer to enable the Council to discharge its duty if they failed to bid or secure an offer via choice based lettings within a reasonable timescale.
7. Under-occupation - To remove the penalty of suspending an under occupier from bidding if they refused 4 offers and replace with a discretionary decision to suspend an applicant who repeatedly bid for, then refuses a property where it was evident that they have no intention of moving.
8. Under-occupation - To allow under-occupiers wishing to downsize from a house to a flat where they were giving up one or more bedrooms, to be considered for a flat with a spare bedroom (i.e. a couple or single person can move from a 3-bed house to a 2-bed flat or a 1-bed flat) with or without a garden.
9. Serious Unacceptable Behaviour including Rent Arrears - To replace the 7-year rule for all unacceptable behaviour with a prescribed risk-based approach, to determining whether a history of unacceptable behaviour was serious enough to warrant exclusion from the Housing Register. Looking at patterns and severity of behaviour, cause and effect, recent history and support mechanisms that the applicant had, to prevent reoccurrence.



10. Allocation of Accommodation (rent arrears in excess of 4 weeks rent) - To replace the blanket 4-week arrears rule with a discretionary prescribed risk based approach, to determine whether an offer could be made to an applicant with rent arrears based on the cause of the arrears, and repayment plan.

11. Local Lettings Plans and Key Workers Housing - To include the use of a local lettings plans where appropriate to do so in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996.

12. Priority Transfers and Management Transfers - To replace Appendix 3 Priority Transfers with relevant sections in the main body of the Allocations Policy that define the offer policies for management transfers, temporary or permanent decants, overcrowding and welfare grounds (as well as medical grounds).

13. Pre-Transfer Property Inspections and Recharge Policy - To introduce a 'ready to go' inspections for tenants who were pursuing a transfer, to ensure they left the property in a suitable condition, and to have the ability to suspend applicants from bidding until they brought their property up to the required standard. Furthermore, for anyone who does leave a property in a poor condition (for example it was fine during the 'ready to go' inspection but damage had been done since) to be recharged for the cost of bringing the property back up to a standard that was suitable to re-let.

All of the recommendations would be submitted for stage 2 consultation to stakeholders between October and December 2021.

The Committee requested that if requested could the feedback received from other housing professionals and housing associations with regards to the Housing Allocation Policy be shared.

The Committee asked the following questions;

- What were Local Lettings Plans and Key Worker Housing? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that Local Lettings Plans and Key Worker Housing allowed for balanced communities to be created within new estates or developments rather than just going from the Allocation Policy which would be a members decision rather than an officers decision. It would also allow for consideration around communities where there were problems, to ensure an effective change could occurred.
- Could the accommodation allocated to service people, such as the Police or Fire Services be considered for housing residents? The Housing Services Portfolio Holder advised that she would contact the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner regarding this query.
- Should the Allocation Policy take into account international emergencies such as the Afghanistan Refugees resettlement programme? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that there were always situations where discretion was required and the Allocation Policy allowed for these circumstances to be considered out side the policy.
- How did the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 change the duty placed on the Local Authority? The Interim Housing Strategy Officer advised that although the previous policy had included Domestic Abuse, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was very prescriptive and therefore needed to be included in the new policy. She would supply a copy of the differences between the new and old policy for Members via the members briefing note.

- What was meant by Personal Housing Plans; Cascading letting arrangements and the Debt Reset Bite Scheme? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that the Debt Respite Scheme Regulation 2020 was introduced following the pandemic and a further information on the scheme would be supplied in the Members Bulletin. The Interim Housing Strategy Officer advised that the Personal Housing Plans were introduced with the Homelessness Act 2017, as a requirement for people seeking rehousing to engage in an agreement with the Council to take some responsibility, ensuring that the wellbeing and welfare of the person was considered. The cascading letting arrangements allowed housing which targeted a particular priority to cascade down to a larger geographical group, if the need was not required.
- Could the information sent out to members be sent to the Co-opted member of this Committee as well. The Co-opted members details would be passed onto the relevant officer.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee noted outcome of the stage 1 initial consultation on the review of the Allocations Policy 2022-2027; and
2. That the Committee approved the proposed major changes to the Allocation Policy 2022-2027 which would be included in the stage 2 consultation between October 2021 and December 2021.

**21. REVIEW OF THE TENANCY POLICY**

The Community and Wellbeing Director presented a report on the Tenancy Policy which was due for renewal in April 2022. The report sets out the proposal not to make any material changes to the terms of the current Tenancy and the next steps for the stage 2 consultation.

The Committee were advised that a Government Equalities Impact Assessment in 2016 found that nationwide far fewer councils and housing associations had introduced fixed term tenancies than had been anticipated. A recent desk-top analysis of councils in Essex found that of the other stockholding councils Castlepoint, Colchester, Basildon and Harlow were issuing lifetime tenancies rather than flexible tenancies and many of the Registered Providers operating in Rochford had ceased issuing flexible tenancies because of the disproportionate burden of the review process on their resources.

To date none of the 10-year fixed term tenancies in EFDC had reached the point of review and therefore it was felt that it would be prudent to continue with the period until the data was available.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee noted outcome of the stage 1 initial consultation on the review of the Tenancy Policy 2015-2022; and
2. That the Committee approved the proposal not to make any material changes to the terms of the Tenancy Policy, which would be sent out from consultation to Stakeholders in the stage 2 consultation between October 2021 and December 2021.

**22. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Community and Wellbeing Director presented a report on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which was due for renewal in April 2022. The report set out the proposed recommendations and the next steps for the stage 2 consultation between October and December 2021.

The review had highlighted evidence-based issues and opportunities for inclusion in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which included;

1. To streamline the strategy for 2022 – 2027 into an easy to read publication and for the associated policy and procedures for preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping to be produced as separate stand-alone documents;
2. To formulate the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy as a set of 5 strategic priorities within the framework of the national context, the local context, and Epping Forest District Council's Corporate Objectives; and
3. That an Action Plan with SMART targets be produced, following the same style and format as the proposed Overarching Housing Strategy to enable it to feed into service plans, teams and individual one-to-ones.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee noted the stage 1 initial consultation on the review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy;
2. That the Committee approved the proposed changes to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 which would be included in the stage 2 consultation between October 2021 and December 2021 and presented to Cabinet in Spring 2022.

**23. OVERARCHING HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Community and Wellbeing Director presented a report on the Overarching Housing Strategy which was due for renewal in April 2022. The report set out the proposed recommendations and the next steps for the stage 2 consultation between October and December 2021.

The review had highlighted issues and opportunities for inclusion in the overarching Housing Strategy 2022/2027 which included;

- The Five Strategic Priorities
  1. Increasing the supply of affordable housing – to maximise opportunities to increase the supply of suitable affordable housing;
  2. Promoting health wellbeing and independence - to consider health wellbeing prevention and support when its needed;
  3. Economic growth and regeneration - to strengthen the links with partners to collectively bridge the gap between the cost of housing and the ability of households on low incomes to meet these costs;
  4. Quality and standards - the Council's commitment to offering high quality housing and housing related services and the recourse that was open to residents who were dissatisfied; and

5. Protecting and enhancing the environment – to cover the natural environment culture and heritage that was unique to the district.
- An action plan with SMART targets be produced that would follow the same style and format as the proposals for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which could then be fed into service plans, team plans and individual one-to ones.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee noted the stage 1 initial consultation on the review of the Overarching Housing Strategy; and
2. That the Committee approved the proposals for the Overarching Housing Strategy 2022/2027 to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 which would be included in the stage 2 consultation between October 2021 and December 2021.

**24. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Committee noted that the date of the next meeting would be 11 January 2022.



# Overview: Operation Synapse

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at Neil Ross- Community Safety Team, Essex Police  
Melissa Faux- EFDC Senior Crime and ASB Officer

Minute Item 17

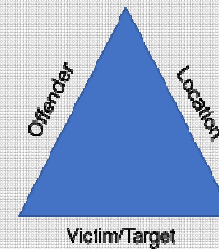
# The Problem

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- Historical patterns around a number of properties in Waltham Abbey used by local youths: drugs and ASB.
- March 2021: Serious assault at EFDC property. Premises had been cuckooed, drug dealer attacked and local youth arrested at scene.
- EFDC officers apply for and obtain a Closure Order
- Hypothesis: Criminality will be displaced and further local addresses will be at risk of being taken over.

## Routine Activity Theory

Crime occurs when a motivated offender comes together in time and space with a suitable victim in the absence of a capable guardian.



OFFENDER

Reduce the number of likely offenders

LOCATION/TARGET

Harden any prospective targets/places

GUARDIAN

Increase number/presence of guardians

## Creation of working party

- EFDC Housing, Community Resilience and the funded police team meet fortnightly to share information regarding new or recent ASB complaints.
- The intention is to identify any persons or premises at risk of, or in the process of, being exploited by criminal networks.
- The group assess each strand of intelligence. If it fits the above criteria or otherwise indicates that a property or tenant may be at risk or being targeted by criminals, actions were allocated to the most suitable team

## Partnership work with Operation Raptor (drugs and gangs)

- Separate operation running simultaneously to target the known offenders



# Results

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1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – Closure Order obtained for XX Caneland Court

Intelligence received that group are linked to a property at Essex House, Quaker Lane. Closure Order considered but tenant is re-housed out of area and the property boarded up.

Within 2 days, the group return to YY Caneland Court, which had previously been targeted and addressed in 2020.

3<sup>rd</sup> May 2021- incident involving the group occurs at XX Amesbury

4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 – Closure Order obtained for YY Caneland Court

16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 – Closure Order obtained for XX Amesbury

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021- Closure Order extension obtained for XX Caneland Court

15<sup>th</sup> September 2021 - Closure Order extension obtained for XX Amesbury

ARRESTS – 3 x juvenile males, 1 x adult female, 1 x adult male

# Closure Order

## Closure Order

(SECTION 80(5) ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014)

In the Chelmsford Magistrates' Court  
Sitting at 10 New Street Chelmsford Essex CM1 1NT

Address:

On application of Epping Forest District Council  
Address of Applicant Authority: Civic Offices High Street Essex CM16 4BZ

Relevant Authorities Consulted – Essex Police,

The Court has found on the balance of probabilities in relation to the address at ("the Premises"):

- (a) that a person has engaged, or (if the Order is not made) is likely to engage in disorderly, offensive or criminal behaviour on the Premises, or:
- (b) the use of the premises has resulted, or (if the Order is not made) is likely to result in serious nuisance to members of the public, or
- (c) there has been, or (if the Order is not made) is likely to be, disorder near those premises associated with the use of the Premises

And that the Order is necessary to prevent the behaviour, nuisance or disorder from continuing, recurring or occurring

Accordingly the Court orders that a Closure Order is made pursuant to Section 80 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in respect of the Premises

A Closure Order is an Order prohibiting access to the Premises for a period specified in the Order

~~This Closure Order prohibits access to the Premises by all persons (except those persons specified or those of a specified description) at all times (unless specified) for a period of THREE MONTHS from \_\_\_\_\_ and ending at \_\_\_\_\_~~

Subject to the following exceptions:

Staff and representatives of Epping Forest District Council, Emergency Services,

A person who without reasonable excuse remains on or enters premises in contravention of a Closure Order commits an offence under Section 86 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 liable on summary conviction to a maximum of 51 weeks imprisonment and / or an unlimited fine.

A person who obstructs a constable or authorised person entering or doing anything reasonably necessary to secure the premises against entry by any person commits an offence under Section 86 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 liable on summary conviction to a maximum of 3 months imprisonment and / or an unlimited fine.

District Judge / Justice of the Peace

[By order of the clerk of the court]

Date

# Next Steps

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- Youths are due in court, two parties still to be charged.
- Funded officers have drafted Criminal Behaviour Order applications for 3 x youths and 1 x adult
- Op Raptor officers have completed extensive investigations
- The working party were meeting fortnightly to remain aware of any concerns however owing to the reduction in activity this has been conceded and future discussions are on an adhoc basis.

# Reporting

If residents suspect any properties are being used for Criminal purposes they can report it via the below channels:

- Call 101
- Live chat with Essex Police online
- Report it online to Essex Police
- Report to EFDC via the website: [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/crime-and-safety/report-anti-social-behaviour/](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/crime-and-safety/report-anti-social-behaviour/)



Any questions?

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