EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee:	Stronger Communities Select Committee	**Date:**	Tuesday, 22 March 2022
Place:	Council Chamber - Civic Offices	**Time:**	7.00 - 8.51 pm
Members Present:	Councillors J Lea (Chairman), R Balcombe (Vice-Chairman), H Brady, I Hadley, S Rackham, K Williamson and D Wixley		
Members Present (Virtually):	Councillors S Murray, C Nweke and J H Whitehouse		
Other Councillors (Virtual):	Councillors N Avey, R Brookes, J Philip, M Sartin and D Sunger		
Apologies:	D Plummer		
Officers Present:	R Perrin (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer) and R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)		
Officers Present (Virtually):	A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), R Pavey (Service Director (Customer Services)), M Thompson (Service Manager (Technical)) and C Wiggins (Directorate Specialist – Technical Services)		

---

42. 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.

43. Substitute Members

The Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

44. Declarations of Interest

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

45. Terms of Reference & Work Programme

The Committee noted that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would be reviewing the Committee's work programme for 2022/23 with the lead officer, N Dawe. This would be presented to the Committee for discussed at the first meeting of the Committee**.**

It was noted that a request to scrutinise the Epping Foodbank should be included on the Committees work programme for 2022/23.

46. Presentation from the District Commander for Epping Forest and Brentwood

The Interim District Commander for Epping Forest and Brentwood, Chief Inspector Paul Ballard advised that he had been seconded to this position for approximately 5/6 months, in place of Chief Inspector Ant Alcock who had been seconded to the Major Investigation Team.

The Chief Inspector advised that over the last 12 months performance had been good, although the data had still been impacted by Covid. It was noted that reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) had reduced by 51% and this was probably due to how covid breaches were being reported as ASB. There had been a 4% increase of all crimes, which had been attributed to covid and how crimes had been recorded. However, within Epping Forest, robbery had reduced by 11%, personal robbery was down by 14% and residential robbery down by 24%. Unfortunately, there had been an increase of 17% in violence against person offences and a 13% increase in violence with injury but there was on going work in this area. In additions to these figures further work was being carried out to improve public engagement in the district.

The Committee asked the following questions:

- Had domestic violence been included in the violence against persons offences figures and was there any data available on domestic violence figures in the district? The C/Insp advised that the common assaults figures would include domestic violence and within the district there had been a 6% increase in offences reported to the police.
- What engagement was occurring between the police and residents and how it could be improved? The C/Insp advised that engagement throughout the covid period had been very challenging, although improvements were required on a face-to-face basis which would include pre-pandemic events such as coffee with cops; forums; community events; and residents' meetings.
- Could the rural crime figures for the district be provided? The C/Insp advised that he would need to consult his Rural Engagement Team based in Chelmsford, although there was a Rural Specialist PC Officer, Andy Cooke for the District, as well as the neighbourhood beat officers.
- Did the police have plans in conjunction with TFL to monitor large groups of people entering the district via the underground stations? The C/Insp acknowledged that the underground stations were a focal point and had been affected by seasonal changes. There were several events in and around the district and plans were being put in place to monitor these events. Furthermore, there was also great partnership working between the Council, CSP and TFL and if the large groups involving young people were to become an issue, the Police would look for alternative methods to disperses people gathering, if required.
- How many of the 200 newly recruited police officers would be placed in the district? The C/Insp advised that formal recruitment was dealt with by a central office, although the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) had committed to continue the uplift in community policing in town centres.
- Did the recruitment process in Essex differ from the MET? The C/Insp advised that he did not know what the recruitment process for the MET was like, although the Essex recruitment process involved several assessments prior to the vetting stage which was then followed by a robust and lengthy training period. This was reviewed and amended in accordance with national guidelines.
- Would the police be carrying out any speed checks within the district? The C/Insp advised that speed checks were being carried out in the district. Centrally, work was on going with the road safety support team, in and

around Fyfield and Waltham Abbey. It was noted that residents could advise the police of areas within the district that had road safety issues and the community speed watch groups worked extremely well.

- Did the police work in conjunction with the highways authority to implement road cameras? The C/Insp advised that when several collisions occurred at a certain location, the highways authority would liaison with the police to collate the data to support recommendations for that location.
- How could the police assist with safety on rural roads? The C/Insp advised that the police were there to enforce the law and not to design, direct, change or implement traffic calming measures or speed restrictions as this would be in the remit of the highway's authority.
- Could the police monitor the rural roads for vehicles fly tipping? The C/Insp advised that the law would be changing with regards to the enforcement of flying tipping. At present, it was the responsibility of the Council.
- Do the police inform Essex Highways of fatalities? The C/Insp advised that he did not inform the relevant highways authority although this was not to say that it did not happen through either the Safer Roads Bureau, Roads Policing Team, or support staff.
- What support did the Community Speed Watch training officer get and were the statics available for the road accidents? The C/Insp advised that support would be given to the relevant officer to train Community Speed Watch volunteers. He would confirm where the data could be found and get back to the Committee.
- Did the police have the capacity to engage with schools? The C/Insp advised that there were 2 Young Persons Officers who worked with the secondary schools within the district.
- Do PCSO have the authority to issue penalty charge notices for parking on pavements? The C/Insp advised that the Chief Constables delegated powers of authority to their PCSO, and he would have to check what powers had been delegated.
- Do officers have the capacity to attend residents' properties to assess and make recommendations on how to secure their properties? The C/Insp advised that unfortunately they did not have the capacity for this. Although, where required, residents would be referred onto Crime and Prevention Advisors.
- Where there any initiatives to cut organised car crime in the district? The C/Insp advised that there were several initiatives involving cross-border collaboration, darker night patrols, special vehicle recovery unit and intelligence led investigations.

The Customer & Partnerships Services Portfolio Holder advised that the Safer Essex Road Partnership looked at problematic hot spot for traffic collisions and recorded data on personal injury or death related accidents. Regarding pavement parking, he advised that outside Greater London, parking on pavement was not illegal and enforcement could only be for obstruction. There were ongoing discussion at Government level regarding this issue and if delegated, the Council would look to NEPP to enforce.

- Could an update be given on successful initiatives that had prevented crime in the district? The C/Insp advised that there were no current updates, although operations may be occurring.
- The pandemic had changed the way many people worked, which had been reflected in local towns and high streets becoming busier. Had this effected crime? The C/Insp advised that there had been changes in crime trends although there had been nothing specific in relation to town centres.

Furthermore, the Council funded Police officers were currently working on reports of pick-pockets gangs working in Epping, High Street on market day.

* C/Insp Ballard gave the following responses after the meeting.

Was the District specific RTC data periodically published and accessible?

This was available on the Safer Essex Roads website – district casualty data - saferessexroads.org/collision-data/links-and-downloads

Do any of your teams offer specific additional support for speeding, road safety operations etc?

Chigwell would take over the management of OP CALYPSO funding from April 1st which would allow for a far greater focus on local road safety issues including speed enforcement. The team was also using a new Laser Cam 4 device which allowed enforcement at night. We would also be recruiting 3 additional police staff members during the summer to also enforce speed. At present a member of my team was reviewing our speed enforcement strategy to reflect what changes were needed to make in line with Vision Zero. On the Twitter account, there was significant speed enforcement around EFDC.

It was suggested that there may be scope for a joint police & council enforcement operation in relation to illegal waste carriers and similar offending to assist in tackling the issue of fly tipping in rural areas. Was this something that your teams might be interested in?

We regularly carry out OP NASH days of action in Loughton / Waltham Abbey. These were days planned and set by the Partnership. Samantha Wright was our planner and link and would be very happy to support and enhance those days.

47. Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership Annual Strategic Assessment, Annual Report and Plan on a Page

The Specialist Technical Services Officer, C Wiggins presented the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership (CPS) Annual Strategic Assessment, Annual Report and Partnership Plan on a page.

The Community Safety Partnership was required to complete an annual Strategic Assessment which was used to direct and guide their activities, under the requirements as responsible authorities, of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

A strategic assessment included

- an analysis of the levels and patterns of crime and disorder and substance misuse in the area.
- an analysis of the changes in those levels and patterns since the previous strategic assessment.
- an analysis of why those changes had occurred.
- the matters which the responsible authorities should prioritise when each were exercising their functions to reduce crime and disorder and to combat substance misuse in the area.
- the matters which the persons living and working in the area consider the responsible authorities should prioritise when each were exercising their functions to reduce crime and disorder and to combat substance misuse in the area.

- an assessment of the extent to which the partnership plan for the previous year has been implemented.

The CSP had pulled together a review of the major issues facing the district in 2022 and the strategic assessment for 2021-22 which had been included in the agenda.

In preparation for the 2022-23 Strategic Assessment, the CPS had worked with Essex Police and wider Safer Essex partners to agree a common model, which could span across Essex and fulfil the needs of Safer Essex Community Safety Agreements and allow each, district, borough, city, and unitary area, to ensure their documents reflect the local needs and priorities.

The CSP Plan on a Page provided information at a glance on the planned delivery of Epping Forest CSP going forward.

The Committee asked the following questions.

- Why were the figures hate crime figures so high? The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that this had been due to issues at the Bell Hotel in Epping. She would request a breakdown of the figures and email them to members.
- Whether based on the data for the number of fire incidents in Epping Forest, should there be a local campaign for the provision and installation of smoke detectors in common areas within the home and to promote the Government initiative that provided funding for this? The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that she would be meeting with the Estates Manager from Essex Fire and Rescue to discuss accidental residential fires and supporting the new legislation for the social housing.
- Was the information about accident fires in relation to social housing or all properties; and could a breakdown be provided as social housing were fitted with both smoke and heat detectors? The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that the data included all properties, and the type of tenure was stated on the profiles.
- Could further information be given on the hate crime figures associated with Waltham Abbey? The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that she would supply the data to the Member directly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Community Safety Partnership Annual Strategic Assessment and Annual Report be noted; and

2. That going forward the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership Plan on a Page 2021/22 includes a glossary and additional detail on the schemes.

48. Customer Service Update

The Customer Services Service Director, R Pavey presented a report on ‘what our customers were telling us’ and the Customer strategy in the following areas.

- What the customer was telling the Council
- Customer Centre & Community Hub
- Customer Service Strategy – 2022/23 Overview
- Online engagement Surveys and focus groups
- Causation data from incoming customer calls
- Website
- Mystery Shoppers
- Digital Inclusion
- Members Digital Journey

- Cash Payments
- In your shoes customer service behavioural training
- Telephony
- Corporate communications including digital news platforms

The Committee asked the following questions.

- Had the Council considered bench marking against other types of similar sized business other than just local authorities? The Customer Services Service Director advised that this was a valid point, and he would take this into consideration.
- Was the Project Manager for Telephony a new role? The Customer Services Service Director that this was not a new post but a resource from the Project Management Team.
- Where were the SLA reported? The Customer Services Service Director advised the SLA were reported at the Stronger Council Select Committee along with all Performance indicators.
- Concerns were raised regarding the digital inclusion of residents and how they had been consulted as the survey had only been accessible by residents who already used technology. Furthermore, there were issues with the planning department and that they had not responded to members and the public, which was not good enough. The Customer Services Service Director advised that discussions between the relevant departments would be carried out. The Planning Services Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that following the submission of an application there was no requirement for the planning department to contact the applicant or objector, although the Council had acknowledged that this was causing issues and a planning forum had been set up, which would be held regularly between officers and members.
- There were issues with residents and members leaving answer phone messages and not being contacted back, which was then resulting in more calls into the Council. The Customer Services Service Director advised that currently the telephony system could not track the calls and determine whether the issue had been resolved, although there was a business solution being developed.
- Due to the delay in the supply of blue recycling boxes, would it be possible for glass recycling to be placed in the recycling bags? The Customer Services Service Director advised that he would have to investigate this option.
- Could a report with data be provided on the Community hub usage? The Customer Services Service Director advised that although the hub had been launched post pandemic it was there to provided communication across the various hubs in the district as a community initiative rather than just a hub. He advised that the Digital Strategy was to enhance residents who wanted to use the digital services and not remove other ways of communicating with the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the update on ‘what our customers were telling us’ and the Customer strategy.

49. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the date of the next meeting would be in the new municipal year on 12 July 2022.

CHAIRMAN