

Report to the Council

Committee: Council
Date: 9th April 2024
Subject: Community & Wellbeing
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Smruti Patel

Recommending:

That the report of the Community, Health & Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Epping Forest Youth Council Elections 2024

Over 60 young candidates stood during the February and March elections for 25 Youth Council seats - the highest number of candidates on record to date. Roding Valley High School, in particular, had a remarkable 17 candidates stand. Seven school elections were held between Monday 26 February and Friday 22 March. Results were announced on Tuesday 26 March. The new cohort of Youth Councillors will take up office on Monday 8 April.

“Stop & Think Roadshows” for local Secondary Schools

Funded by the Community Safety Partnership, seven Secondary Schools are currently receiving the 60-minute performance for Year 7 or Year 8 pupils, using forum theatre to stimulate discussion and learning. The Roadshow focusses on Police Stop and Search, and also Stop and Account practices and provides a platform to explore behaviours and attitudes when engaging with the Police.

Youth Council support for an Independent Advisory Group Survey

A Youth Safety Survey was recently conducted by the five youth representatives on the Independent Advisory Group and a total of 474 surveys were completed by local school pupils; 178 Davenant Foundation School; 176 Roding Valley High School; 101 Epping St John's and 19 Waltham Holy Cross Primary Academy.

Limes Farm Youth Provision

Youth Unity has submitted a bid to the Police Fire & Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Development Fund for a mentor to support the transition of pupils between Years 6 and 7 as they move into secondary school. The bid builds on the work which the Council currently commission Youth Unity to deliver at the Limes Farm Youth Club.

Limes Farm Colts Football Team took part in a friendly match at Grange Farm Trust on Saturday 9 March. The Chairman of Council attended and presented a Chairman's Award, trophies and medals to the young players.

Community Cafe in Waltham Abbey

The Waltham Abbey Community Cafe celebrated its 2-year anniversary in February. This has become a self-sustainable session, originally started by the Council's Community Team and now being run by local volunteers. The Community Café has gone from strength to strength providing a safe, friendly, fun and welcoming environment for local residents. This particular

celebration enabled 'cafe goers' to share what the Community Cafe means to them. Attendees commented; *"The café is a happy place and I love to attend as I live alone. Recently we created a WhatsApp group including everyone who attends and feel I can call on any of them if I ever need anything"* and *"My husband and I love the café; we have formed great friendships and really enjoy the chat each week. My husband often asks if we are 'going down the Abbey' today."*

The Waltham Abbey Community Café runs every Wednesday from 12noon – 1.45pm in Epping Forest District Museum.

Epping Forest Dementia Friendly Communities

Plans are underway for a 2024 Epping Forest Dementia Fair. A working group has been created through the Dementia Friendly Community Group. This is the third of its kind and last year's event provided support to over 140 people. This year the event will take place on Saturday 11 May, 10am – 2pm at St John's Church in Epping.

Care To Move Project

A third Council Independent Living setting is making use of specially adapted cycling equipment purchase from RideLondon 2023 funding. During February, the Care to Move Project expanded to Hyde Mead House in Nazeing and residents were inducted on how to use the equipment. A Nazeing Community Champion oversees and monitors the activity which supports residents to improve their mobility and increase general physical activity levels.

Play in the Park School – Easter and Summer School Holiday Sessions

School holiday family fun "Play in the Park" activities continue to be being delivered by the Council in partnership with local Town and Parish Councils.

For children aged 5-12, Play in the Park is all about playing games and having fun outdoors. The sessions are fully inclusive and work on a 'drop in' basis. The Play in the Park Team provide a range of sports equipment, including bikes and arts & crafts resources, for children and their parents/carers to enjoy together at a range of green spaces across the district.

As part of a wider RideLondon funded programme, the Council organised FREE bike maintenance over Easter via the Essex Cycle Training Team. The Council has also linked Town and Parish Councils with the scheme for their Town Shows, and these will include Waltham Abbey in June, Epping in July, and Loughton in September.

Oakwood Hill Community Hub and Consultation

An exciting re-launch of the Oakwood Hill Community Centre as a multi-service Community Hub took place on Thursday 21 March, between 9:30am – 1pm in Loughton. Hosted by Restore Community, the Community Development & Wellbeing Team, along with staff from Tenancy & Estates, Income, Rehousing and Qualis formed part of the multi-service offer at the launch. Numerous partner organisations, such as Peabody, were also in attendance. In addition to the formal launch of the Community Hub, the Council's Community Development & Wellbeing Team, in partnership with wider health partners, undertook a community consultation exercise. The aim was to gather an understanding of what services, activities and opportunities residents would like to see in the Oakwood Hill area. This assists the Communities Team and wider Council with its whole system partnership approach and will enable the mobilisation of system partners to deliver services to meet the identified needs.

The consultation took the form of a door knocking exercise to get a better understanding from residents themselves of their needs and aspirations. A flyer with a QR code was also produced

so that residents could complete the survey online. Results of the survey are currently being collated.

Stay Safe & Well Community Events

Another of the Community Team's popular Stay Safe & Well events took place at Zinc Arts in Ongar on 12 March. The stimulating, interactive health and wellbeing event saw over 60 local residents visit multi-agency information stands and listen to informative talks from the blue light services and specialist health advisors.

Health checks were provided on the day, a seated exercise session suitable for all abilities warmed participants up, followed by a free lunch and information bag, and then an interactive theatre performance about the perils of scamming.

The next Spring event will take place in Sheering on 11 April.

Winter Stay Safe & Well events will be delivered in Roydon on 29 October and Theydon Bois on 30 October when flu jabs will also be available.

Epping Forest Community Champions

Two new Community Champions have been successfully recruited from Moreton and Buckhurst Hill and one more Champion is in the process of being onboarded from Nazeing, which will bring the total number of Community Champions to 28.

First Aid training will be provided to Champions in May.

Nazeing's long-standing Community Champion has been successful in securing £500 from the Qualis Community Benefit Fund towards a Canalability trip for the residents of Hyde Mead House and wider Nazeing.

Funding Secured

With support from the Community Development & Wellbeing Team's Senior Community Engagement Officer, the Upshire School Community Train Carriage Project has secured £5000 from the Community Safety Partnership, £5000 from the Epping Forest Public Health Community Fund and £5000 from the Qualis Community Benefit Fund.

Initiated by the Communities Team, the Buckhurst Community Pantry received £3000 and Limes Farm Community Pantry received £7000 from Essex County Council. Both of these initiatives are run by the Council's Community Champions.

Epping Forest District Museum

On 1st April the Epping Forest District Museum Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) formally assumed responsibility for the delivery of the Museum service on behalf of the Council. Through an initial four-year Service Level Agreement with the CIO, the Council has provided a robust platform from which the Museum can flourish and further build a sustainable community-focused Museum service for the district for years to come.

The 'Towns Through Time' exhibition continues to attract a regular flow of visitors to the Museum and the feedback captured on the associated memory wall clearly illustrates the value and affection the community has for the Museum.

Customer Service Contact Centre

A report on the progress of the Council's Contact Centre over the past 12 months and associated Customer Services Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) was presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee on 5th March.

Details of proactive continuous improvement initiatives and enhancements were shared with Members including; a comprehensive benchmarking exercise which has been undertaken with other Councils across Essex to highlight and learn from best practice, and work to further explore the benefits and capabilities of the Council's new telephony system.

The detailed presentation highlighted that lead officers in the Customer Services team have established regular meetings with the new telephony provider, Cirrus/Gamma. Through close liaison with Cirrus/Gamma reps, further enhancements to the telephony platform are being progressively secured. Robust and more meaningful data and insight in respect of matters such as the swift resolution of calls (known as first point resolution) is proving to be the catalyst for early performance improvement and there is now, for example, clear "in the moment" visibility available in respect of Planning Services related calls into the Contact Centre.

Following careful consideration and detailed discussion, the Committee was happy to accept the recommendation to remove the historic overly generic "Customer Satisfaction" KPI in its current format, in favour of more meaningful and measurable indicators being adopted corporately. Regular meetings with wider Council service areas will continue in order to further improve the Council's customers' experience.

Customer Services staff are supporting the Council's new waste service project by undertaking a review of existing procedures to identify efficiencies and the simplification of online services. Meetings are planned with Granicus and Whitespace (the core existing and specialist waste system providers) to look at the automation of current processes as a whole "customer journey" and the integrations required to improve processes generally and to ensure customers are kept updated throughout. Various elements will be built in phases and prioritised accordingly.

Complaint Handling Code 2024

The joint Housing Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code will take effect 1st April 2024. The Council will be fully compliant with the new Complaint Handling Code. Furthermore, staff are reviewing the Council's Complaints Policy, Response Templates, Complaints Form and Handling Code Self-Assessment in order to deliver excellence in this area.

Staff refresher training workshops covering the management of any complaints which may come into the Council will be rolled out from April. The Council acknowledges that data protection is especially important when handling complaints, hence, the Council's Data Protection Officer will also input into the training workshops. Interactive online training resources will also be created by Customer staff for the online training portal, Litmos.

The Housing Team has introduced complaints benchmarking through Housemark. The aim is to measure how the Council is performing from a Housing perspective compared to other authorities. The Customer Services team assists Housing staff by uploading Housing complaints data monthly to ensure that Housemark produces an all-encompassing and accurate report.

Analysing complaints which come to the Council enables staff to improve services. Quarterly review meetings are held with each Services area in order to analyse root causes and identify trends in order to drive up performance wherever possible.