

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 July 2014

Subject: Safer, Greener & Transport

Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Waller

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

Community Safety

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

The Council's ASB investigator for the Debden area recently received a complaint of graffiti sprayed on a wall at Bricklamps Path, Debden Broadway. The officer carried out an investigation by viewing the Council's public space CCTV, with the result that images of an offender carrying out the act were identified and retrieved. Enquiries were carried out, with police using still images of the youth responsible, enabling him to be identified, and the information was passed to the Neighbourhood Policing Team, who arrested the youth concerned. He subsequently admitted the offence of criminal damage, which was dealt with by way of a police caution, with compensation of £70 being paid to the Council to cover the cost of removing the graffiti. The successful resolution of this case was made possible through excellent partnership working between officers of the Council's Community Safety team and Essex Police.

An investigation is under way concerning reported anti-social behaviour in the area of the shops and flats at Debden Broadway. This includes youths climbing on to flat roofs at the rear of shops and accessing the balcony areas to the flats, as well as ASB directed towards shopkeepers. Re-deployable CCTV has been used to cover an area not accessible by the fixed public space CCTV - a factor which was being exploited by youths involved. The Council's ASB investigator, working with Essex Police and local public services, identified over 10 youths involved in this activity. Working with EFDC legal services, a strategy has been implemented whereby banning letters are being sent to those individuals identified, threatening court action for civil trespass if their behaviour continues. This investigation is continuing and is being co-ordinated with local businesses, residents, police and the Debden Housing Office.

Community Trigger

The Community Safety team have been working towards implementation of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. This legislation includes a number of provisions streamlining the way ASB cases are dealt with, reduces the overall number of enforcement powers, and provides for a mandatory power of possession in extreme cases. Guidance from the Home Office on the new enforcement powers is still awaited; however, one important provision is the right of a victim to request an ASB case review, informally known as a Community Trigger, if he or she feels no action has been taken and the case meets the required threshold. A consistent response across the whole of Essex has been agreed by all local authorities, registered providers, Essex Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and a threshold agreed of 3 reports of ASB in the preceding 6 month period or one report of hate crime over the same period. All reports, in the first instance, are to be notified through the relevant local authority to a single point of contact, which in our case will be the Community Safety Manager. Together with an officer, I attended the Essex launch meeting for the scheme at Basildon, and the team is currently working towards the development of member training as well as staff briefing packages around the Act's forthcoming implementation in September.

Crucial Crew

Once again, the Crucial Crew project has been delivered to every Year 6 pupil in the District, together with pupils from Brentwood primary schools. Some 1,700 children in total have participated in interactive scenarios covering many aspects of personal safety. Themes this year included online safety, substance misuse, road and fire safety, recycling and environmental crime. Perhaps most significantly, a scenario was delivered by staff from Safer Places which focussed on healthy relationships. Domestic abuse continues to be an area of growing concern within the District, and relevant early advice and guidance represent a particular priority focus. The Council's young apprentices not only supported the Community Development team in the day to day running of the project but also delivered a bespoke scenario covering bullying which was extremely well received by all participants. Follow-up information booklets have been distributed to every pupil, and a teachers' resource pack was provided to all schools in order that key safety messages can be re-visited within a classroom setting, prior to pupils commencing secondary school in September.

Safeguarding

Following successful appointments to the two new safeguarding posts, I am pleased to inform Council that significant progress is being made in respect of addressing our Section 11 Safeguarding Action Plan.

Lynn Maidment, who had previously worked for Harlow District Council and was manager of the Brentwood Foyer, has joined the Council as Safeguarding Officer. Claire Baccarini, who was already working for the Council and has been involved in providing support for the current Domestic Homicide Review, was successful in securing the Safeguarding Administrator role.

Lynn and Claire are currently reviewing and updating all of the Council's policies relating to safeguarding, including domestic abuse, 'honour-based' abuse and forced marriage, child sexual exploitation, and abuse of vulnerable adults, as well as the overarching safeguarding policy and procedures. Plans are additionally under way to implement a new central referral process for the Council, which will enable all safeguarding incidents and concerns to be assessed before submission to the Essex social care and initial response team. This accords with best practice across local authorities in the county and will assist the Council in identifying any emerging safeguarding issues, both with tenants and other families in the District.

Safeguarding training for elected members

A members' Safeguarding training session was provided as part of the Introduction to Council training day on Saturday 28 June, and I am pleased to report that 7 new members attended this very important training, along with two longer standing councillors. A further training session has been organised for Tuesday 26 August from 4.00 pm to 5.30 pm in Committee Room 1, and I would encourage all fellow councillors who have not previously undertaken this training to reserve a place. It is additionally hoped to provide a further session in the autumn, and training is already planned for 3 February 2015.

Countrycare

Countrycare has hosted several events recently. For children, Countrycare was present at two 'Play in the Forest' days hosted by Community Development, organised an Easter scavenger hunt in Roughtally's Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR), held a bug activity evening for the Woodford Brownies and arranged two pond dipping sessions, at one of which the Loughton Rainbows netted their first great crested newt, found at Linder's Field LNR. On 21 May Countrycare spent the day with three Year 2 classes at Alderton Infants School, building bird boxes and talking to the children about the importance of helping our wild birds. Three classes (involving a total of 90 pupils) built 30 bird boxes to sell at Debden Day.

For adults, Countrycare led a guided walk around Chigwell as part of the Life Walks series, with 17 people participating. The volunteers were given a guided walk round Magdalen Laver and Moreton, with a lunch stop at Bobbingworth LNR. A bee walk was held at Roding Valley Meadows LNR on 5 July, with 12 people enjoying a tour of the site, but regrettably few bees braved the rain.

The EFDC Chief Executive, Glen Chipp, and directors spent a hard-working morning pruning roses at Bobbingworth as a team building event.

Shortly before the end of her term, the outgoing Council Chairman, Cllr Mary Sartin, hosted a much-appreciated tea party to thank the Countrycare volunteers.

All members of the team are now fully trained in the use of a portable defibrillator which will go out with them on the weekly volunteer days and to all events hosted by Countrycare.

Countrycare has been working in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) to help improve a local wildflower meadow at Stapleford Tawny - Hawksmere Spring. Two volunteer days have been devoted to helping EWT to rake up the arising's cut by EWT Warden Patrick Bailly. This will help reduce the amount of rough grasses and scrub on the site and allow wildflowers to flourish. EWT will, in return, help Countrycare to mow and green hay strew Linder's Field LNR.

In the same month, Countrycare and the Friends of Swaines Green won a Living Landscapes 2014 Award from the Essex Wildlife Trust. This is for the conservation management jointly carried out on Lovelock's Meadow, which is part of Swaines Green and owned by Epping Town Council.

Finally, Roding Valley LNR has just won the Green Flag award for 2014/15. Congratulations are due to our colleagues in the Essex Wildlife Trust for achieving this in three consecutive years.

Conservation

The character appraisals and management plans for the Staples Road and York Hill conservation areas were ratified by Cabinet in April, and residents have been notified and hard copies of the documents printed and made available.

The character appraisal and management plan for the Baldwins Hill conservation area was endorsed by Cabinet in June, incorporating an enlargement of the boundary to include Loughton Potato Grounds allotments and the almshouses at the end of Stony Path.

Next in line are the character appraisals for Copped Hall and Waltham Abbey conservation areas. As in the cases of the Loughton appraisals, Copped Hall has had a draft appraisal for a number of years and it needs to be adopted, once it has been updated.

Waltham Abbey conservation area is a priority because it has been identified as being potentially 'at risk'. The importance of the area and the contribution it makes to the historic value of the District combined with development pressures and the high number of vacant commercial units, mean that it will benefit from the adoption of a character appraisal and management plan to guide development and encourage investment in the enhancement of the historic environment. Work has commenced on the historical development section of the appraisal.

Work on the character appraisal for the new Buckhurst Hill conservation area, centred on St John's Church, is also now taking place. A leaflet has been circulated within the area to inform residents about the possible designation and that work has started on the character appraisal. Once a complete draft appraisal has been produced as the basis for full public consultation, it will then begin.

Trees and landscape

The team has dealt with several railway-related issues recently. In one case, affecting an area of land near Theydon Bois station where ornamental trees were felled without notice, officers have been representing residents' concerns to Transport for London, stressing the desirability of funding suitable replacements in the village - so far without a positive outcome. In Loughton, works are starting on another major programme of embankment strengthening and stabilisation near the Alderton County Infant and Junior Schools; as with previous schemes, there will be loss of trees, but the team has secured revised plans to ensure that an important row of hornbeams in the school grounds survives unharmed, and also that the large area to be used for the works compound will be fully restored for pupils' use.

In my last Report I noted that the Landscape Officer had been invited to Brussels (at no cost to the Council) to give the keynote speech at the European Tree of the Year competition, following interest in our Community Tree Strategies. The speech having been well received, it can now be seen on youtube, posted by the organisers. We have received confirmation that a substantial grant to extend the Community Tree Strategies programme is likely to be approved in the near future.

Energy efficiency and climate change

Sharing and reporting greenhouse gas emissions

The end of the data collection and reporting period for the Council's greenhouse gas emissions is drawing near. There is still outstanding data from Facilities Management, but it is hoped that this will be ready in time for the emissions to be calculated before the report deadline. This reporting involves the Environmental Co-ordinator collating data from multiple sources including Facilities Management's energy spreadsheets for our largest buildings, fuel card invoices, energy bills, casual, essential and lease mileage etc, and then converting it into tonnes of carbon dioxide, using a calculation spreadsheet devised by central government. This year's report will be presented internally at the next Green Corporate Working Party meeting in September, but in the meantime it must also be published and sent to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) by 31 July.

DECC Annual Statistical Release by Local Authority

On 26 June DECC released its latest estimate of tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted per capita (tCO₂ per person) within every local authority. The full report, entitled *Emissions within the Scope and Influence of Local Authorities 2005-12* is available online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-emissions-estimates>

It should be noted that there is a lag of nearly two years due to the quantities of data being processed, and therefore the latest figures are for 2012. This Report tells us that the District's per capita emissions increased from 5.5 tCO₂ per capita in 2011 to 5.7 tCO₂ per capita in 2012.

Recycling of Civic Offices commercial waste

The office food waste separation scheme is still going very well, which means that as much of our office waste as possible is being recycled, although issues may arise when we switch over from SITA to our new waste contractor. There are some details that will need to be ironed out in the handover to the new contractor to ensure that we will still be recycling the maximum proportion of our commercial waste. Once the handover is complete, it will be time to start planning how this scheme can be rolled out to our satellite offices.

Parking

Council car parks strategy

The District-wide public consultation on the new Council car park strategy started in May, seeking views from residents, visitors, businesses and other users of Council car parks. The consultation can be accessed via the Council website and has been circulated to town and parish councils, Town Centre Partnerships and One Epping Forest. Information has also been included in the recent edition of the *Forester* to encourage as many responses as possible. Alpha Paking Limited have been assisting officers by carrying out face to face surveys and were in the Council car parks from 24 June to 4 July, collecting feedback from users. The deadline for the consultation is 31 July, and I shall update members once all responses have been analysed.

Buckhurst Hill Parking Review

The formal public consultation on the proposed changes was carried out by Essex Highways from 5 June to 27 June, including adverts in local newspapers and notices in the vicinity of the proposed changes, as well as information on the Council website. Essex Highways engineers are now reviewing the responses, and a meeting has been arranged with the Buckhurst Hill ward members to discuss the outcome of the public consultation. Once all changes have been agreed, Essex Highways will be making the necessary legal traffic orders.

When this project is complete, we plan to commence work on the Loughton Broadway Parking Review.

North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)

At its meeting held on 26 June, a surplus of £152,000 for the on-street account in 2013/14 was reported to the NEPP Joint Committee. This is a considerable improvement on the previously anticipated position and will not only enable investment to be made in training and improved hand-held devices for the use of Civil Enforcement Officers but will also allow sums to be retained to lessen the possibility of partner authorities having to contribute to any deficits in subsequent years.

The Joint Committee also approved the Annual Risk Register and the Annual Governance Statement and considered the 5 year Strategy and Development Plan up to 2017/18.