

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 28 July 2015

Subject: Safer, Greener & Transport

Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Waller

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

Community Safety

Volunteer Police Cadets

Epping Forest District has been chosen as the second pilot area for the new Volunteer Police Cadets programme which is being rolled out in Essex. Following the Chelmsford City pilot that was implemented earlier in the year, the Epping Forest cadet programme will be launched on 8 September and will be based at the Limes Centre, Limes Farm, Chigwell.

Essex Police and the Community Safety Partnership aim to recruit a cohort of around 25 young people as cadets, about a quarter of whom will have been identified as 'vulnerable'. The cadets will be provided with training at the Limes Centre and each cadet will need to commit to three hours per week volunteering time.

All vetting and recruitment of cadets will be carried out by Essex Police, and local schools and Youth Offending teams will be contacted to promote recruitment to the programme. Further updates will be provided as the programme develops.

Young Persons Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) Post

In the last financial year, Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership, Braintree CSP and voluntary sector agency Victim Support funded a six month Young Persons' ISVA post in support of young people living in the two district areas. The resource was introduced in response to the identification of a number of young victims that have been sexually exploited or sexually abused. The ISVA has worked directly with these young people over the last six to nine months and has also delivered workshops to other young people to raise awareness of 'consent' and the law, the grooming process, the effects of rape/sexual assault and Child Sexual Exploitation.

In addition, ISVA has provided training to professionals working with young people including educational establishments, Youth Offending, police, housing associations, Social Care and Health in sexual violence and Child Sexual Exploitation and has provided schools with a referral and support pathway.

I am very pleased to say that this excellent work has been further extended until March 2016, through joint funding support from the CSPs and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner. This will take the service up to the launch of the countywide ISVA Service, which will incorporate workers for young people.

CSP Analyst Post

I am very pleased to advise Council, that following a series of interviews conducted with Principal Analyst colleagues from Essex and Kent Police, the Community Safety Team have appointed an analyst who will serve the West Local Policing Area, consisting of Epping Forest, Brentwood,

Harlow and Thurrock. This initiative is a pilot that is being closely monitored by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The analyst post will enable the four CSPs to focus resources on identified problems of concern and will also allow them to evaluate performance and initiatives to ensure best use of resources. The successful candidate, who is based at the Council and supported by the Community Safety Team, has considerable experience of producing analytical data, having worked for HM Customs, the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the National Crime Agency. The analyst has passed police Management Vetting and is currently learning about Essex Police data systems.

Anti Social Behaviour

The area of Limes Farm in Chigwell remains a priority area for the Council's ASB team and our south area ASB Investigator is spending regular time each week co-located with the area housing management team at the Limes Centre. Current work is under way to integrate ASB data recording to ensure best use of intelligence, and regular 'cross-border' meetings are providing excellent conduits for intelligence sharing and joint working. These meetings are hosted and chaired by the Council's ASB Investigator and include representatives from EFDC Housing, Essex Neighbourhoods Policing Team, Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team, British Transport Police, London & Quadrant Housing Association and other involved organisations as and when appropriate.

We are seeing some emerging ASB issues at Debden Broadway again, where evidence is being gathered by the council's ASB Investigator for the possible imposition of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). Police are using their new dispersal powers which have the advantage of being immediate and focused on those responsible for ASB, and this may also provide evidence for a proposed PSPO.

An area of considerable concern for the Council is the recent proposal by Essex Police to reduce the amount of ASB work that they undertake so that they only handle high level ASB issues. This would result in the Community Safety Partnership being required to deal with all low and medium level ASB incidents. At the current time, the impact of this change in service provision is not fully known, but it is estimated that the CSP may be faced with needing to deal with approximately 1500 more ASB cases per year than previously.

CCTV Provision

Shelley Close, Ongar: Following partnership working between the EFDC Community Safety Team, EFDC Housing and Essex Police to address a range of ASB and other issues, a project has been undertaken to install a stand-alone CCTV system at Shelley Close, Ongar. Quotations have been received and a contractor appointment will be announced subject to planning application approval. The equipment will be column mounted, with recording equipment placed adjacent to the column.

North Weald Airfield: North Weald : A full replacement CCTV system comprising 19 high definition cameras including Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), wireless and control equipment, has been installed in both of the operation rooms and the observation tower at the Council's airfield. A light aircraft crash landing has already been captured by the new CCTV system and the evidence has been passed to the Air Accident investigation Branch (AAIB).

The Community Safety Team is also currently working with a local community group in North Weald to assist with the introduction of a small CCTV system to cover a new children's play area which has been subject to recent vandalism and ASB. The team have provided technical advice and supported the group with representation of the project to the Parish Council. Fund raising is being carried out by the community group to raise sufficient finances to implement the scheme.

Safeguarding

The Council's Safeguarding team has now dealt with over 90 safeguarding referrals since its

introduction in May 2014. These have ranged from complex referrals involving children and Domestic Abuse, through to issues of abuse and exploitation of elderly people living in the District. Each referral is assessed and monitored by the team, and referrals are made to Social Care and other agencies where relevant.

Many of the safeguarding issues that are dealt with are very time and resource intensive. A current example which highlights the complex nature of referrals is where the Council's Private Sector Housing team and the Safeguarding team have been trying for over a year, to engage with a vulnerable resident in the District who has been making excessive calls for ambulances. The Safeguarding team recently managed to organise a case review conference which included Social Services, East of England Ambulance Service and the Fire Service, to develop a method of engagement with the resident. The Fire Service managed to access the resident's home to carry out a Home Safety visit and through this, managed to build a relationship with the resident to ensure the right support agencies could start working with him. The Social Worker involved in this case has commented very positively on the approach taken by the Council compared with other neighbouring local authorities.

Countrycare

Since my last report Countrycare has continued with its well attended regular volunteer days with tasks such as mowing and raking, pulling ragwort and bracken and building compost bins.

In April Countrycare and Essex Wildlife Trust set up butterfly transects on two of Countrycare's sites (Bobbingworth Nature Reserve and Church Lane Local Nature Reserve), so that data relating to butterfly populations at these sites can be added to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). Butterfly surveys are now being carried out regularly and the data is being entered on to the UKBMS website.

In May Kevin Mason led a tree walk in Loughton with the help of local naturalist Tricia Moxey, and 17 people attended.

At the beginning of June, Countrycare took 22 brownies pond dipping in Woodford. The students played games identifying invertebrates and learned about the wildlife likely to be found in ponds.

On 24 June, Kevin Mason led another guided walk, this time for the Life Walks group in Sheering, with 19 participants.

Countrycare has had two work experience students recently. They carried out practical conservation tasks, helped with species surveys and entered data into the relevant databases.

Trees and Landscape

The Trees and Landscape team has been divided as part of recent changes in the Development Management team, so that the officers giving advice on applications for development, on TPO applications, high hedge cases etc., now report to Jeremy Godden, along with the Conservation Officer. The Principal Officer, Christopher Neilan, has been tasked to concentrate on the landscape elements of the Local Plan, on achieving a district-wide green Infrastructure plan and carrying on the programme of community tree strategies. He now reports directly to Nigel Richardson

The team have recently had success at Chelmsford Magistrates Court in a prosecution for unauthorised works to a protected chestnut tree. The tree was being damaged as a result of a lack of concern for conditions attached to a planning permission. The developer was fined £600 in absentia, and was also ordered to pay the Council's costs of £804.31 and a victim surcharge of £60. The evidence was gathered following a visit to the site immediately after the Trees team were contacted by a concerned member of the public. This urgent action also enabled further damage to be prevented.

Twenty new TPOs have been made in the current calendar year. There are currently two live high hedge cases, with three receiving follow up intervention.

Active strategic work includes several projects related to completed community tree strategies. We have commissioned a follow up study to the Roydon Landmark Tree study, completed in 1996. This is commemorated by the large mural outside the Council Chamber. The study is designed to test the effectiveness of the programme alongside conventional tree protection, to provide evidence for its extension, and as evidence for the Local Plan. Support is currently being given to Theydon Bois Parish Council and the tree wardens to complete and publish the Landmark Tree project for the village. Active work is also under way in Loughton to implement the action plan for their Community Tree Strategy. It is hoped that the next projects will be the Community Tree Strategies for North Weald and Waltham Abbey, subject to confirmation of funding. The Parish and Town Councils have both expressed their support.

Energy efficiency

Work being carried out on energy accounts by consultants Smith Bellerby is continuing, with assistance provided by the Environmental Co-ordinator where necessary, though most of the detailed work is being progressed by David Newton.

Annual greenhouse gas data collation also continues, incorporating statistics relating to fleet, essential and casual vehicle mileage, buildings covered by DEC legislation, oil and diesel used for machinery, plus some extra buildings data that has become available as a result of Smith Bellerby's work. However, the usual official letter to local authorities from the Department of Energy and Climate Change, requesting that they carry out this exercise, has not been received this year, so the Department has been asked to advise.

The report on carbon strategy options that was planned for the Neighbourhood and Community Services Select Committee in June has been postponed until September.

Parking

Car parks strategy

The revised tariff is now operational in all Council car parks. New Pay and Display 'smart meters' have been installed in all car parks and Members may have noticed the revised arrangements for the Visitors' Car Park at the Civic Offices. I would like to remind Members that there is no increase in parking charges at Waltham Abbey and Ongar, other than the lowest tariff increasing from 10p to 20p and there will be two hours free parking at weekends followed by a £1 all day charge, and free weekend parking in December has also been retained.

Members will be aware that the Parking Strategy, approved by Cabinet in February of this year, includes installation of new CCTV systems and enhanced lighting. I have asked officers to investigate the feasibility of replacing existing lights with LED systems, and a business case is currently being prepared to assess the potential cost savings to the Council. This initiative will be considered under the Invest to Save funding bid process.

I continue to receive support and guidance from the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group and would like to thank its members for their continuing assistance in implementing the Strategy.

Parking Reviews

All the legal formalities associated with the making of new Traffic Regulation Orders have been completed for the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review, and the programmed start date for carrying out signing and lining works was 27 July. Depending on weather conditions, all works should be completed within a week.

I am keen to start work on the Loughton Broadway Parking Review and, in the first instance,

propose to meet with the local ward members to achieve a better understanding of the scope of works and how best to move this project forward.

North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)

Progress continues to be made in implementing the small parking schemes in the District. We would like to see more schemes implemented, but resources are limited. The next opportunity to nominate schemes to NEPP will be at the Joint Committee meeting in October, and I intend to consult with local councils and the relevant ward members, so that we can nominate those schemes where sufficient local member support exists and where the schemes are most needed.