

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 3 November 2015

Subject: Safer, Greener and Transport

Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Waller

Recommending:

That the report of the Safer, Greener and Transport Portfolio Holder be noted.

Local Policing

I am sure members are aware that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex and the Chief Constable recently announced new proposals for local policing across Essex. The planned changes are designed to address a range of challenges for Essex Police, including the changing landscape of crime, which has seen the escalation of crimes such as domestic abuse, cyber-crime and Child Sexual Exploitation. Added to this are the significant financial challenges with expected budget cuts of £63 million by 2019/20 from an annual budget of around £262 million.

At the meeting that I attended to learn of the proposals, we were advised that across the county there are 80 police buildings, mostly in a poor state of repair, which require around £30 million of maintenance work to bring them up to standard and £2 million per year just to maintain their current condition. Following careful analysis on usage viability, the police estate will therefore be reduced to 30 buildings strategically placed within Essex. In Epping Forest district, this will see the closure of Epping and Ongar police stations and the front desk of Loughton police station, although the latter will remain as an operational base. The nearest police station open to the public will be in Harlow. We were however informed that very few people actually call at police stations and that new technology will enable people to use secure online systems for reporting crime and tracking the progress of investigations.

Unfortunately such large scale financial cuts can only be met by reducing the largest police overhead - its workforce, with 83 per cent of the police budget spent on staff. At a local level, this means that the new Community Policing Team for Epping Forest and Brentwood will be made up of one local policing and partnership inspector, two sergeants, 10 constables, one dedicated youth officer and seven PCSOs. This is a significant reduction for the area, but we are advised that the team will be locally based and will prioritise protecting people from harm, preventing and reducing crime, bringing criminals to justice and engaging with the public. It has however been proposed, that what is described as 'low level ASB' will be dealt with by local authorities and Community Safety Partnerships within the existing resources available.

Other more serious issues such as organised crime, as well as crime involving gangs, drugs and violent/sexual assault, will be dealt with by special teams assigned on an ad hoc basis

to the district. The Council and Community Safety Partnership (CSP) will continue to operate in close cooperation with the local policing team, but we need to make decisions on the priority areas of work for the Community Safety team when the new arrangements come into effect.

It can not be denied that, with fewer local police resources to call on, the perception will be that the public can no longer expect the same level of service as in the past. We have held a meeting with the local police commander to assess how the Council and CSP can respond most effectively to the pending changes in order to mitigate their impact. We are working on a number of ideas and I shall keep members informed as they are developed.

Safeguarding

The following safeguarding cases have been dealt with by our safeguarding team during September, but I am informed that although the statistics are lower for this period than for August, we have had several cases that required intensive staff time. These have included a case of hoarding and significant self-neglect which involved collaborative working across our Neighbourhoods and Community Safety team, Princess Alexandra Hospital and the Fire and Rescue service.

Total number of concerns received by the Safeguarding team for this period: ..	16
Number of children-only concerns (where children were victims):	6
Number of adult-only concerns (where adults were victims):	9
Number of concerns that involved both (adult and children were victims):	1
Total number of children involved:.....	11
Total number of adults involved:	10