

Report to the Council

Subject: Safer, Greener and Transport

Date: 18 February 2016

Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Waller

Recommending:

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

Police precept

At the meeting of the Essex Police and Crime Panel which I attended on 29 January, Nick Alston, the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) proposed an increase in the Council Tax precept of 3.36 per cent for 2016/17 - the maximum permitted by the Government before a referendum is triggered. This is equivalent to an increase of £4.95 a year from £147.15 to £152.10 for a Band D property, thus raising £3m of additional Council Tax receipts. After the PCC had been fully questioned about his proposal and its impact, the Panel gave its formal agreement following a vote, in accordance with statute.

The percentage increase agreed by the Home Secretary is greater than that for most police forces in the country, taking account of the fact that Essex Police has been historically underfunded, both in comparison with other forces and to meet the increasing levels of demand across the county. Essex currently has the second lowest policing precept across the shire counties but has been assessed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary as one of the most efficient forces.

Community Safety

Policing and Anti-Social Behaviour

In November 2015, the PCC and the Chief Constable of Essex Police announced proposals to make significant changes to local policing across the county, in order to meet a reduction of £63 million in the police budget by 2019/20. The proposals include a complete review of the police estate and the development of new IT infrastructure for the police, and the main impacts on our district will be the closure and sale of Epping, Waltham Abbey and Ongar police stations (as well as the closure of the public counter at Loughton) and a significant reduction in the number of officers and PCSOs within the Community Policing team.

These reductions will have a range of implications for the Council and Community Safety team in terms of their impact on our statutory obligations to prevent crime and disorder in the area and responsibility to deal with anti-social behaviour.

We currently have two dedicated full time ASB Investigators working in the Community Safety team who deal with ASB complaints across the entire district, involving council and non-council tenants. These officers deal with an average of 350 complaints per year. Currently, they have seen an increase in workload of 12 per cent compared with the previous year. The Council's Housing Management Officers also deal with tenant related ASB. However, due to the complex nature of many cases, the ASB Investigators are often

asked to assist, and in some cases, take the lead on cases for Housing, due to their specialist knowledge and skills.

In addition, the Council's Environment & Neighbourhoods Officers (ENOs) are a team of one manager and seven uniform Community Safety Accredited Officers (CSAS), who deal with environmental crime issues such as noise and fly tipping.

With the reduction in policing, it can reasonably be expected that demand for additional Council intervention will increase. However with the expected local government grant reductions over the next four years, maintaining the current level of service may become increasingly difficult. It may therefore be necessary to adopt a new Community Safety approach which does not raise public expectations to an unachievable level. As Essex Police move to a more desktop based investigation process, there may also be greater demand for CCTV footage, together with increased requests for use of Council re-deployable cameras to cover for the likely reduction in high-visibility police patrols.

It is anticipated that the Council could also experience increased demand on public reception areas and the switchboard, for incident reporting and advice. Levels of public frustration at a lack of response from public services may also manifest itself in more aggression being experienced by front line officers, including those at public reception areas. Therefore it is very likely that customer facing staff will need additional training, as more diverse enquiries are received from the public.

Indeed, reductions in police services may also lead to increased complaints to elected members from discontented constituents. This could generate increased workload for Community Safety staff as members try to resolve complaints on behalf of their ward areas.

It is therefore suggested that the Council will need to develop a new Community Safety policy that sets out clear guidelines as to the scope of work that can realistically be undertaken within existing staff resources. This will include work undertaken by Community Safety and other directorates involved in dealing with ASB, licensing and crime and disorder. With a reduction in policing for lower level anti-social behaviour complaints and a lack of police presence, the Council may need to address public confidence and fear of crime. Consideration therefore might need to be given to potentially extending the role of the uniform Environment and Neighbourhoods Officers in order to provide a tasked response to crime, disorder and ASB. Alternatively, additional resources may need to be made available to employ private sector Community Safety accredited services, to provide this type of activity.

If the Council does not have the ability to provide a tasked uniform response to developing hotspot areas at an early stage, this could allow problems to escalate, thus resulting in the need for higher level intervention and resources and increased fear of crime in the district. There is also a significant risk that where the Council and Community Safety Partnership have successfully managed to reduce crime and ASB in key areas of the district, the additional pressures on the local authority will lead to the emergence of new issues and an increase in local crime statistics.

Modern slavery awareness

Following on from the Child Sexual Exploitation conference organised in November, a Modern Slavery conference is being held in the Council Chamber on 10 March, providing attendees with the awareness to identify signs of modern slavery in our communities, and ways to address it. Members are invited to attend.

Reducing gang activity

The Community Safety Team is participating in a West Local Policing Area initiative for reducing gang activity. The group consists of representatives from Essex Police, Community Safety teams from across West Essex, the Community Safety Partnership Analyst and co-opted social landlords. The group has had an initial meeting and will continue to look at strategic gang management themes across West Essex on a regular basis. Work is also under way to identify vulnerable residents in hot-spot areas, who may be vulnerable to the gang tactic of 'cuckooing'.

Local ASB issues

The ASB Investigators are working with Essex Police to reduce a long-term ASB problem of youths accessing balcony areas in Debden Broadway. They have identified a specific location and, together with Housing Services, are in the process of commissioning the erection of an anti-climb barrier to restrict the ability for youths to climb in this area. The council's investigators are additionally working on implementing a Public Spaces Protection Order in Debden Broadway which would give police and accredited officers more powers to deal with persistent ASB issues.

The cross border ASB meeting chaired by EFDC ASB Investigators is working well and is particularly effective in the south of the district. Cooperation between EFDC, Essex Police and the Metropolitan Police has been particularly effective, and an example of this is the current work with the Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team, in an application for a Criminal Behaviour Order against a Hainault male who is persistently involved in crime and disorder in both Hainault and Chigwell. A court date has been set for April to hear the full application and investigators will represent EFDC to give evidence at this hearing.

Work with Safer Places

Links are being strengthened with Safer Places, Harlow through the provision of Domestic Abuse Risk Management training by the Community Safety team and a new agreement to work jointly on risk management plans and physical security additions for higher level, 'medium risk' victims of domestic abuse in the District. To assist with this initiative, Community Safety have secured the services of a retired police crime prevention officer, who is providing his support in a voluntary capacity.

CCTV

The CCTV operational programme for 2016 is very busy, with major schemes planned for Birch View, Epping, Limes Farm, Epping High Street and all EFDC owned public car parks. A recent new installation in Springfields, Waltham Abbey, has already proved successful in identifying fly-tippers as well as drug dealing and usage.

CCTV officers are in the process of carrying out additional training of the Council's Neighbourhoods Officers in the deployment of CCTV in rural areas that experience regular fly-tipping. This will allow the Neighbourhoods team to carry out and manage CCTV based investigations without disproportionately impacting on the already limited capacity of our CCTV officers. BT Infinity is about to be adopted into the CCTV office at the Civic Offices, allowing faster upload times and saving officer hours at many locations across the district.

Safeguarding

The following safeguarding cases have been dealt with by our Safeguarding team during January, with several cases once again requiring intensive staff time:

Total no. of concerns received by the Safeguarding Team for this period:	13
No. of children-only concerns (where children were victims):	6
No. of adult-only concerns (where adults were victims):	5
No. of concerns that involved both (adult and children were victims):	2
Total no. of children involved:	14
Total no. of adults involved:	9
No. of new cases referred to Essex Social Care:	8
No. of new cases referred to Police	3
No. of multi-agency referrals made (eg. to Police and Essex Social Care):	0
Referred to MARAC only:	0
Referred to MARAC and Essex Social Care (where child involved):	0
Referred to MARAC and Essex Social Care (where adult involved):	0
Referrals to other external agencies (eg. Family Mosaic; CQC; GP, MHT):	0
Updates sent to agencies where victim/perpetrator already known/on-going: ...	0
Not referred (doesn't meet threshold/not Safeguarding):	3

Categories:

Welfare concerns:	5	Physical Abuse:	0
Domestic Abuse:	1	Self Neglect/Hoarding:	0
Mental Health/Mental Capacity:	0	Homeless:	4
Neglect:	0	Substance Misuse:	0
Emotional/Psychological Abuse:	0	Exploitation:	3
Financial Abuse:	1	CSE:	0
Sexual Abuse:	0	Care Meetings (on-going):	0

Countrycare

Since my last Report Countrycare has continued with its well attended regular volunteer days. These took place at Weald Common, Chigwell, Roughtalley's Wood, Thornwood Nature Area and Home Mead. Hedge laying has also taken place at Church Lane.

On 16 December a member of the team attended the Buckhurst Hill Residents Association's AGM to give a talk on Linder's Field Local Nature Reserve. The event was well attended, with approximately 25 people present.

Since Christmas Countrycare has been looking into taking on two new sites. One is in Epping, and one in Waltham Abbey is currently the responsibility of Housing.

Work on two more parishes has been completed in the Veteran Tree Hunt - Chigwell and Stanford Rivers.

In January two days of paid work were done in Belhus Chase in Aveley for the Woodland Trust. This work included coppicing hazel wood and chipping the brash.

Parking

Car parks strategy

The project to instal LED lighting and CCTV systems in all Council car parks is progressing well. This is a complex project with input required from various external agencies. Work is currently in the design phase with physical installation planned for later this year.

Parking Reviews

Now that the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review scheme has been completed, officers are able to commence work on the Loughton Broadway Parking Review. I have had two meetings with local ward members to discuss the implementation strategy for the scheme. This project will need some careful planning and coordination with other projects such as the redevelopment of the Langston Road depot.

Off street parking arrangements

Members are aware that Cabinet agreed to take back the off street parking enforcement and cash collection arrangements from the North Essex Parking Partnership. I have called a meeting of the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group, which provided valuable support during the preparation and implementation of the Car Parking Strategy, and shall rely on their advice in taking this project forward.