

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Portfolio: Community & Partnerships**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Bedford**

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**Recommending:**

**That the report of the Community & Partnerships Portfolio Holder be noted**

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This has been a very busy period for the Community & Partnerships directorate and I have been pleased to attend a wide range of activities and events across my portfolio, covering all ages and abilities, some of which are included below.

## **Community, Culture and Wellbeing**

### **Crucial Crew**

I was delighted to attend the Council's very successful Crucial Crew event which is a wellbeing and personal safety initiative for all 10-year olds at school in the district. The event was staged at Debden House, Conference & Camping Centre in Loughton during the week of 10th June to 14th June and over 1,400 Year 6 pupils from primary schools across the Epping Forest district took part in the interactive programme which focussed on crucial personal safety messages and key information about how to stay fit and healthy. Facilitated by the Council's Community, Culture and Wellbeing Team, scenarios were delivered by a range of partner agency to the children. Partners involved included; Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, ACE, Essex County Council Road Safety, Safer Places, Sainsbury's, Spark2Life and the Red Balloon Foundation. A range of topics were covered from on-line safety to gangs awareness, healthy relationships and the importance of physical activity. This was my first visit to Crucial Crew and I was very impressed with the organisation and interest demonstrated by both the facilitators and the children taking part.

### **Active Outdoors**

Our Health & Wellbeing team has been busy developing two new outdoor activity sessions to encourage local people be more active and improve their health and wellbeing. These include a "Wellbeing Walk" which takes place every Tuesday 6.30pm to 7.30pm at Roding Valley Nature Reserve in Buckhurst Hill. This session incorporates breath work, mindfulness, meditation and stretch and will run until the end of September. A new "Boxing Bootcamp" has also been developed which runs every Monday 12noon - 1pm in Waltham Abbey Gardens. This session is a combination of boxercise and boot camp for all abilities and will also run until the end of September. Both sessions are proving popular with excellent attendance.

### **Great British Spring Clean**

Earlier in the year, in May, our Community, Culture & Wellbeing team mobilised Council staff, residents and staff from partner organisations to take part in "Great British Spring Clean" events. Communities in Limes Farm, Chigwell and Ninefields, Waltham Abbey came together with the aim to make a difference in their community and help clean up the environment. Epping Forest's Community Champions, families

and individuals armed with litter pickers, high vis jackets, bin bags and gloves went around their various estates and collected any litter they found, helping to make the community a greener, cleaner place to live.

### **Senior Safety Day in Chigwell**

The Council's voluntary Community Champions from Chigwell helped to organise and promote a Senior Safety Day at Chigwell Hall in Chigwell in June. Over 40 senior residents attended and were reminded how to keep safe in and around their homes. Speakers from Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Essex Police, Crime Stoppers and Neighbourhood Watch spoke about fraud, scams and fire safety, all attendees said that they felt well informed and more aware, following good interaction with their peers and professionals. The day culminated with Arc Theatre Company delivering a short piece of interactive theatre, which raised awareness of the various types of scams people may encounter and gave advice on how to avoid being a victim of scams and fraud. Feedback from all participants was extremely complimentary about the day.

### **Children's Summer Holiday Activities 2019**

Our Summer Holiday Activities 2019 programme for children, young people and their families is now available which contains a wide range of fun and exciting activities on offer across the district. These include family workshops, children's shows, multi-sport activity days, disability inclusion sessions and creative workshops. Working in partnership with Town and Parish Council's there are also the free "Play in the Park" sessions which are programmed in Abridge, Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Moreton, Nazeing, North Weald, Ongar, Roydon, Theydon Bois, Thornwood and Waltham Abbey.

### **Epping Forest Youth Council - We R Safe Project**

One of the highlights of my Portfolio since I commenced in the role, was to be part of the Youth Council's excellent 'We R Safe' Short Film Premiere event, which was held on Monday 8th July 2019 in the council Chamber. The We R Safe project follows the successful Drugs Awareness project that the Youth Council undertook in 2018 and focusses on keeping young people safe, by giving them tips and advice, along with information about who to contact if they fall into difficulties. The launch event took the form of a premiere movie night and introduced the five key themes of the project; Realise, Run (knife awareness), Report, Resist and Resilience, with each of these themes being portrayed in short film clips designed, developed and acted by members of the Youth Council.

I was delighted to be in the company of a range of guest speakers, who included the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Michael Chapman; the High Sheriff of Essex, Dr James Bettley; the Chief Constable of Essex Police BJ Harrington and Deputy Police Fire and Crime Commissioner, Jane Gardner. Our Chairman of Council and Cllr Whitbread were also speakers at the event. We were also very pleased to welcome Lorin LaFave from the Breck Foundation, who's son Breck Bednar was tragically murdered in 2014 following online grooming. Lorin was very complimentary about We R Safe, as were the range of other guests who included two previous High Sheriff's of Essex, Lorna Rolfe and Simon Hall, who were both great advocates of the Youth Council in 2017 and 2018.

Information about this excellent initiative can be found on the Council's website at [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/youthprojects](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/youthprojects).

### **Other Youth Council Activity**

Four of our Youth Councillors; Barnaby, Eleanor, Harriette and Zack, recently met with local MP – the Rt. Hon. Dame Eleanor Laing at Thatcher House in Loughton. The Youth Councillors discussed the many issues and concerns facing Epping Forest young people and presented their different projects, including the National Award Winning “MiLife” project.

Dame Eleanor was particularly complimentary about the Youth Council’s recent Drugs Report and survey and agreed to take the findings from this to fellow Members of Parliament to challenge legislation around the misuse of Nitrous Oxide capsules and to look at campaigning for health warnings on packaging similar to that found on cigarette packets. Dame Eleanor also confirmed her attendance at the next Youth Democracy Conference which will be hosted by EFYC on 22nd November at the Civic Offices.

### **Youth Activities Map 2019**

Over the time that the Youth Council has been in place, it has developed and regularly updated a Youth Activities Map which contains details of the range of opportunities for young people to take part in activities within their community. Over recent months, this information has been digitalised through a collaboration with the Council’s ICT Team and an interactive map has been developed for young people to access remotely. The map, which was launched alongside the We R Safe Project, can be easily updated as and when required.

### **MiLife Mental Health Project**

The award winning Youth Council mental health project, MiLife, reaches the end of its three-year programme in the Autumn. This immensely successful initiative has provided support and guidance to thousands of our young people across the district. The final stage of the project is to digitalise MiLife so that schools and young people can continue to access the valuable knowledge and support in a sustainable way. Working with local third sector organisation, The Red Balloon Family Foundation, the digital version will be launched in schools at the start of the new academic year.

### **Grant Aid**

We are continuing to receive a high level of applications for the Council’s Grant Aid scheme which supports voluntary and charity organisations within the district who provide valuable services to our residents. I have reviewed over 34 applications so far, covering different organisations and our funding continues to cover a variety of services and equipment, this includes funding approved for initiatives such as; kitchen refurbishments for community facilities, gardening equipment and health screening services. With online applications now available for groups, the process has been made even quicker and easier to use.

### **Museum Exhibitions**

I am really excited about our District Museum’s next exhibition; “Scouts, Skills and a Century of Change: The Untold Story of Gilwell Park”, which opens to the public on 10 August and will run until 12 October. This exhibition has been produced in partnership with the Scouting Association at Gilwell Park and celebrates 100 years of scouting at Gilwell. It will be formally opened by Dwayne Fields, Scouting Ambassador and the first black Briton to walk the North Pole.

The next exhibition to open at Lowewood Museum is “James Ward: The Greatest Animal Painter of his Time”. The exhibition opens on 21 September and will run until 25 January. This project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and will

showcase James Ward's work from the collections at the Tate, London and Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

### **Community, Culture & Wellbeing Volunteers**

Between April – June volunteers within Community, Culture and Wellbeing contributed 645 hours which equates to over £5,000 in kind support. Volunteer work has included museum front of house, collections care and upkeeping the garden.

### **Cultural Education Programme**

Between April and June this year over 2,500 school pupils have participated in dance education school workshops and pupils from Upshire Primary School completed their Arts Award Projects. The service is currently developing an Arts Award resource to train teachers to deliver the programme themselves. This programme is funded by the Royal Opera House Bridge.

The Royal Opera House Bridge have also commissioned the service to help develop creative network meetings with education providers and cultural organisations within the district to discuss creative provision within schools.

### **Events Programme**

Another very enjoyable event that I had the pleasure of attending was 'eNgage', which is the Council's annual youth and community dance showcase and this took place at The Spotlight Theatre in Hoddesdon, on Friday 28th June and was a great success. Groups from all over Essex and Hertfordshire performed their dance pieces to an extremely high standard. There were 150 dancers aged from 6 to 86 years performing in front of a packed audience and our museum's resident dancers, the 'Museum Movers' also came to support the show and were inspired by a group who travelled from Chelmsford called Forever Young who ranged from 70 years +.

The Community, Culture and Wellbeing is working in partnership with the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service on the development of a networking community group for families with autistic children. Taking place at Epping Forest District Museum, the scheme called "Mini Play, Big Listen" is in its development phase and aims to support local families with early diagnosis of autism.

The District's "My Weight Matters" scheme, which works in partnership with Voluntary Action Epping Forest and ACE Weight Management, is now running sessions at the Museum on a regular basis.

Our District Museum has been invited to take part in the 'Of By For All' project which is an international programme of work. Invited by the Santa Cruz Museum of Art in California, the museum is one of two UK museums involved in the project. The scheme aims to provide relevant resources and advice on how to encourage participation and build relationships with local communities.

### **Community Resilience Service**

#### **Environmental Enforcement**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter (April-June 2019), the Environment Enforcement Team has received 1581 complaints/service requests. During this period the team has served a range of notices including;

- 3 Noise Abatement Notices on 2 properties in Waltham Abbey, and The Merry Fiddlers in Epping
- 6 Community Protection Warnings (3 regarding waste on land, 2 for noise, and 1 regarding waste and shouting).

- 3 Community Protection Notices have been served, 2 regarding waste on land and 1 for the waste and shouting issue. Of these, 2 have/are having 'Works In Default' enacted to clear the waste, for which the tenants will be recharged.
- 1 S.46 notice has been served (regarding disposal of waste in prescribed manner)
- 4 other waste offence cases are currently with legal for proceedings, and we are waiting for court dates regarding these.

Prosecution wise, the team has issued 6x £200 fixed penalties for fly tipping (total of £1200), and we had a successful prosecution in April 2019, regarding a fly tipping offence in Hillyfields, Loughton, where the person responsible received a total financial penalty (fine and costs) of £952. The delay in bringing the matter to court was due to court availability, and that the person responsible did not attend a number of hearings.

### **Anti-social Behaviour**

The councils Community Safety Team has worked in collaboration with Metropolitan Police Redbridge Safer Neighbourhoods Team and have delivered a gangs prevention education package to Limes Farm Junior School and West Hatch Senior School. This was as a follow up to Operation Rose, which took place in 2018 and focussed on gang activity through County Lines into the district. The input was well received by both schools with over 400 year 6,7 and 8 students benefiting. This action was made possible due to the excellent cross border links forged by the councils Community Safety Investigators and demonstrates the value of multi-agency working.

There are currently two applications received for Anti-social Behaviour Case Reviews, (Community Triggers) in the Loughton and Waltham Abbey areas. The applications place a statutory duty on the council to determine whether they meet the threshold for review and, if they do, sets further time deadlines to convene a multi-agency panel meeting and make recommendations to resolve the case.

### **Community Safety & Housing**

Community Safety are working with the councils Housing Options Team to prevent the inappropriate placement of applicants in temporary accommodation. In the past there was a significant failure rate where persons would be found accommodation only to cause serious issues when they moved in. In a pilot scheme which has been running for over a year, Community Safety have developed a lawful vetting process prior to accommodation being offered. This works collaboratively with Housing Options staff and the Loughton Community Policing Hub and allows staff to access risk before offering placements. The scheme has proved extremely successful reducing inappropriate placements to very low levels. This has reduced the amount of council officer time in problem solving those placements that failed, it has also saved the council money in having to instigate an eviction process and has saved on police resources that were often called to disorder caused by inappropriate placements. The scheme has relied heavily on Community Safety oversight, but now having demonstrated its effectiveness, the majority of the processes used are about to be automated saving further time.

## **Economic Development**

### **Economic Strategy:**

Consultation on 'Nurturing Growth' (a discussion paper on developing an economic strategy) closed on 27<sup>th</sup> May. The consultation involved direct mailings to 150 recipients plus copies to key stakeholders and presentations to a special meeting of the local Chamber of Commerce and to the One Partnership Board. It was also published on the council's website with a supporting social media campaign.

Over 30 responses were received. However, a concern highlighted in the responses was related to the limited duration of the consultation period and a general lack of awareness of the process. Therefore, following Members' direction, it has been suggested that the consultation period be extended for two months, to enable greater engagement and to host a major stakeholder conference in September to review responses, amend the document and begin the production of a delivery plan. However, this will be subject to a presentation to Cabinet Committee on the Economic Development resourcing proposals, before its meeting in July.

### **Tourism:**

Following on from the growth to tourism website experienced at the start of the year and especially over the Easter holiday, the visitor numbers have continued to climb. As we enter into the summer season, figures for the latest week to date show daily figures of around or over 1000 visits. Over the last weekend alone one event in Matching Green attracted 1,584 visits with the Epping Town Show following with 994 visits and an event at Abridge recording 600+ visits.

Dedicated pages were created for Countrycare to promote their reserves and walks and an analysis over two months shows a very promising response with around 1,500 hits so far which is over 100 a day. The most popular page has been the Epping walk followed by the general page about Countrycare and its reserves.

Officers continue to lead on the Cross-Border tourism work (encompassing the five districts – Epping Forest, Broxbourne, Harlow, East Herts and Uttlesford) with the most recent meeting held in June at the new Aviation College at Stansted. This meeting was also used as the forum for the first presentation of the outcomes of recent work on the development of a new cycle route linking Rye Hill to Stansted at its core. The latest tourism value figures are due out at the end of July and these will be collated for all the districts to support the first year on year performance review.

### **Green Arc:**

The Green Arc was an initiative to promote and coordinate investment in green infrastructure running from the Thames to Barnet. The One Partnership has recently taken over the project, a consultant to lead work, commissioned using funding inherited from the Arc, has been employed and steps are being taken to establish a Steering Board to take work forward. The first of these steering board meetings was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July. It was attended by representatives from the Greater London Authority (GLA) EFDC, Essex County Council, Corporation of London, Friends of Epping Forest and the Woodland Trust and a number of other organisations. Partners have agreed to meet again in September to review the geography and new approaches to delivery.

The aim of the Green Arc project is to focus on where London meets the countryside, looking at joint initiatives to increase and protect canopy, explore new ways of developing corridors to allow residents and visitors to enjoy the green and unique

areas in this quadrant as well as innovating in community involvement in programmes. A meeting with the GIS team at EFDC has seen the Green Arc begin work to properly map the green assets that exist in this quadrant.

### **Skills**

Officers are continuing to work closely with the new management team at New City College, Epping Forest Campus. In line with member direction, officers have been working to expand representation for the district within the New City College governance structures and are instrumental in establishing a local governance body to ensure effective representation from the local community and employers. Officers have also had a series of meetings with senior figures at New City College in order to progress the local initiative. It is hoped that this work will come to fruition over the next few weeks and a further report can be brought to the next AMED meeting.

### **Bioboost**

Officers continue to work on the delivery of the EU-funded Bioboost programme in cooperation with colleagues in Belgium and Holland. In May the UK Partners hosted an event within the Epping Forest District for colleagues from businesses and universities from both these countries. A key area of discussion was around securing funding for the proposed Cucumber and Food Festival in Waltham Abbey, which will allow Bioboost partners to engage with the public to test the viability of products they are developing using surplus products produced as a by-product of the glasshouse growing industry. EU Partners have agreed that up to £15k can be reserved for this event scheduled for Saturday 26th September. A working group from the Waltham Abbey Town Partnership, Vibrant Partners and local businesses are currently working on this event with the local growing industry.