

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date 19 September 2019**

**Subject: Community & Partnerships Services Portfolio Holder**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Bedford**

---

## **Recommending:**

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

---

## Community Resilience

### **EFDC Funded Police Team**

As a starting point in my report, I want to pay tribute to our dedicated police Community Safety Team. They have been operational in our district for just over a year now and work closely with officers from the council's Community Safety Team as a single integrated unit. The specific tasking criteria has allowed them to concentrate on intelligence led, targeted activity. They have had a large number of successes, seizing drugs, stolen property and criminal assets estimated in excess of half a million pounds this year alone. Epping Forest's crime rates have shown substantial reductions according to July statistics. Robbery down by nearly 19%, burglary dwelling down by nearly 20%, theft from vehicles down over 16% and anti-social behaviour down over 15%. The district also saw reductions in vehicle interference, criminal damage and racially and religiously aggravated offences where the county saw increases. These figures out-perform the rest of Essex and show the success not only our dedicated police team are having but also all our local police services supported by our wider community safety structures.

The team have also worked closely with the Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods officers from Redbridge in preparing joint Criminal Behaviour Orders after the arrest phase of Operation Rose in Chigwell. It is safe to say they have become quite expert in the preparation of these orders and that skill has now been recognised by Essex Police and the team are leading in a pilot scheme for the West Local Policing Area which has developed a standard process for preparing applications, and a computer based training package to be delivered to Community Policing Team Officers to build confidence in making applications. If the pilot scheme is successful it will be rolled out across Essex. Criminal Behaviour Orders are designed to control pre-criminal behaviour to prevent anti-social behaviour and offending. Our dedicated police team continue to provide added value in delivery of a pro-active police presence to the whole district which is having a marked and demonstrable effect.

Whilst I am on the subject of operation Rose I would also like to acknowledge the close working relationship our Community Safety Investigators have forged with the Metropolitan Police which has allowed co-ordinated work by all teams. This culminated in Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods officers delivering a Gang's Prevention package in two schools in our district close to the Metropolitan Police border. This would not have happened without those operational links being in place.

### **Community Safety team**

Moving on I would like to provide some detail of the councils' Community Safety Team involvement around vulnerability and serious acquisitive crime, which as members will know, is a Community Safety Partnership priority. The Homesafe initiative is led by Community Safety and provides visits to residents and businesses providing security advice and

equipment. Referrals are taken from internal departments, external partners, including police, domestic abuse services, health services and provides advice and security to those assessed as at risk due to their vulnerability, this may involve domestic abuse, hate crimes or victims of residential burglary. Community Safety are able to provide a toolbox of equipment ranging from personal attack alarms, window locks, letter box plating where there is an arson risk to name a few. They have approved contractors who can carry out recommended security alterations who are managed by the councils CARE service.

Finally, I am also pleased to report that our volunteer Crime Prevention Advisor, Mr Tony Ellis, who works unpaid with Community Safety has recently been nominated for the Police Fire & Crime Commissioners' Community Safety Hero Awards. Tony was runner up and received a cash award which was match funded by our Community Safety Team to provide Careline alarms for domestic abuse victims.

### **Environmental Enforcement**

Over the period July – end August the Environmental Enforcement Team has received 1147 complaints/service requests. During the same period, 4 x £200 fixed penalties for fly tipping have been issued. Other notices served include;

1 noise abatement notice served on a hotel in Waltham Abbey

2 Community Protection Warnings re. allowing dogs to stray (against 1 household)

1 Community Protection Warning re. bonfires on commercial site which has been difficult to access and determine who the parties responsible are. CPW served on the site owner.

The Cleaner Essex Group (made up from local authority representatives across Essex Councils) are launching a new campaign across the county, as part of the Love Essex initiative at the start of September, highlighting the issue of littering from vehicles. Launches on 9 September, mostly through social media and some petrol pump locations. The message is that the person responsible for the vehicle could be liable for a fixed penalty of up to £150 (maximum allowed by legislation, and the levels vary across the county).

### Community, Culture and Wellbeing (CCW)

**Action for Children Funding - Award for Disability Inclusion Project:** We have secured £48,000 from Action for Children to continue to provide the Council's Disability Inclusion Programme for a further 18 months.. This hugely popular programme for children and young people with disabilities continues to go from strength to strength, delivering a wide range of activities including trampolining, horse riding, soccerability, boxing, swimming, school based Compass Club programme, Bounce and Swim, Camping, Own a Pony, Creative Sessions, Multi Sport Days, Aqua Splash, Forest Fun Days, Dance Workshops and more.

**Grant Aid:** The Grant Aid scheme continues to support our voluntary and charity organisations within the district who provide valuable services to our residents. Funding has recently been approved to twelve local groups, totalling £26,543. Projects include; social isolation theatre pieces, a concert, transport schemes to enable vulnerable residents to travel to medical appointments, counselling, tackling period poverty within schools and refurbishments. With online applications now available for groups, the process has been made even quicker and easier to use.

**Holiday Hunger:** £2,000 was secured from Active Essex to deliver a Holiday Hunger programme over the summer. The Community, Culture & Wellbeing Team worked in partnership with the local Foodbank to ensure that food and play equipment was distributed to families in need.

**Walking Football:** The Council's Walking Football sessions are growing in popularity weekly, providing a great social opportunity for men to meet and make new friends. Approximately 60 participants recently took part in the first ever Walking Football Tournament in the district hosted on the 3G pitch in Waltham Abbey.

**Exhibitions at Epping Forest District Museum:** The “Scouts, Skills and a Century of Change: The Untold Story of Gilwell Park” exhibition, opened to the public on 10 August and had over 700 visitors in the first week. The exhibition runs until 12 October and has been produced in partnership with Gilwell Park.

Our District Museum has recently undergone its VAQAS assessment, which is Visit England Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme, a quality based assessment reflecting the visitor experience and the quality of the product and services offered by the attraction and its staff. A full report is awaited but highlights include the overall service receiving a score of 92% across all assessed areas and 100% received for staff customer service.

**Norway House Day trip to Southend:** During the school holidays, our CCW team worked with Epping Rotary Club who funded a coach to Southend for the day for the residents at Norway House. The families had a great time, with the children loving the opportunity to play in the sea, hunting for crabs and families enjoying fish and chips!

**Community Champions:** Community Champions have received Frontline training to enable them to identify support services, and make referrals to these, on behalf of their neighbours and communities. They have also received a presentation from the Community Transport service. Four new Champions were recruited during the summer. The Community Champions Coordinator is keen to recruit more volunteers from rural localities in the district over the coming months.

**Epping Forest Youth Council:** The Epping Forest Youth Council’s We R Safe films were launched on 9th July and during July – August the 5 films received 3141 hits on YouTube and Facebook. The WE R Safe photos have received 2278 views on Facebook, totalling 5419 views. The Youth Council has additionally received The High Sheriffs Certificate of Recognition for the WE R Safe Project

Youth Councillors recently visited the Houses of Parliament and received a tour of the Palace of Westminster, courtesy of Dame Eleanor Laing. They also visited the Supreme Court to watch a court case in action. The visit was funded by the Jack Petchey Education Fund.

**Summer Holiday Programme for children and young people:** The summer programme was very successful with a wide range of activities delivered including; art workshops, multi-sport camps, craft camps, district-wide Play in the Park sessions and a full inclusion programme. Over 1700 children and young people participated in sessions taking place in a range of locations and venues out and about in the community.

Quotes received included;

‘I loved the museum!!! It was fun but still educational. I learnt about my town and its history. I’ve lived here for a long time and it was good to know my history.’

‘Fab programme! My kids thoroughly enjoy it every year. Love the range and variety available’

‘Please keep it going – always high quality, good variety of locations’

### Economic Development

**Economic Strategy:** A further period of consultation is currently underway, which will culminate in a stakeholder event on Weds 13th November at Theydon Bois Village Hall, from 09:30 to 13:00. Stakeholders and local businesses have been sent a consultation and have been advised that any proposals arising from the consultation would be subject to resourcing and potential partnership delivery. As previously advised, Members are very welcome to attend. Following the event, a report will be produced outlining the key proposals arising from the event and associated funding and resource implications. This will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in December.

**Tourism:** During August Bank Holiday a daily average of 1,150 people viewed 2,670 pages on the Visit Epping Forest Website. This is a continued growth and this summer navigation was improved to enable popular areas to be more easily accessed with dedicated menu sections for countryside, walks and museums. To maximise the impact of the home page featured information has been added that is updated on a regular basis and used to promote initiatives such as the Council's programme of summer activities for children. Another Council service recently added is the Countrycare reserves and walks and these pages have seen a significant increase in visitors over the summer holiday with hits rising from 1,483 in July to 5,586 by the end of August.

The 'What's On' pages continue to be the most popular and for summer 2019 the site featured a record number of events averaging 60-70 listings at any one time. For many smaller organisations and community/voluntary groups the site provides a key avenue for advertising their events, especially where they have no web presence of their own.

On a regional basis, the importance of the Cross-Border tourism initiative has been highlighted by the Government's recently announced 'Tourism Sector Deal'. This reinforces the importance of tourism to growth in the country's economy post-brexite and sets out a new deal to support growth and prepare for an extra 9 million visitors per year. Of most interest to the cross border group is the aim of creating up to five new Tourism Zones with the aim of supporting areas such as ours to bring districts together to develop and grow their visitor offer and create new tourist destinations that can better target overseas visitors. Ideal candidates will be areas that have good transport links but an underdeveloped offer, which is an exact match for our cross-border tourism area. Details will be made available in December but officers are taking the lead in preparation for a potential bid.

The annual Tourism Conference is planned for November this year and will once again have a strong cross-border element. A date is currently being negotiated with the Waltham Abbey Marriott who, it is hoped, will once again be happy to sponsor the event.

**3. Green Arc:** Protecting, expanding and enhancing the quality of the green infrastructure of this area around the capital is an increasing concern for people. 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 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 confirm the geography of the new Green Arc and new approaches to delivery and funding.

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 planting programmes.