

23 October 2013**ITEM: 16 (i)****Council****CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT****Report of:** Councillor Gaywood, Portfolio Holder for Public Protection**Public Protection****Introduction**

I am pleased to be presenting my second portfolio report to Full Council.

Although a small portfolio in terms of budget, Public Protection incorporates two out of the five Council Community Strategy Priorities:-

Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities

By reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and safeguarding the vulnerable.

Protect and promote our clean and green environment

Ensuring Thurrock's streets and parks and open spaces are clean, well maintained and users feel safe.

The portfolio covers a very wide range of statutory services which protect the public from harm to their health and prosperity. The portfolio is far reaching and impacts on every resident, visitor and commercial enterprise within Thurrock.

Public Protection works hand in hand with many other agencies including the Police, Fire Service and Government Departments to ensure the public are protected. In spite of the financial challenges the teams face they continue to provide a high level of service.

I continue to ensure this portfolio is an inclusive one and value the input into shaping and addressing areas of concern from the shadow portfolio holder, Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny committee and the Licensing committee working together for the protection of all of our residents.

Whilst I recognise the continued good work of all the teams in Public Protection, within my report this year I am bringing specific focus to the work of the following teams within the department, Community Protection, Licensing, the Community Safety Partnership, Trading Standards, Environmental Protection, Food Safety and Parking Services.

I would also like to highlight the contribution made to the welfare of Thurrock's residents by joint working arrangements put in place with other Local Authorities by way of shared services.

Shared Services

The Community Protection Team during this year has entered into an agreement with the Essex Countywide Travellers Unit (ECTU) to deal with unauthorised encampments in our borough. The ECTU is a partnership of local authorities within Essex with Essex Police, the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and Health. This agreement is subject to review after two years.

As portfolio holder I will shortly be attending the strategic review group for the ECTU to scrutinise its performance to date.

Over the last few years the Trading Standards team at Thurrock have been working in conjunction with Trading Standards officers at Birmingham Council who operate the Illegal Money Lending team. This team provides the expertise for dealing with illegal money lenders, commonly known as loan sharks who operate in Thurrock and exploit vulnerable residents and most importantly the support for the victims of loan sharks. The team undertake educational initiatives for consumers and enforcement work against unlicensed lenders.

Environmental Crime

The team continue to address the problem of fly-tips in the Borough. We know this is a major concern for our residents and so we have concentrated our efforts on delivering a robust programme of prevention and continue to carry out operations with Essex Police and partner agencies to disrupt fly-tippers before they tip to avoid otherwise costly clear up costs. Officers continue to visit local traders to ensure that they have appropriate measures in place to dispose of their waste legitimately and to support them through education, which reduces the likelihood of unscrupulous operators disposing of their waste by illegally fly tipping.

Whilst this is good news there is always more to be done and we look to make further improvements over the rest of this year.

We continue to tackle dog fouling and littering by carrying out proactive operations where they work either visibly or undercover in areas we know are blighted by dog fouling or littering to work with those who choose not to pick up after their dog has fouled or drop litter, this work is both educational and from an enforcement perspective. Knowing approximate times and days when offences occur helps the team be more efficient in their efforts to tackle this behaviour.

With the budgeting and structural changes that the Council has seen over the last year Housing will be taking a key lead in the tackling of Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) within the borough. Working with partners the new Housing ASB Team will look to ensure that detailed consultation takes place with residents to see how we can adapt our ASB services to make it fit their needs. There will be a clear vision that poor behaviour by council tenants or on council estates will not be tolerated and action will

be taken to moderate this behaviour to achieve positive community outcomes. The team will look to target “hot spots”, known places of concern within the borough’s housing stock and look to work with partners to reduce offending and improve the overall feeling of safety within the borough.

Licensing

The Licensing Team are responsible for a wide range of Licences. Premises Licence (Alcohol and Entertainment), Taxis, Gambling, Sex Establishments, Animal Welfare (e.g. Pet shops, Boarding Kennels), Charity Collections and Scrap Metal.

Last year our officers processed over 1,200 applications for all types of licences. In addition to the application processing, officers have taken part in numerous multi agency operations around Scrap Metal Thefts, the Community Alcohol Project, Taxis and the night time economy, as well as general enforcement of licences and their conditions.

The Licensing team continue to support the Licensing Committee and have begun the process to review the taxi vehicle conditions and specification; implementation of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 and have implemented the changes to the Licensing Act 2003 brought about by Live Music Act 2012.

There have been numerous Licensing Sub-Committees where decisions have been made over a variety of taxi and alcohol licensing matters, with any appealed decisions being successfully defended at court.

I would like to thank the Licensing Committee Members for their continued work on the committee and at the many sub-committees that have been held so far this year. Without the dedication of these Members, the operation of an effective licensing regime at Thurrock Council would not be possible.

We continue to support the borough wide Pub-watch and Behave Or Be Banned Scheme (BOBB), and are actively participating in the Community Alcohol Project in Corringham which is focused on reducing access to alcohol in the Corringham area by young people.

Community Safety Partnership

I have continued to work with the Public Protection teams and Community Safety Partnership as part of the Cruiser strategic group to provide a multi agency response to the problem of cars cruising in the Lakeside Basin.

We supported the implementation of the dispersal order in this area and following engagement with the retail park land owners to target harden the area, visible presence on out of hours and engagement with late night license holders the problem has reduced significantly. We are now working with planning and highways on further projects to reduce the problem further and supporting the Police and businesses with banning orders.

Through the community safety partnership tasking we have targeted 2 hot spot areas for domestic burglary and vehicle crime with multi agency days of action

encompassing train stations and housing estates. This provided effective engagement and crime prevention advice to over 1,000 residents.

The Essex Police and Crime Commissioner held his first Thurrock Public Engagement event at the civic offices which was supported both by myself and Thurrock's District Commander as well as Community Safety Partnership members. The event was well attended with members of the public and local voluntary organisations able to ask questions and seek responses on crime in Essex and Thurrock.

I continue in my role as the Thurrock Police and Crime panel member to challenge the Commissioner on policing policy in Essex and in scrutinising the effectiveness of outcomes against the areas of focus within his crime plan. I actively seek answers around specific problem areas affecting Thurrock, and am persistent in holding the Commissioner to account for supporting the Violence Against Women and Girls Agenda.

I am also holding regular meetings with the District Commander for Thurrock, Chief Inspector Ben Hodder and the two area Neighbourhood team Inspectors working together to ensure a joint partnership across my portfolio to reduce and prevent crime and to safeguard our most vulnerable residents.

Trading Standards

Trading Standards enforce consumer protection and animal health legislation to bring about a fair and safe trading environment. The work of Trading Standards is far reaching and impacts on every resident and commercial enterprise within Thurrock and has the potential to impact upon other individuals and organisations outside of our borough.

Our team have successfully promoted and established the multi agency Thurrock Community Alcohol Partnership (TCAP). This has been launched in Corringham and brings together Trading Standards, Licensing, Essex Police and Thurrock Community Safety Partnership to tackle underage drinking and antisocial behaviour. The youth service and education have also been involved to assist with getting the message out to our young people. Through the establishment of the Thurrock Community Alcohol Partnership in the Corringham area we aim to-

- support responsible alcohol retailers,
- reduce access to alcohol by young people,
- improve public perception around anti-social behaviour associated with alcohol in the area
- and promote safe consumption levels of alcohol.

In addition to this officers continue their efforts with test purchasing around the borough. An intelligence led approach is being adopted to enable us to catch prolific offenders who deliberately sell age restricted products to young people. So far this year 5 premises have failed a test purchase for alcohol and 2 for underage tobacco sales we have initiated licence reviews for each of these. At the

time of writing of this report 3 premises have had their licences suspended for a period for the sale of alcohol to children.

Trading Standards are also working closely with DP World to ensure that procedures to check the safety of imported goods are in place for the London Gateway port when it receives the first ship in October this year.

The National Trading Standards Board and BIS (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) consider product safety at port of entry into the UK a significant threat to the general public.

Three illegally imported dogs were identified and successfully quarantined, protecting Thurrock residents against rabies. One importer has been prosecuted for the illegal importation of a puppy.

The team continue to assist vulnerable consumers and intervene where they may have fallen prey to rogue traders who cold call. All of our sheltered housing sites are signed up as no cold calling areas.

Our officers continue to work in partnership with the Police, Highways Agency and VOSA identifying overloaded vehicles on Thurrock's roads. They have carried out 12 road traffic prosecutions so far this year with a total of £7244 in fines.

Environmental Protection

The work of the Environmental Protection encompasses the areas of pollution control and statutory nuisance such as noise, odour, light.

The team operate the out of hours noise service and have had considerable success in the last year in reducing the exposure of residents to noise at night that would otherwise disturb their lives. In the last year the out of hours noise team dealt with 700 requests for service which included evidence gathering visits. They have used a combination of informal intervention and formal legal action, including the seizure of noise equipment to achieve results. Three prosecutions have been taken against residents whose loud music disturbs others.

Other areas of Environmental Protection enforcement work include dealing with filthy and verminous properties through serving notices to get the problem resolved and acting if this is not done, boarding up unsecure premises, rubbish accumulations at property likely to encourage pests, high hedges and light nuisance.

Environmental Protection Officers carry out checks on factories and industrial processes to ensure they are complying with the rules on pollution. Works continue to reduce the impact of these processes on the wellbeing of residents. The team continue to work with partners such as the Environment Agency where the regulatory responsibilities lie with them.

Our officers provided expert acoustic and pollution control advice to 191 planning and licensing applications over the year.

The team implement the Air Quality Management Regime in Thurrock and monitor 15 designated Air Quality Management Areas.

They maintain and collect data from scientific monitoring equipment at 5 sites in the borough. These sites are at Tilbury, Purfleet, Stanford Le Hope, Corringham and Chadwell St Mary and are located so as to check on likely sources of pollution including road traffic and factories.

They have also dealt with contaminated land enquiries over the year.

The Contaminated Land strategy for Thurrock will be completely updated by the end of 2013. This is the strategy that determines how we investigate and declare sites as contaminated and appropriate mitigation measures to be applied to sites to contain emissions from sites or accommodate changes to the use of contaminated sites.

Food Team

Our officers within the Food Team have continued to undertake the statutory duties to ensure food safety in Thurrock. They have carried out food hygiene and standards inspections in approximately 1,300 premises from manufacturers, packers, cold stores, import/exporting companies, restaurants and takeaways to schools, care homes and retail stores.

The team also carry out investigations into food and food premises complaints from residents, allegations of food poisoning, unsafe drinking water and notifiable infectious diseases including legionella.

Food is regularly sampled from businesses across the borough to ensure food safety and accurate labelling (to prevent contamination). The team worked with the Food Standards Agency to ensure that meat supplied from Thurrock was not contaminated with horse meat.

The volume of imported and exported food stored, transported and sold within the borough continues to increase, including the import of nuts, seeds, spices, fruit and vegetables and the export of similar foods. We provide export health certificates to enable Thurrock companies to sell their food outside of Europe, including margarine and baby milk powder going to China.

This team also operate Thurrock Council's Street Trading Consent scheme, which enables the council to control the numbers and locations of mobile food vehicles across the borough. This is to prevent nuisance to residents and reduce risks to road users, in addition to ensuring food safety.

Parking Services

Parking services has continued to undertake the civil enforcement of parking contraventions throughout the Borough, to ensure that the safety and efficient movement of road users is not compromised.

Details of the performance of parking services are contained in the Annual Parking Reports, which can be found on the Council's website. The headline figures from the 2013 report are:

- 9,323 on-street penalty charge notices issued.
- 1,597 off-street penalty charge notices issued.
- Total surplus income on parking account in 2012/13 was £60,289.

The parking service also took delivery of a CCTV enforcement (school safety) vehicle at the end of 2012/13, which embarked on a 6-month trial in June 2013, to gauge its effectiveness via any improvement to problems caused by inconsiderately and dangerously parked vehicles, especially near schools. The trial will enable an informed decision to be made on the future of mobile enforcement in the Borough.

A competition to name the vehicle was held with local primary schools, and the winning entry was PIPPA (Park It Properly Prevent Accidents).

The School safety group will be meeting at the end of this month to discuss the effectiveness of PIPPA outside our schools and to ensure joint action with partners to continue to discourage dangerous and problem parking and encourage alternative travel to and from schools.

I was very pleased to be able to introduce changes this year to the charging structure for residents' and visitors' parking permits with effect from April 2013. This has meant that the first two residents' parking permits and the first sheet of visitors' parking permits have been issued free of charge to eligible households each year.

As a result of this residents and businesses in South Ockendon have been consulted about the feasibility and desirability of introducing a residents parking zone, to reduce the impact of commuter parking in the locality of the station. Residents and businesses in Tilbury and the Badgers Dene estate will also be consulted about the introduction of a residents' parking zone in these areas

Financial Information - Overview

The overall net budget within the portfolio is £2.069m. This is split into two distinct areas; Public Protection and Parking.

Below is the financial summary of the services, with the annual budgets that make up the portfolio.

Cost Centre Code	Original Budget £000	Revised Budget £000	Budget To Date £000
Environmental Health Food Safety	182	189	68
Environmental Protection	425	428	145
Licensing	(85)	(78)	(22)
Trading Standards	376	379	128
Public Protection	325	329	112
Health & Safety	355	308	104
Public Protection Service Management	150	125	43
Community Protection	140	143	26
Community Safety	228	229	1
Civil Protection	180	184	47
Safer Communities Fund	86	86	(50)
Domestic Violence	20	20	0
Young Persons Substance Misuse	(14)	(14)	27
Drugs Action team	(2)	(2)	18
PCT Pooled Treatment Budget	(9)	(9)	174
Drugs and Alcohol Team	86	86	29
Substance Misuse Commissioning	80	80	27
Public Protection	2,523	2,483	875
Off Street Car Parking	67	88	71
On Street Car Parking	(274)	(274)	(90)
Parking Decriminalisation	(228)	(228)	(76)
Parking	(435)	(414)	(95)

Financial Information – Forecast 2013/14

The public protection element of the portfolio is forecast to achieve a balanced financial position at the end of the financial year. This is after the following savings were taken out of the 2013/14 base budget

Community Protection Co-ordinator + Protection Officers	(127,043)
2012 Olympics Provision	(100,000)
Health & Safety Budget	(80,000)
To cease all overtime working for Public Protection Teams	(69,426)
Community Safety	(34,000)
Councils Contribution to community safety partnership	(7,000)

There is still a number of vacant posts within the service, which are being actively sought to be recruited to. The savings as a result of this are contributing towards a balanced financial position.

The service is also forecasting an increase in the level of licensing income in relation to the budget, as well as prudently managing central expenditure budgets such as equipment and furniture.

The elements of the service in relation to Drug and Alcohol are funded mainly through external income. As a result of this, they remain ring-fenced, and are not being used to offset budgetary pressures elsewhere within the service. Any surplus on these funds at the end of the financial year will be carried forward as part of an earmark reserve to be used in future years

The parking service budget is broken down into 3 distinct areas; off-street, on-street and parking decriminalisation.

The off-street budget mainly covers expenditure on the maintenance of car park infrastructure, and the income from off-street pay-and-display parking ticket sales.

The on-street budget mainly covers expenditure on operational costs and overheads, and income from on-street pay-and-display parking ticket and permit sales.

The parking decriminalisation budget mainly covers income from penalty charge notices.

Parking services are currently implementing measures to improve the collection of penalty charge notice income, which will increase the surplus on the parking account. Any surplus revenue generated by this will be invested in transportation initiatives, in accordance with Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Outturn 2012/13

During last financial year, the public protection service achieved a budget underspend of £0.324k. This was as a result of a number of different factors within the budget. The main variances within the service were:

- Underspend on the growth provision agreed to fund financial pressures associated with the 2012 Olympics (2013/14 budget reduced)
- Vacancies within front line regulatory services (now recruited, or actively being sought to be recruited to)
- Prudent management of central overhead budgets

The service agreed to maintain a budget underspend during the year as part of the overall financial strategy of the Council in 2012/13. However, the factors that existing during 2012/13 have changed, and these same savings will not be achievable in 2013/14.