

24 February 2016

ITEM: 17

Council

Cabinet Member Report – Communities and Public Protection

Report of: Councillor Jane Potheary

This report is Public.

I am delighted to be presenting my portfolio report to Council for the first time.

This portfolio covers a very wide range of statutory services, the overall aim of which is to protect the public and develop the community in Thurrock. Teams in Communities and Public Protection continue to work hand in hand with many other agencies including the Government Departments, Other Councils, the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service to achieve this aim.

I will outline the work of the teams that deliver this activity on behalf of the Council. Our teams continue to provide a professional service in the face of financial challenges and I would like to take this opportunity to thank officers for their continued hard work.

Environmental Crime

One area of particular activity this year has been the pursuit of fly tippers. This has resulted in the prosecution of thirteen individuals for waste offences so far this year and further prosecutions are in progress or in the pipeline. Fly tipping is an increasing problem in Thurrock and in most local authority areas in the Country. We know that fly tipping is a major area of concern for our residents and so we have concentrated the efforts of our environmental enforcement officers on this area of work, in particular where evidence can be obtained for prosecution of offenders. Fly tipping reports have continued to increase in the last 3 years.

Environmental Protection

The work of the Environmental Protection (EP) Team encompasses the areas of pollution control, air quality management, contaminated land, statutory nuisance and environmental enforcement.

EP continues to deal with the enforcement of high hedges, light nuisance, odour nuisance and dust nuisance. The team provide advice including expertise in acoustics to planning and licensing applications to promote good environmental compliance on developments and licensed events / premises.

EP Officers completed all 69 permitted industrial process inspections. This statutory duty includes the enforcement of environmental permit conditions to ensure compliance with emissions to air, land and water. Works continue to reduce the impact of these processes on the wellbeing of residents and improve the industrial processes environmental management systems.

The team implement the Air Quality (AQ) Management Regime in Thurrock and monitor 16 designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's). The team continue to maintain and collect air quality data from scientific air quality monitoring equipment at 5 remote sites in the borough.

Air quality officers continue to work with Highways and Public Health officers to produce a new AQ strategy and Air Quality Action Plan for Thurrock's current and new AQMAs and this should be completed in early 2016.

The team dealt with 69 Contaminated Land (CL) enquiries this year. Enquiries are made from site developers, businesses and residents looking to purchase new houses or land for development. The team store and maintain records of historical land use, remediation and current status to answer specific CL enquiries.

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 saw the team processing over 1400 applications for all types of licences. In addition to the application processing, the team have taken part in numerous multi agency operations with partner agencies around Scrap Metal; the Thurrock Community Alcohol Project; Taxis/Limo's enforcement and the night time economy, as well as general enforcement of licences and their conditions.

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 Licensing 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.

The team have continued to support the borough wide Pubwatch and Behave Or Be Banned Scheme (BOBB), and are actively participating in the Community Alcohol Project in Purfleet which is targeting access to alcohol in the Purfleet area by young people, as well as promoting the messages around the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the Prevent Agenda with local licence holders.

Thurrock Safety Advisory Group is administered and chaired through the Licensing Team which continues to review large events in the Borough providing support, guidance and regulation, ensuring that the community attending those events remain safe and that those organising the events have access to the skills and

resources of all partner agencies.

Thurrock Community Safety Partnership

The Council is a statutory member of the Community Safety Partnership along with the Police, Community Rehabilitation Company, National Probation Service, Clinical Commissioning Group, and Essex Fire and Rescue.

In order to address local crime issues and assist in addressing emerging issues around the radicalisation of groups the partnership priorities are:

Reduce Youth offending and re-offending of adults & young people

This will address volumes crimes of: Domestic burglary; Most serious violence; Personal robbery and drug offences

To reduce harm to and safeguard vulnerable victims from: Domestic abuse; Sexual offences including rape; Child sexual exploitation; Serious Youth Violence; Hate crime; Anti-social Behaviour; Cyber Bullying; Honour Based Abuse and Serious Organised Crime encompassing Modern Day Slavery & Fraud where victims are vulnerable

Violent extremism: Delivering the Governments counter terrorism strategy – Prevent locally

Civil Protection

The work of Civil Protection impacts on every resident, commercial enterprise and Council department. The team produce plans which inform the Councils response to a range of emergencies and disruptive occurrences that could arise in Thurrock.

The Civil Protection team work hard to co-ordinate resources in an emergency incident, operating a 24/7 on call duty system. They were involved in co-ordinating the initial response to the sink hole that appeared in Hogg Lane. The majority of this work involves pre-planning and monitoring the high risks in Thurrock e.g. for our potentially hazardous industrial sites designated under the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (COMAH) and flood risk such as the potential for an east coast tidal surge.

Trading Standards

Trading Standards enforce consumer protection legislation to bring about a fair, safe and equitable trading environment within Thurrock. The work of Trading Standards impacts on every resident and commercial enterprise in the area. It also has the potential to impact upon other individuals and organisations external to Thurrock. The team are involved in the, National Trading Standards Board, Safety at Ports Project. For more information on this area of work please see the report which went to Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny in September.

The team have had a successful prosecution in relation to illegally imported puppies, not only do many of these puppies exhibit health problems that mean that owners

are faced with unexpectedly high vets bills but they are often not correctly vaccinated against rabies and so have to be quarantined to prevent the introduction of rabies into the UK.

Unauthorised Traveller Encampments

Thurrock continues to have significant numbers of unauthorised encampments, continuing the trend seen last year. Between 1.3.15 and 10.12.15, there were 56 such encampments in our Borough, of which 7 were on private land. In such cases it is the responsibility of the landowner to get the travellers moved on; the remaining 49 were responded to by the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU), of which the Council is a subscribing member. Once the ECTU has been notified of an unauthorised encampment which is on public or Council-owned land, it undertakes all the remaining actions required, including court appearances, to get the encampment moved on.

The ECTU has a target to remove of all unauthorised encampments on public or Council-owned land within 10 working days. This is the minimum time required to comply with the service of the necessary papers for the various stages of the removal process. I am pleased to report that they have continued to hit this target on every occasion in Thurrock, often getting the encampment removed within 7 or 8 days.

The Council has recently funded a programme to target-harden those sites which have been used on a number of occasions by travellers, to make them less accessible for unauthorised encampments to be set up.

The annual cost of membership to the ECTU was reduced by 10% this year to £6,462.90p, which I believe represents excellent value for money.

Health and Safety

The main focus this year has been moving to a self service model for internal health and safety management. This has involved the updating of the Councils Health and Safety Policy Statement and the development of internal procedures and documentation to assist managers across the organisation to manage health and safety compliance within their areas of responsibility on behalf of the Council. The work of the teams external health and safety inspectors has involved participation on projects and investigation of accidents in the workplaces in Thurrock. A number of enforcement actions are in progress in relation to these accident investigations, including several prosecutions.

Food Team

The Food Team has continued to undertake its 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 were successful in receiving grant funding from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to undertake advisory visits to food businesses to encourage the display of food hygiene ratings at their premises in places where consumers could easily see them.

Parking Regulation, Enforcement and Management

The management of parking across the Borough is an essential tool in supporting road safety and balancing the often competing needs of our communities. Examples of this include balancing the needs of commuters and residents, or the needs of those wanting the roads kept clear for safety reasons, alongside the needs of those wishing to park. As land uses change and communities evolve, new Traffic Regulation Orders are required and others need to be amended. So far this year, Thurrock's Traffic team have developed and consulted on 17 new or amended orders.

Notable trends this year have been the growing numbers of rail commuters, with increased demand for parking places near railway stations, and increased designated lorry parking places allowing the Council to be more rigorous in restricting parking in on-street locations where this causes problems for local residents. In December, Cabinet gave approval for a new commuter car park at Purfleet, and 132 additional spaces at Grays' Beach.

School Gate Parking enforcement continues to be an issue for communities across the Borough. Our innovative trial in partnership with Tilbury Pioneer has demonstrated what can be achieved by joint working. Initial evaluation suggests a significant reduction in parking violations and complaints from parents.

Our Parking Enforcement Team supports the maintenance and management of on and off-street parking as well as Controlled Parking Zones and Permit Parking Areas across the Borough.



At the start of this year, we had 2,731 resident's parking permits issued across the Borough, representing a 12.7% increase on the previous year. Free weekend

parking was again provided during December 2015 in all on and off-street pay-and-display parking places.

Community Development and Equalities

As pressures on council budgets continue to impact on local services, it is imperative that we support people to be resilient and build support within communities. In November, Cabinet agreed to establish the Community Environment Development Fund – subject to Council’s approval of the budget in February 2016. Communities can apply to the fund for infrastructure and environmental improvements such as better road layouts and verge reinforcements. The idea behind creating this fund is so the council can support this process with a transparent system looking at capital requests. In many parts of Thurrock residents are incredibly proud of the area where they live and we councillors are often approached with exciting and innovative ideas aimed at improving those areas – this fund will help those residents keen to take forward their ideas forward.

Empowering communities to do more for themselves results in more appropriate, community led responses that are sustainable and holistic in their approach. This continues to be a leading principle behind the development of Community Hubs. Hubs demonstrate how working differently can unleash the passion and skills inherent within communities to bring people together and make a difference to local people. Two hubs have opened this year – Stifford Clays ‘Acorns’ Hub and Tilbury Hub. A charitable organisation – Thurrock Community Hubs – has now been established under the umbrella of Thurrock CVS to develop and sustain hubs across the borough. Funding from the Transformation Challenge Award has now been set aside to support hubs and a training programme supports the development of volunteers. As well as helping resident’s access council services, hubs enable local people to come together around the issues they feel most passionate about.

Volunteering continues to be supported across Thurrock from formal opportunities to ‘Time Bank’ requests for more practical exchanges of support. The council is extremely proud of the 257 volunteers who give their time to support council services across Thurrock museums, libraries, youth offending and children centres to give just a few examples. A mid-year review was carried out across the summer, with 100% of respondents saying they would recommend volunteering with Thurrock Council to others. All volunteers received a certificate of thanks, signed by the mayor, during Volunteers’ Week in June, As a council we are always keen for ways residents to volunteer with us. When an appropriate placement is not available, we are lucky to have a thriving Volunteer Centre in Thurrock based at ngage.

As Portfolio Holder for Communities my role also includes liaison with the armed forces. Thurrock was the first council in Essex to develop a Veterans’ Charter, and we signed the Essex Community Covenant in 2013. In June Thurrock launched the Veterans’ Information Portal - or the VIP Portal – as part of its Flying the Flag ceremony to mark Armed Forces Day. The portal has been developed through the Essex Military Civilian Partnership and Thurrock is pleased to be part of this

initiative, encouraging veterans to register by using their service number. I urge all Councillors to learn about the VIP Portal and to encourage all veterans to sign up so that we can build a picture of the profile of veterans living in Thurrock.

The World War One Commemorative Group enjoys cross party membership as well as a rich contribution from many service and heritage groups active in Thurrock. Unfortunately, poor weather meant that the sports day at this year's event at Coalhouse Fort had to be abandoned. However, those attending were still able to enjoy the displays and re-enactments arranged to commemorate the Great War, These events provide a unique opportunity to remember the sacrifices made in previous conflicts so that we might enjoy the freedom and choice we enjoy today.

The framework for Equality Impact Analysis (EqIA) is now well established and will continue to be used as a tool to inform new policy arrangements, key decisions and budget savings proposals.

Following a successful relaunch in December 2014, the council now has 5 very active staff forums representing Mental Health, Disability, Black, Minority Ethnic staff (BME), Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) and Women. The groups have achieved a great deal in the last 12 months from reviewing and updating our HR policies, to completing an accredited assessment of our support for staff. Some fantastic achievements from our dedicated workforce that we should all be proud to celebrate.

In April 2014 Cabinet agreed to establish a Fairness Commission for Thurrock based on a great deal of evidence into levels of inequality in the borough. The Fairness Commission held its first meeting March 2015 and defined fairness as '*A fair society is where people have an equal chance to realise their full potential and an equal chance to have their voices heard and be part of decision-making*'.

From June to October the Commission held a 'Summer of Listening' to help understand people's perceptions of fairness. By understanding how people experience life in Thurrock, the Commission will be better placed to reflect on our opportunity to ensure that current regeneration opportunities benefit the whole borough, and tackle historic examples of inequality. The Commission is due to share its report with Cabinet next month. I endorse their recommendation to review the Single Equality Scheme (SES) with a comprehensive focus on access, tackling poverty and building cohesion. A robust SES will replace the Annual Equality Report to Council. Workforce equality data will continue to be published on the website as this is a statutory requirement under the Equalities Act.

Public Protection Financial Information – Overview

The overall net budget within Public Protection is £1.695m. Below is the financial summary of the services, with the annual budget assigned to each individual area.

2015/16 Revised Budget

Cost Centre	Revised Budget £000's	Actuals To Date £000's	Budgets to Date £000's	Variance to date £000's	Forecast Outturn £000's	Revised Variance £000's
Environmental Health Food Safety	210.5	116.8	140.3	(23.5)	187.0	(23.5)
Environmental Protection	330.6	184.2	218.4	(34.2)	316.4	(14.2)
Licensing	(51.3)	(38.3)	(58.5)	20.2	(31.1)	20.2
Trading Standards	331.4	177.2	221.0	(43.8)	287.7	(43.8)
Public Protection	236.0	154.6	157.3	(2.8)	233.2	(2.8)
Health & Safety	308.7	157.7	205.8	(48.1)	327.3	18.6
Public Protection Service Management	49.4	24.4	32.9	(8.5)	40.9	(8.5)
Community Protection	79.8	53.7	53.2	0.5	80.3	0.5
Community Safety	21.0	0.0	14.0	(14.0)	7.0	(14.0)
Civil Protection	151.0	80.0	100.7	(20.7)	130.3	(20.7)
Safer Communities Fund	18.3	0.0	12.2	(12.2)	51.7	33.3
Domestic Violence	40.0	0.0	40.0	(40.0)	40.0	0.0
Grand Total	1,725.4	910.3	1,137.3	(227.0)	1,670.7	(54.7)

Financial information – Forecast 2015/16

The service is expected to achieve a £0.050m surplus at the end of the year. This is the overall position of operational activities, and is helped by additional proceeds of crime income within the service.

Community Development and Equalities Financial Information

The Community Development and Equalities team is within the Strategy team in the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit.

Cost Centre	Revised Budget £000's	Actuals To Date £000's	Budgets to Date £000's	Variance £000's	Forecast Outturn £000's	Revised Variance £000's
Strategy Team	403.69	280.10	286.67	(6.56)	397.12	(6.56)
Community Development Projects	50.90	25.49	39.60	(14.11)	36.79	(14.11)
Voluntary Grants	432.60	346.08	317.24	28.84	432.60	0.00
Grand Total	887.19	651.67	643.51	8.17	866.51	(20.67)

There are no significant variances to the budget that are forecast at this stage.

Strategy Team DA500

This code includes salary and non-salary budgets for the Strategy Team including corporate and service planning, performance management, research and intelligence which are outside of this portfolio area as well as community development and equalities within it.

There are four posts supporting Community Development and Equalities. The remaining budget funds one Strategy post and covers all other service costs and recharges.

Community Development

This code is used to support specific projects undertaken by the team.

Voluntary Grants DA502

The code is used to pay the funding agreements administered via CVS to support voluntary sector development and delivery