

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>COMMUNITY AND HOUSING COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
<b>Date:</b>	June 10, 2010	<b>5</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT</b>	
<b>Author:</b>	Diane Burridge, Director of Operations, 01799 510580	Item for information

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## Summary

- 1 This report updates members on matters that are not otherwise on the Agenda and provides information items.

## Recommendations

- 2 That the report is noted.

## Situation/Update

### 3 Work Premises Inspection of Health and Safety

Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA) puts a duty on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authorities (LAs) to make adequate arrangements for enforcement. Previous guidance issued by the HSE on how these enforcement arrangements should be achieved was not mandatory but owing to a reduction in the amount of resources health and safety enforcement has been receiving nationally from LAs the HSE has now issued revised mandatory guidance. This requires LAs to be able to demonstrate that they are meeting the mandatory requirements by April 2011 at the latest.

UDC Environmental Health have always provided a pro-active health and safety enforcement service that includes the investigation of accidents, complaints and partnership working with other Essex LAs on topic based inspections such as asbestos, dermatitis and falls from heights. However given the wide range of functions covered by Environmental Health officers there has always been pressure on resources for delivering a premises inspection programme for health and safety particularly when serious accidents and even fatalities have been reported to us. Expertise in investigating and inspecting health and safety must be maintained and authorised officers must be able to demonstrate their competency to do so using a new HSE framework.

We are currently updating our policies and procedures in line with the section 18 guidance to ensure we meet the requirements. These will be subject to peer review from a neighbouring authority. Our database of premises that require inspection is also being updated from which we will implement our risk based inspection programme accordingly. Members will be further advised of the

arrangements to meet next April's deadline and a report is planned for the September meeting of this committee.

#### **4 Audley End and Heritage Open Days**

English Heritage is unable, as yet, to provide an answer to this Committee's request to permit Audley End to be included in any of the free entry days. A holding note has been received evidencing that some consideration is being made to the request. Officers continue to chase their final answer.

#### **5 National Pet Microchip month**

The Animal Warden will be offering discounted micro chipping to support national pet micro chipping month. The fees will be in accordance with approved fees and charges with the £24.50 home visit charge being reduced to £16 (£12 for those in receipt of council benefits) during the event, additional pets at £8 each. This income contributes to the cost of providing this statutory service.

It is in the council's interest to encourage the take up of micro chipping as it will permit the quick return of pets to their owners, minimising distress to both. Costs are incurred by dog owners whose dogs are found straying in respect of kennel fees, statutory fees and stray dog fees. If the owner is not identified similar costs are incurred by the council including any vet fees for injured or unwell dogs. Of the 107 stray dogs dealt with last year 26 were able to be returned direct to their owners.

The interaction between pet owners and the council's Animal Warden allows advice to be given and responsible ownership discussed. A leaflet to this effect has recently been produced and the content on our website refreshed.

#### **6 Community Achievement Awards**

This event is scheduled for the evening of 6 September.

#### **7 Recession Impact – Housing Options/Homelessness Update**

As can be seen from the figures below it has been a very busy year for the housing advice/options/homelessness service with a significant increase in numbers of people seen.

Quarter 3 2008 = 117  
Quarter 4 2008 = 190  
Quarter 1 2009 = 229  
Quarter 2 2009 = 264  
Quarter 3 2009 = 209  
Quarter 4 2009 = 274

Through concentration on homelessness prevention work the homelessness figures were reduced from 48 homeless presentations and 26 acceptances in

2008/09 to 27 presentations and 10 acceptances in 2009/10. There were 121 prevention cases recorded for 09/10 up from 60 in 08/09. It is anticipated that pressure on the service will increase during the coming year and it is going to be hard to sustain these figures. The effects of the economic down turn can already be seen in clients' drops in income becoming more long term.

The CAB has also reported a large increase over the past year with the work they are doing on debt advice. They have been able to increase their work in this area due to the extra Government recession impact funding that the Council was able to pass on which was used to train another debt advisor.

The Housing Options team with the help of CAB have now helped one family avoid repossession through the Governments mortgage rescue scheme, other cases are still ongoing.

## **8 Car Parking at Dunmow and Mountfitchet Romeera Leisure Centres**

A briefing note will be circulated at the meeting.