

COMMUNITIES, YOUTH & PUBLIC SAFETY PORTFOLIO REPORT FOR FULL COUNCIL, JULY 2020

Community Safety matters

Whilst social distancing restrictions have been in place a 'Hot Desk Hub' has been established to enable partner agencies to 'dial in' every fortnight, on a Wednesday morning. This invitation has now been extended to parish and town clerks, giving them the opportunity to report matters concerning safety within their respective areas. The first of these meetings saw 3 parishes bring forward issues which were discussed and actioned.

Day-to-day business is becoming more and more 'normal' and we are beginning to pick up with our partners, particularly with regards to an increase in cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB) which are occurring between neighbours. This has been particularly prevalent during the lockdown period and in a number of cases Community Protection warnings have been issued.

In particular, we have experienced numerous complaints of ASB taking place in and around Stansted Lodge in Takeley. This is a bed & breakfast premises which is being used to house homeless people by other local authorities during the health crisis. We are continuing to work with the owner of the premises, along with other departments within the council and external agencies to address these concerns.

Our Community Safety team are pleased to welcome PC Helen Stewart to be part of our community hub team. This resulting from a decision taken by Essex Police to appoint Community Engagement Officers to District Council areas that have a hub. This gives us the benefit of having a direct link to our local policing teams and we see it as an important step to assist in sharing intelligence and resolving issues in a timely fashion.

The Communities Team have recently held meetings with the Essex Boys & Girls Club to commence outreach work in our rural areas. Initially this will be a reconnaissance exercise at various locations with the intention of building an understanding and trust, before hopefully embarking on delivering some activities and awareness programs on current topics effecting young people, such as sexual health, drug misuse (including NOS – "laughing gas") and excess drinking. We aim for this to be started by the beginning of the summer holidays.

Our projects such as Safer Streets, Drinks with Community Links and ToolSmart have all had to be postponed because of the lockdown. That said, with the easing of lockdown we believe that social distancing can be applied and it is our intention to resurrect these very soon. We are looking at holding the first event, which will be a Safer Streets presentation in Thaxted. This will focus on enforcement as well as educating residents about staying safe. Please watch this space for more information.

Our continued engagement with Secondary Schools in the District has led to discussion on the preparation of delivering specific awareness projects in our schools for the forthcoming academic year. It is our intention to take the 'Reach every generation gang awareness' training session into Forest Hall School, Stansted in November. This just leaves Helena Romanes School, Great Dunmow to receive the benefit of these bespoke training sessions designed to affect change. The presenter, a former gang member himself, knows first-hand just how young people get caught up in gang culture and understands why 'hard to reach young people' are labelled 'hard to reach.' His experiences bring reality to the educational training provided. It is hard-hitting, and inspirational allowing our community staff to reach out and hopefully convince the more 'hard to reach' young people not to become part of the gang related crime culture.

We are at present in discussion with our media department regarding the development of a UDC Community Safety page which will enable us to update residents, communities and businesses with Safety news and new initiatives. It will also enable us to distribute 'up to date' scams and fraud awareness more rapidly to all of our parish and town clerks and to the Uttlesford Crime Alert Facebook page, as well as our Neighbourhood Watch Steering Group for them to cascade further. This is work in progress, so please watch this space.

Safeguarding

- Throughout the COVID lockdown period the number of safeguarding referrals has increased. Probably not surprisingly because families have been living so close to each other, in circumstances never ever experienced before.
- It is our intention to deliver further domestic abuse training to business' and retail outlets. This is in partnership with Safer Places and the project is known as 'Ask for J'

Community Response Hub

Throughout these unprecedented times, the Communities Health and Wellbeing team have been running the Uttlesford COVID response hub. They have been working in Partnership with the Council for Voluntary Services (CVSU) and Volunteer Uttlesford and together this team has been working with the Operation Shield Programme. They have responded to over 2,500 direct contacts to the hub, delivered over 2,000 prescriptions and helped over 500 residents with shopping requests. There is now a COVID data base of over 350 volunteers and this does not include all of the volunteers in groups set up by the villages, although they are linked in. The team has contacted 550 vulnerable residents who had not registered for help through the Government and they made 36 Welfare visits to those that did not respond to telephone contact to ensure that all was well. 35 Emergency food parcels have been delivered to our vulnerable residents.

Although the contact with the hub is easing it will remain in operation alongside business as usual, in case of a further outbreak or local lockdown.

Working alongside the CVSU a survey of all of our volunteers is taking place to establish who is still available and what the experience of volunteering was like for them. We are also contacting the beneficiaries to see whether the service that we offered was the right service for them and if there are any improvements that could be made.

Wedding ceremonies have resumed at the Council Offices, all following strict government guidelines. There were four recently, all of which were booked before lockdown.

Colin Day

District Councillor

Cabinet Portfolio holder for Communities, Youth, Public Safety
and liaison with the Police, Fire & Rescue Service