

Councillor Maggie Sutton – Portfolio Holder for Communities

Report to Full Council: 11 March 2024

General Summary

We are currently undergoing recruitment to replace Fiona Gardener, Communities Manager. Interviews take place on the 23rd February 2024 and we hope to announce the successful candidate shortly.

Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse

We have completed and have submitted a Section 11 safeguarding audit with Essex County Council safeguarding boards for adults and children. The results and actions from the audit will inform the basis of a Safeguarding Action Plan, which will be measured and delivered via the Safeguarding Steering Group who will ensure that we are meeting our statutory duties as a District Council.

We have re-commissioned services of Next Chapter, a Housing Navigator service for victims of Domestic Abuse within Uttlesford. The worker provides support to residents as well as families seeking housing in Uttlesford due to domestic abuse and can risk assess harm as well as sign-post to relevant services. The post is match funded by Essex County Council.

The Community Safety and Safeguarding teams are currently engaging with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance to become an accredited partner of the scheme and to ensure that UDC's policies and procedures are updated and that our governance and partnership arrangements are fit for purpose.

Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support

Further to the Rent Assist Programme and grant pots available for community and emergency items for UDC's Ukrainian guests and hosts, we are currently seeking approval for strategic grant pots to assist the integration and well-being of refugees and Asylum Seekers. The money is available to UDC through government grants and we will be seeking to commission the following strands of work;

- Emotional well-being and mental health
- Information, advice and guidance on a range of topics including housing, welfare and benefits, employment, education and training
- Organised activities for children and young people and families
- Individual emergency grant pots

Grants Update

We have met with all the applicants of the Voluntary Support Grant and decisions will be made on the 29th February 2024 by a committee of the Cabinet and recommendations will go to Cabinet in March for ratification.

We have recommended to Cabinet the award of two grants from the large scale sports grant that was rolled-over from 2022-2023.

We have been undertaking a review of grant giving across the organization under the Blueprint Uttlesford programme and are proposing savings of £250K and will be using some of the UKSPF grant funding to support the Voluntary and Community projects. The Community Support Grant will open in the new financial year.

Community Safety

The Community Safety Partnership are hosting a partner away day on the 21st February 2024 to discuss CSP priorities arising from the Strategic Assessment and to inform the five year Community Safety Action Plan.

UDC will be continuing their funding of local Police Community Support Officers and will be working much more closely with Essex Police to brief and task the PCSO's in the community, depending on emerging issues and ASB, working much more aligned to community need.

UDC is leading on the Closure Order of a Housing Association property that has been responsible for crime and ASB in the area and associated with the address. There is a multi-agency working group that is dealing with reports and taking tenancy action at the address but it is felt that intervention is needed to prevent further ASB from taking place and to seek respite for neighbours.

UDC is currently engaging with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners office to seek opportunity to access the Safer Streets funding and will be liaising with the public and partners to identify need and projects in the community to help in the prevention of ASB, youth diversionary activities and safer streets activities.

Health & Well-Being Board

Key partners of the Health and Well-Being Board have met to form a delivery plan that sits under the Uttlesford Health and Well-Being Strategy. A series of workshops and data sharing will help us to determine priorities, which we will then share with wider agencies, residents and Councillors to ensure that priorities are aligned.