

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 MARCH 2018

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Report from: Portfolio Holder for Business Management Councillor
Turpin

Summary

This report sets out progress made within the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Business Management which fall within the remit of this Committee.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee covered by the Portfolio Holder for Business Management are:

- Community Officers
- Emergency Planning
- Registration
- Bereavement

1.2 Achievements are detailed by services area below.

2. Community wardens

2.1 The Community Wardens attended 33 PACT meetings. From these meetings they resolved 124 issues of concern to residents by direct action. A further 76 issues were passed onto other departments within the council.

2.2 41 Community Engagement events were attended, including healthy walks, student engagements, library forums, PCSO meetings, Police surgeries, town centre forums, residents associations, neighbourhood panels, community fun days, the All Saints Volunteers and the Community Safety Partnership consultation.

- 2.3 Wardens continue to engage with rough sleepers as necessary, signposting them to support agencies.
- 2.4 The Community Wardens organised 42 community clean-ups and litter picks, encouraging the local community to take ownership of problems in their locality and do something positive about them.
- 2.5 25 of these clean-ups were carried out as part of the national Spring Clean campaign. 165 members of the public took part in these events, as well as 31 Ward Councillors. A total of 285 black sacks of litter were collected and removed, weighing in at just over 1 tonne.
- 2.6 Improvements were also made on land owned by J C Decaux at Luton Arches, as a direct result of intervention from the Warden Service.
- 2.7 Wardens removed 104 abandoned vehicles from the streets of Medway this year. A further ten vehicles were surrendered to the council.
- 2.8 By providing intelligence to the DVLA, Community Wardens secured the clamping of 1,160 untaxed vehicles, many of which were subsequently removed.
- 2.9 Community Wardens maintain a programme of educational visits to schools throughout the year. These presentations target year 6 pupils and focus on messages concerning personal safety, responsible dog ownership and littering.
- 2.10 Presentations were given at 15 schools this year, including one at the Marlborough Centre to 15 autistic children.
- 2.11 Engagement also took place at Bradfields Academy, in connection with littering by pupils.
- 2.12 The Mayfair Project was completed in August and was celebrated with a street party which was featured in the local newspaper. Responding to local perceptions of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the area, a Community Warden met with residents who described Mayfair as being full of concrete and lacking in community spirit. They expressed a wish for the area to be lifted and to create a friendly community environment.
- 2.13 With this in mind, the Community Warden devised a plan, taking advantage of Mayfair's unique situation in that there is no road access. This involved working with the children in the area, who were the source of the perceived ASB. She agreed ground rules with them and their parents about litter, and acceptable times of play. She introduced a chalkboard for them to use, consequently reducing the level of graffiti. She provided them with soft balls to play with, reducing noise levels. She even provided a bike shed, for which she needed to obtain planning permission. Finally, the officer introduced some planters in the area which the community will maintain.

- 2.14 All of this was paid for with funding secured from the Street Cops Trust, following a successful bid by the warden.
- 2.15 The team visited 393 commercial premises checking compliance on behalf of the Food & Safety Team.
- 2.16 Trials of a dedicated ward Facebook page are underway. There have been a few teething problems, but it is envisaged that this will enable the Community Wardens to communicate effectively with community stakeholders, such as Ward Members, PACTs, Neighbourhood Watch and other community groups all at the same time. The trial is in Rochester South and Horsted, and will be rolled out to other areas once success is demonstrated.
- 2.17 All Wardens attended Mental Health First Aid training and have also completed the mandatory online courses for Dementia Awareness, Data Protection and Prevent.
- 2.18 Working in partnership with their colleagues in Environmental Enforcement, two Community Wardens have been trained in the issue of Community Protection Warnings (CPWs). This is specifically to address the subject of refuse being placed out early in Hartington Street, Chatham and Gardiner Street, Gillingham. At the time of writing, these projects are just over a week old and 20 CPWs have been issued.
- 2.19 Should the residents in question continue to offend, evidence will be passed to the Environmental Enforcement Team for further legal action. This project will naturally spread to the surrounding streets and to other areas.
- 2.20 A new contract was procured and awarded last year for the kennelling of stray dogs. The terms of this contract give us more room to house dogs for longer, enabling us to re home them successfully and significantly reducing the number of dogs which are put to sleep.
- 2.21 Community Wardens dealt with 233 stray dogs this year. 106 were scanned for microchips on the street and returned directly to their owners and 127 were taken to kennels.
- 2.22 Of those dogs taken to kennels, 41 were rehomed and six went to foster care until a permanent home was found. 78 dogs were happily reunited with their owners. 95 dogs received veterinary treatment.
- 2.23 Community Wardens microchipped 58 dogs in their own homes free of charge.
- 2.24 When stray dogs are returned to their owners, they are sent an invoice, which helps to offset the costs of running the service. There is a statutory provision enabling the council to do this.

- 2.25 However, as payment rates are very low and the administration costs of recovering debt are excessive, a new system is being introduced in April that will recover the payment.
- 2.26 All stray dogs are featured on our dedicated Facebook page. Since April, the page has reached over 976,000 people, with nearly 20,000 actively engaging.
- 2.27 The Community Warden Team was awarded a Gold Footprint Award by the RSPCA in recognition of their excellent stray dog policies and procedures for the fourth consecutive year, helping to keep Medway on the map.

3. Emergency Planning

- 3.1 Heatwave and Cold Weather Emergency Plans were written to cover seasons from 1 June– 15 September 2017 and 1 November 2017 – 31 March 2018. These plans are refreshed each season to reflect the arrangements set out in NHS and Public Health England's National Emergency Plans.
- 3.2 The Emergency Planning team continues to monitor the warnings and alert service, jointly run by the Meteorological Office and NHS, and advises Council services and voluntary organisations when trigger levels are met. To date response and action has been necessary on one occasion for heatwave and five occasions for cold weather, prior to the recent snow.
- 3.3 The Emergency Planning Team was audited from late 2016 to May 2017 and awarded a 'Strong' score.
- 3.4 A live test was conducted on the alerting systems that would be used in the event of an external emergency associated with an emergency at the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) site on the Isle of Grain. This test is carried out on an annual basis, last held on 21 June 2017.
- 3.5 The Kent and Medway Hazardous Pipelines Emergency Plan was reviewed rewritten and Tested during Exercise Zeus on 8 and 13 June 2017
- 3.6 The Emergency Planning Team has arranged for senior officers from across the Council to attend the following multi-agency events:
- Working in a Safety Advisory Group – May 2017 (3 Officers)
 - Public Safety at Festivals – July 2017 (4 Officers)
 - Legists During an Emergency training – October 2017 (13 Officers)
 - Geographical Information System Mapping training – September 2017 (1 Officer)
 - Oil Pollution Beach Masters training – October 2017 (4 Officers)
 - Multi Agency Joint Incident Command (MAJIC) – November 2017 (2 senior Officers)
 - Scientific Technical Advisory Cell Training – November 2017 (4 Officers)

- 3.7 The Emergency Planning team has provided additional internal training and represented Medway Council at the following Exercises:
- MCG Control Centre – June 2017
 - Exercise United, Mass Fatalities – July 2017
 - Medway Council Events table-top exercise – July 2017
 - Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) Seminar – October 2017
 - Exercise Valkyrie, Kent and Medway Recovery – November 2017
 - Exercise Tethys, Kent and Medway Reservoir Inundation – November 2017
 - Rest Centre Manager training – December 2017 (5 Officers)
 - Incident Liaison Officer (Duty Engineers) – December 2017
 - Exercise Vanguard, Counter Terrorism exercise February 18
 - Emergencies on Trial – March 2018 (Up to 16 Officers)
- 3.8 The Emergency Planning Team contributed to the planning and response for two multi-agency operations.
- 3.9 The Emergency Planning team has represented the Council on 15 separate standing KRF groups and task and finish groups, which are established as and when necessary, to undertake specific projects.
- 3.10 Throughout the year the Emergency Planning Team has responded to a number of severe weather and flood alerts (three named storms and four potential major flood alerts).
- 3.11 In conjunction with the Council's Flood Officer, the Team has been involved in the consultation over the new thinking from the Environmental Agency on future coastline protection (2100 Project Thames Coastline and The Medway Estuary and Swale Scheme).
- 3.12 There have also been incidents involving, potential avian flu and disease-carrying mosquito planning and response.
- 3.13 The Team has given assistance to Medway Highways in respect of the issues with Stoke Railway Crossing and Resilient Network Planning.
- 3.14 The Team has contributed to the following emergency plans:
- Kent & Medway Hazardous Pipeline Plan
 - KRF Severe Weather Plan
 - Kent & Medway Pandemic Flu Plan
 - Medway Council Pandemic Flu Plan
 - National Emergency Mortuary Arrangements Plan
- 3.15 Three contracts have been renewed:
- Adler & Alan Tier 2 Oil Pollution Response Contract (June 2017).
 - Icom Grain Village Siren Maintenance Emergency Response and Servicing Contract (July 2017).

- Enera (Rapid Reach) Emergency Message Notification to the Isle of Grain (Aug 2017).
- 3.16 There have been a number of explosive demolition projects (Grain and Kingsnorth) to which Emergency Planning has been a consultee and which required coordinating a Medway Council response in relation to road closures, temporary parking restrictions, air quality, noise, vibration and Control/Contact Centre liaison.
- 3.17 There has been a continuing push to create aide-mémoires to support the Major Emergency Plan targeting specific Emergency Roles.

Beast from the East and mini Beast from the East

- 3.18 During the recent episodes of severe cold weather, Emergency Planning (EP) provided the Council and partner organisations, Medway Norse and Medway Commercial Group (MCG) with early weather warnings and attended and communicated all Severe Weather Advisory Group information. Upon declaration from the Severe Weather Advisory Group that there was a high confidence that the severe weather would have significant effects, Kent Police took over the Command and Control phase of the incident. The EP team ensured that the Council's Strategic and Tactical officers were fully briefed and assisted in coordinating the internal response groups.
- 3.19 Following the Multi-agency Strategic Statement, the Council carried out its duties using a silver tactical group to coordinate all response activities. The EP Team provided a catch-all 4x4 structure that mobilised all available 4x4 vehicles from Medway Council, Medway Norse and Southeast 4x4 Response (voluntary sector). These vehicles provided transport for essential staff to get into Gun Wharf, any Children and Adults Service requirements and some assistance to Medway residents. The team also coordinated and supplied the 4x4 response for Medway Community Health care, taking the Community Nurses and carers to the prioritised clients and all of Medway Hospital's essential staff 4x4 transportation. Medway Council was also able to supply two and a half gritters' worth of salt to Medway Hospital, which was unable to get ordered supplies through, due to national severe weather conditions.

4. Bereavement

- 4.1 For the calendar year 2017, 1,926 (adult) cremations were undertaken (against 2602 in 2015) and 342 interments (against 270 in 2016). The reduction in cremations is linked to the reduced capacity at Medway Crematorium due to the improvement works which are due for completion over the next few months.
- 4.2 Facultative Technologies Ltd (FT), a Dutch based company with major manufacturing capacity in the UK, were selected to remove and install 3 new cremators and abatement equipment. FT has more than 80% of the UK market and enjoys an excellent reputation. A principal

contractor, Mulalley were appointed January 2018 to assist with the enabling work and address the snagging items left by previous contractors. As before, closures of the service will be minimised.

- 4.3 There have been 17 referrals for funerals to be provided under the Public Health (Control of Disease Act) 1984. Working with genealogy companies helped locate a number of relatives which meant that 15 funerals were provided by the authority.

5. Registration

- 5.1 There were 5013 birth registrations with 97% being registered within 42 days of birth. 2323 deaths were registered with 90% being registered within 5 days of death; 328 deaths involving post mortems were registered and of these 80% were registered within 7 days of death. 2,145, notices of marriage were taken, 745 marriage ceremonies and 12 Citizen Ceremonies performed.

- 5.2 The Guildhall has been set up as an annex to the Register Office for marriages on a Saturday and this has proved popular.

- 5.3 The service must submit an annual performance report to Her Majesty's General Register Office. The feedback for this year's submission was:

- The level of service was high
- Customer service was high as demonstrated by the low waiting times for death registrations and notices, and public satisfaction surveys,
- We were able to provide a good level of reassurance around safeguarding data to the Registrar General
- There was a high level of compliance against the statutory and operational standards
- There was a slight improvement in registering deaths within the legal timeframe (compared to the previous year) however, the priority given to death informants had affected the time between birth and registration which had dropped slightly.
- Overall, it was also noted that the Registration service operated efficiently maintaining a cost neutral status.

Lead officer contact:

RuthDu-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services

ruth.dulieu@medway.gov.uk

Tel 01634 333163

Appendices

None

Background documents

None