

## **REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**28 MARCH 2019**

### **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 PACTs this year at which 143 issues of public concern were raised. 91 of these (65%) were resolved by direct action from the Warden Service and 52 were referred to other departments or partner agencies.

2.2 Wardens also organised or attended 32 Community Engagement events, including healthy walks, student engagements, Parish councils, PCSO meetings, Police surgeries, town centre forums, residents associations, neighbourhood panels, park friends' groups, community fun days, the Community Safety Partnership consultation and the All Saints Volunteer Evening which was attended by over 100 residents.

- 2.3 Wardens continue to engage with rough sleepers as necessary, signposting them to appropriate support agencies. They have also assisted with the Medway Winter Night Shelter programme.
- 2.4 The Community Wardens organised 34 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 13 of these clean-ups were carried out as part of the national Spring Clean campaign, which received positive reports in the local press. These are excellent community events and have an immediate and positive impact. Across the Spring Clean, 20 Councillors attended as well as 64 members of the public. 277 bags of litter were collected as well as some larger items. The total weight disposed of was just over two tonnes.
- 2.6 Other community clean ups of note were at Rede Common, which was attended by 30 residents and Gillingham Park.
- 2.7 Wardens removed 86 abandoned vehicles from the streets of Medway this year. A further 10 vehicles were surrendered to the council.
- 2.8 By providing intelligence to the DVLA, Community Wardens secured the clamping of 1,148 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 12 schools this year, as well as one at the 6<sup>th</sup> Medway Cub Scouts.
- 2.11 The team continues to visit commercial premises checking compliance on behalf of the Food & Safety Team.
- 2.12 This year the team have launched 6 dedicated area Facebook pages. These pages 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.
- 2.13 Community Wardens dealt with 237 stray dogs this year. 130 were scanned for microchips on the street and returned directly to their owners and 107 were taken to kennels.
- 2.14 Of those dogs taken to kennels, 42 were rehomed and 5 went to foster care until a permanent home was found. 57 dogs were happily reunited with their owners.
- 2.15 57 dogs received veterinary treatment.

- 2.16 The terms of our dog kennelling contract enables the team to house dogs for longer than the statutory 7 day period when necessary, meaning that they can be re homed successfully and significantly reduce the number of dogs which are put to sleep.
- 2.17 Community Wardens microchipped 95 dogs in their own homes free of charge.
- 2.18 A new payment system was introduced this year meaning that stray dogs are not returned to their owners until full payment is received. In one case where the owner refused to pay, the dog became the legal property of Medway Council on the expiration of the statutory 7 day period and was subsequently re homed.
- 2.19 All stray dogs are featured on our dedicated Facebook page. This year, the page has reached over 1.7 million people, with 31,028 actively engaging.
- 2.20 The page was also instrumental in a conviction for abandonment. Following an appeal for information on Facebook which featured a video of a man apparently abandoning a dog, the offender was identified, interviewed under caution and charged with animal cruelty.
- 2.21 The case was prosecuted at Medway Magistrates' Court by the Enforcement Team. The case was proved and the bench handed down fines and costs totalling almost £800.
- 2.22 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 fifth 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 2018 and 1 November 2018 – 31 March 2019. 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 has a new Manager due to a staff retirement and is busy permanently recruiting to full strength.
- 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 12 July 2018.

- 3.5 Medway Council's duty to carry out a three yearly review, consultation, rewrite and development of the External Emergency Plans for Grain's Upper Tier Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites has been carried out. The Plans will be tested during Exercise Combine 2019 in April 2019.
- 3.6 The Emergency Planning Team has arranged for senior officers from across the Council to attend the following multi-agency events:
  - National grid LNG (Grain) Internal Exercise (2 Officers)
  - Public Safety at Festivals training – July 2018 (3 Officers)
  - Exercise Blackstart (Kent wide power supply) (2 Officers)
  - Working in a Safety Advisory Group training – October 2018 (3 Officers)
  - Oil Pollution Shoreline training – October 2018 (4 Officers)
  - KRF Winter Preparedness Workshop - November (4 Officers)
  - Medway Ports Oil Pollution Exercise (Ex-President) – January 2019
  - Counter Terrorism Act Strategic training – February 2019 (1 Officer)
  - Oil Pollution Contingency/Officers training – March 2019 (5 Officers)
- 3.7 The Emergency Planning Team has provided additional internal training and represented Medway Council at the following Exercises:
  - Medway Council Events table-top exercise – May & Oct 2018
  - Initial Coordinator training – June 2018
  - MCG Control Centre – July 2018
  - Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) Seminar – October 2018
  - Incident Liaison Officer
  - 4x4 familiarisation training (50 Officers) – November 2018
- 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. These Groups are consolidated by means of a Kent Resilience Forum Delivery Groups Day which incorporates the three core function Groups, Plans and capabilities, Risk and Exercise and Training.
- 3.10 Throughout the year Emergency Planning Team has responded to a number of severe weather and flood alerts (one named storm, one snow event, three potential major flood alerts and two Heatwave events). There was also response required for a major surface water flooding incident (May 2018). The team has also supported two large

incidents where a number of residents were displaced as a result of Gas or power supply issues.

- 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 has been a complete review and rewrite of the Rest Centre/Emergency Shelter directory with training being developed for April 2019.
- 3.13 The Team has contributed to the following emergency plans/reports:
  - Kent & Medway Mass Fatality Plan
  - Kent & Medway Mutual Aid Document
  - Director Public Health's Annual report
- 3.14 There has been a continuing push to create aide-memoirs to support the Major Emergency Plan targeting specific Emergency Roles.

#### **4. Registration**

- 4.1 There were 4985 birth registrations with 98% being registered within 42 days of birth. 2650 deaths were registered with 98% of informants being offered an appointment within 2 working days of notification; 328 deaths involving post mortems were registered and of these 80% were registered within 7 days of death. 1,745, notices of marriage were taken, 817 marriages registered and 12 group Citizenship Ceremonies performed.
- 4.2 The Guildhall has been set up as an annex to the Register Office for marriages on a Saturday, and this has continued to prove popular.
- 4.3 The service must submit an annual performance report to Her Majesty's Passport Office, 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).
  - Overall, it was also noted that the Registration service operated efficiently, maintaining a cost neutral status.

## 5. Bereavement

5.1 Cremation and burial statistics for the last 3 years are as follows (adult numbers are given as these attract a fee):

<b>Calendar Year</b>	<b>Total Cremations</b>	<b>Adult Cremations</b>	<b>Total Burials</b>	<b>Adult Burials</b>
2018	1995	1877	349	330
2017	2046	1925	343	321
2016	2696	2602	270	252

5.2 The reduction in cremations is thought to be due to:

- The reduced capacity at Medway Crematorium due to installation works and building works, which have now completed.
- The effect of competition from Thamesview Crematorium.

5.3 The crematorium project was completed in early October and the three cremators with full abatement are operational. Snagging items are in train and the results of the emission testing by an independent laboratory are awaited.

5.4 With the completion of the abatement project it is anticipated that numbers of cremations will continue to rise (although potentially not to 2016 levels in the near future, due to increases in local competition).

5.5 There were 17 referrals for funerals to be arranged under the Public Health (Control of Disease Act) 1984. Working with genealogy companies helped locate a number of relatives resulted in 13 funerals being carried out.

### **Lead officer contact:**

Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services  
[ruth.dulieu@medway.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.dulieu@medway.gov.uk)  
Tel 01634 333163

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background documents**

None