

28<sup>th</sup> June 2017

## Environment and Enforcement Committee

### Essex Countywide Traveller Unit and Open Space Protection Measures

*Report of:* David Carter

*Wards Affected:* All

*This report is:* Public

#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on measures to protect Council owned land from unauthorised incursions and on the Council's membership of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU)

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **Members approve the potential additional expenditure to maintain ECTU membership in 2017/18 due to increased enforcement costs of incursions.**

#### 3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 Essex Countywide Traveller Unit  
Following increasing numbers of unauthorised incursions onto Council land in recent years the Council has joined the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU) which was established to address issues across Essex relating to Gypsy and Travellers and to deal with unauthorised encampments on the partner local authority, Parish Council and Essex County Council land.
- 3.2 Brentwood Borough Council received a presentation from ECTU and agreed to join the partnership with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016.
- 3.3 The agreement with ECTU provides for unauthorised encampments on Brentwood Borough Council and Parish Council land within the Borough to be dealt with by the unit, including legal costs and bailiff removal where necessary.

- 3.4 Unauthorised encampments on private land are not covered by the terms of the agreement.
- 3.5 Since the Council joined the partnership ECTU have dealt with encampments at the Brentwood Centre, Weald Country Park and Navestock Heath. Essex Police have also been able to act directly at sites including Weald Park, Navestock, William Hunter Way, Warley Country Park and the Brentwood Centre and on private land at Wates Way and Ingrave Road.
- 3.6 Because of a significant increase in unauthorised incursions across Essex ECTU has exceeded its 2016/17 budget, particularly in legal fees which has resulted in an overspend of approximately £72k.
- 3.7 It is likely therefore that there will be an increase in member contributions to the unit this financial year in order to cover this and likely future expenditure, however the contribution from each District or Borough Council amounts to less than 2% of the total budget each and is substantially lower than our expenditure on legal and bailiff costs prior to joining.
- 3.8 Any increases in costs will be determined by the ECTU Joint Committee meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> June and a verbal update will be given.
- 3.9 **Open Space Protection Measures**  
At the meeting of the Community, Health and Leisure Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016 Members received an update on works carried out to protect areas of Council land from unauthorised incursions.
- 3.10 Additional works were proposed to sites including Alexander Lane Shenfield, Seymour Field Ingatestone, Bishops Hall Park, Bannister Drive Hutton, Larkins Playing Field, Little Warley Common and the Brentwood Centre.
- 3.11 The works proposed were completed before the end of the financial year 2016/17. The budget total of £133,700 was under spent by a total of £21,374, final total actual expenditure was £112,325.

#### **4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 4.1 The proposed increases in ECTU contribution will be reported verbally following the meeting of the Joint Committee.

#### **5. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 5.1 To continue to effectively deal with unauthorised incursions onto Council and Parish Council land in the Borough and to reduce the impact of additional expenditure.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 Increases in contributions are determined by the Joint Committee which is attended by Members from the District and Boroughs represented and approved by the Committee.

## **7. References to Corporate Plan**

Environment and Housing Management

Develop effective partnership arrangements with key agencies to deliver services

Community and Health

Make Brentwood a Borough where people feel safe, healthy and supported

Work with partners to reduce anti-social behaviour and ensure that Brentwood is a safe place to live

## **8. Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

**Name & Title:** Jacqueline Vanmellaerts Financial Services Manager  
(Deputy Section 151 Officer)

**Tel & Email:** 01277 312829 / jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

The financial implications have been cross checked with the Accountancy team and are set out in the body of the report.

### **Legal Implications**

**Name & Title:** Daniel Toohey, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

**Tel & Email:** 01277 312860 / daniel.toohey@brentwood.gov.uk

While the Council has a broad duty to residents to ensure the safekeeping of its assets, which will include a robust but proportionate response to trespassing on Council property, it is also required to have appropriate regard to statutory requirements including human rights issues.

Membership of the ECTU will assist in assessing the appropriate response to traveller incursions and legal action where required.

**Other Implications** (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

None identified

- 9. Background Papers** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

None

- 10. Appendices to this report**

None

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