

**27 January 2021**

**ITEM: 13**

**Council**

**Report of the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour**

**Report of:** Councillor Rob Gledhill, Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour

**This report is public**

**Introduction**

As the portfolio holder for Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) this report is presented to update on the work of the teams within Thurrock Council whose role it is to keep residents safe. This report covers the period from April 2019 to date.

We recognise and fully understand that anti-social behaviour has always been a key priority for residents, therefore this is a key priority for Cabinet, and it is for this reason I have continued to be the Cabinet Member responsible. The areas that fall under the remit are:

- Community Safety Partnership
- Environmental Enforcement
- Counter Fraud and Investigation
- Housing Anti-Social Behaviour
- Emergency Planning and Resilience
- CCTV Service
- Public Protection

Whilst Essex Police maintain law and order in Thurrock by protecting members of the public and their property, Thurrock Council as a responsible authority have a legal duty to work with our partners to tackle crime and disorder locally and work in partnership to prevent crime, reduce the fear of crime and improve the quality of life for all citizens.

The Council's Public Protection team have continued to provide a crucial service to the Borough in keeping residents safe; in particular, the Trading Standards team, which handles over a third of all seized goods at the UK's ports and continues to lead in an exemplary way.

In January 2020, the Counter Fraud & Investigation function moved into this Portfolio aligning the capabilities in that service with the wider-public protection services, improving the response to serious issues that could affect residents and businesses.

Across the teams, we are taking every possible action, including the issuing of Community Protection Warnings/Notices, Acceptable Behaviour Agreements, Closure Orders and injunctions to protect the community from those that would cause residents harm.

## **1. COVID-19 Response**

- 1.1 In direct response to the pandemic and in the efforts to encourage compliance and support front line emergency services, the Environmental Enforcement team provided proactive foot patrols in high footfall areas such as high streets, parks, and open spaces that were identified as hot spot locations for groups gathering in breach of the government rules and guidance. Since March 2019, Officers have engaged with over 5,000 groups, promoting compliance with the social distancing rules and actively reducing, and deterring non-compliance. The officers gathered information and Intel, which was shared with police partners.
- 1.2 The Emergency Planning and Resilience team have been supporting the Council's response to COVID-19 since March 2020, with senior officers from across the Council attending a Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) twice per week to ensure a shared situational awareness and response to the pandemic.
- 1.3 The Counter Fraud and Investigation work undertaken in Thurrock during the pandemic has drawn national attention and the team have now been commissioned by the government to lead nationally on the response to serious organised crime for COVID-19 support schemes. The newly funded team have been working across the country pursuing over 82 individuals and recovering over £3.2m of public finance.
- 1.4 The Licensing Team have contributed towards the Council's response to reduce the spread of COVID-19 through their work with hospitality venues. During the period of the pandemic when premises were allowed to open, the team worked with businesses to ensure precautions were in place. The team ensured that hospitality businesses were complying with their obligations under the regulations to provide signage, guiding visitors around the one-way systems and giving indications of separation distances, as well as ensuring they collected the relevant customer data to facilitate the follow up by test and trace should an outbreak unfortunately arise at the premises.
- 1.5 Environmental Health Officers from the Food Team have dealt with hundreds of complaints from residents regarding failure to observe COVID-19 restrictions. The enforcement approach has escalated to meet the threat in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy. In many cases, premises have complied voluntarily when approached by officers but on occasion, it has been necessary to take action that is more formal. An example of this includes a hairdresser's salon where it was necessary to serve a prohibition notice to achieve compliance.

- 1.6 Considerable work has been undertaken at Winter Wonderland, Lakeside in conjunction with Thurrock's Public Health team to help safeguard residents using the ice rink and wider Winter Wonderland attractions from the virus. Environmental Health officers provided advice and guidance to the business to allow it to operate as safely as possible. However, the Environmental Health Officers had to serve three Direction Orders on behalf of Public Health to restrict the capacity of people across the site, together with the numbers on the ice rink. Once the Order was served, EHOs undertook COVID-19 monitoring visits during evenings and at weekends to ensure compliance with the Order. This event involved considerable work by Public Health and the EHO team to allow the event to continue to operate in a COVID safe way.
- 1.7 Environmental Health Officers from the Food Team have assisted with the Public Health operation to test and trace those infected with COVID-19, this has involved working evenings and weekends and sourcing additional specialist staff to reinforce the existing team to upscale this area of work. This has greatly assisted the national effort to trace and isolate those infected with virus and thereby reducing the spread in the community.
- 1.8 Trading Standards have undertaken work on the closure of businesses where COVID-19 regulations have mandated it. Officers have been monitoring businesses and intervening where needed to ensure compliance with the rules. In many instances, businesses have complied but Trading Standards have had to serve nine prohibition notices to date on businesses that declined to accept advice and close to comply with the regulations. Whilst many of these have applied to small retail establishments, some work has involved more determined resistance to the regulations by national chains including Carpet Right and Wren Kitchens who initially adopted a different interpretation to the regulations than the Council. Following legal advice and the service of prohibition notices these matters have now been resolved. In the case of Carpet Right that has a head office in Thurrock, our Trading Standards service were called upon to advice to numerous other authorities on the prohibition notice to help facilitate its imposition across much of the UK.
- 1.9 When phase one of lockdown started, Environmental Protection continued to run the weekend out of hours noise service and dealt with a number of ongoing noise, light and bonfire nuisance matters by way of abatement notices, collecting evidence and retrospective enforcement action. The easing of lockdown in the summer this year saw a rise in noise nuisance complaints where groups of young people were congregating on land using amplification equipment. The team continued to deal with these while working the weekend out of hour's noise team to bring abatement where possible, within COVID-19 constraints and taking enforcement action against organisers where they could be identified and traced to a premise
- 1.10 Lastly, the Health and Safety team have been working with premises that have remained open during various phases of the lockdown to ensure robust risk assessments and precautions are in place to reduce the spread of the virus among staff and visitors. Premises specific advice has assisted business owners to mitigate the risks and reduce infection. The team have also

provided similar advice and support to council departments to assist the Council in reducing sickness among staff.

## **2. Community Safety Partnership**

2.1 Community Safety Partnerships were established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to ensure joint working between partners to reduce crime and promote public safety in a locality. In 2011, they were extended to include the duty to reduce re-offending.

2.2 The Council is a statutory member of the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership, as are Essex Police; the Community Rehabilitation Company; the National Probation Service; the Clinical Commissioning Group; and the Essex Fire and Rescue Service. The responsible authorities who form the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) have a legal duty to work together to tackle local crime and disorder in the area and to have in place a partnership plan for that area, setting out the CSP's priorities.

### **2.3 ASB Data**

2.3.1 ASB incidents reported to Essex Police in 2019 compared to 2018 declined by 9.9% (467) compared to the Essex decrease of 10.9%. ASB incidents reported to Thurrock Council declined by 20.5% (42).

2.3.2 Grays Riverside remained the Ward with the highest number of reported incidents. There were significant reductions in ASB reported in Tilbury Riverside and Ockendon wards following action plans having been put in place – including work with the local schools.

2.3.3 The top 3 Wards, of Grays Riverside, West Thurrock & Chadwell St Mary, all went against the District and County trend of decreased ASB recorded by Essex Police. Chadwell St Mary increased by the greatest percentage (24.8%) resulting in a number of actions to address this, including 3 resident meetings and target hardening. Nuisance Vehicle incidents decreased by 27.9% (95)

2.3.4 Essex Police recorded ASB data for 2020 shows a significant increase, however, this reflects the four new ASB categories in relation to Covid-19 and a meaningful comparison is not available. All partners acknowledge that the perception of residents concerning ASB is not always aligned to reporting.

2.3.5 Following the restrictions placed to limit the spread of the worldwide pandemic, ASB levels reported to both Thurrock Council and Essex Police have seen a significant increase, in part due to the reporting of breaches in relation to COVID-19 guidance.

2.3.6 With many people confined to their homes there have been an increased number of reporting in relation to domestic living noise. Appreciating the impact this can have on people's health and wellbeing, the officers use all enforcement options available to stop the disruptions.

2.3.7 In response to the recorded increase in violent crime and the concerns raised by residents in relation to gangs and anti-social behaviour, Cabinet allocated £1m of surplus funding in 2018/19 to tackle anti-social behaviour in the borough. This enabled the recruitment of an ASB officer for 3 years within the Councils Community Safety team. The funding also enabled four additional police officers to complement the Town Centre Teams. The team have increased visible policing and their priority is to tackle ASB in the busiest areas, protect the vulnerable and tackle crimes against businesses.

2.3.8 Funding in 2019/20 enabled the Community Safety Partnership to resource Operation Caesar, run by Essex Police to tackle the nuisance caused by off road vehicles behaving in an anti-social manner. Funding enabled operations to run until September 2020.

2.3.9 In 2019, reports of Nuisance Vehicle incidents to Essex Police decreased by 27.9% (95 incidents). It is disappointing to note increased reporting in 2020; however, some increased reporting is a direct result of confidence in reporting following previous action taken.

2.3.10 For the 12 months – July 2019 to June 2020 operation results were:

<b>ACTION TAKEN</b>	<b>Jul 19 - Jun 20</b>
Incidents attended	124
Fail to stop	86
S 59 warnings	43
Intel reports	33
Stop search	29
Other traffic process/offence	19
Careless driving	18
Words of advice (engaged whilst setting up to ride)	13
Arrests	7
S165	6
Stolen vehicles recovered	5
Vehicle search	4
Prohibition notice	4
Excess Speed	3
CPWs	3
Vehicle seized	3
Driving otherwise than in accordance with a license	3
No seatbelt	1

2.3.11 The local authority provided funding to Operation Raptor, which is the response to tackling gang related violence. In 19/20, the operation was paramount to the success of obtaining and enforcing gang injunctions against members of the C17 gang and the on-going operations to target urban street gangs and county drug lines operating in the Thurrock area.

2.3.12 Following the obtaining of the injunctions a reduction in reported ASB incidents in all of the targeted areas: Grays; High Street, train station, park, Seabrooke Rise and Beach; Lakeside Shopping Centre and Chafford Hundred train station; and Dilkes Wood, Danbury Crescent and Cawdor Avenue in Ockendon was seen. There was also a 25% reduction of drug offences in Ockendon, however all areas saw an increase in violent crime. The increase in violence may be as a result of a gap in the drugs market that has been created following the successful enforcement against C17 and county drug lines operating in the Thurrock area. Rival urban street gangs from neighbouring areas and county drug lines could potentially be looking to exploit market opportunities.

2.3.13 Since April 2020, Op Raptor have continued to enforce the Gang Injunctions obtained on 11 members of the C17 gang and a further interim injunction has been served on one member from September 2020.

2.3.14 The Council takes all reports of potential cuckooing – whereby gangs or a County Line target vulnerable members of the community and is synonymous with persons from out of the area taking over a premises for free to give them a base within a community with which to supply drugs. One recent report has resulted in joined up activity and patrols by Essex Police, and Environment Enforcement Officers, with welfare checks resulting in an arrest of an individual in the area for drug offences.

2.3.15 Operation Adaminaby was set up in August 2019 as a partnership operation Between Thurrock Council Environmental Enforcement Officers and the Community Policing Teams. A total of 14 operations have been completed to date. The aim of the operation is to proactively conduct out of hour's patrols to ASB hot spot areas, as directed by intelligence from the community and the Cleaner Greener Team, to target the anti-social use and littering of nitrous oxide canisters.

2.3.16 The results from Operation Adaminaby to date are as follows:

- 32 Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to fly tipping, littering, urinating, fly Posting and Duty of Care
- 6 Notice in relation to Duty of Care (commercial waste s34)
- 12 Police community resolutions for possession of cannabis
- 2 x male arrested for unfit through drugs in charge of a motor vehicle (possession Cannabis and Cocaine), and;
- 36 Community Protection Warning Notice (30 for ASB, 3 for HGV parking)

#### 2.4 Council funded Community Policing Team Operations to address ASB in 2019/20

2.4.1 In response to an increase in reporting of ASB and robberies around the station in Stanford Le Hope, with support from Council funding, there were over 40 additional hours of visible policing in the area. This resulted in 1 vehicle search, 3 person searches, which in turn resulted in 1 cannabis

warning and multiple groups of youths dispersed, as well as positive engagement with local residents and businesses.

2.4.2 Operation Starfish was put in place in Chadwell St Mary to respond to an increase in ASB and vehicle crime. This part funded operation led to 82 additional hours of visible policing with 1 x vehicle search, 12 persons stopped and searched, 1 x cannabis warning issued and 6 intelligence reports generated. It also led to 1 arrest for possession of a knife, which resulted in a charge, remanded and sentenced to 6 months custody the day after

2.4.3 Following reports of ASB and young people using drugs in Little Thurrock, specifically Delafield Park, Council funding provided 32 hours of additional high visibility policing. Engagement with young people and local residents took place and there were no persons causing issues when police were present. There has been no further reporting of issues at the location, post the operation taking place.

2.4.4 Op Natal was the policing operation put in place in Tilbury in response to increased reporting of ASB. This was part funded by the Council and ran from August 19 to Jan 20. The operation was multi-faceted and there were 7 deployments with a total of 48+ additional visible police hours. Some of the deployments have also been jointly conducted with council officers, resulting in; 3 x persons arrested, 1 x cannabis warning issued, 3 x vehicle searches, 7 x persons stopped & searched, 1 x Section 59 warning issued in relation to nuisance motorbike, 9 x intelligence reports submitted and 2 engagement events completed at local schools.

2.5 An increase in reports due to COVID 19, have required investigation where the complainants are privately renting or owner/occupiers. The cases relate predominantly to noise nuisance, neighbour disputes, drug taking and youth congregation and have resulted in:

- 2 Community Protection Warnings being issued
- 2 referrals to Restorative Justice service
- 23 Noise Warning letters issued
- 9 referrals to multi-agency Locality Action Group
- 6 Safeguarding referrals

2.6 £143k of funding was secured for Thurrock in 2019 and a further £57k in 2020 through the PFCC and the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit to tackle violence in relation to gangs. In 19/20, this funding was used to:

- Increase awareness of risky behavior and impact on parents, pupils and staff at the Olive Academy, where some of our most vulnerable pupils attend
- Expand the work of the new school wellbeing service to work with pupils at risk of permanent exclusion
- To provide a mentoring programme for young people through youth services. This programme continues

- To increase our targeted youth provision through detached youth work and diversionary schemes
- To work with the community and Thurrock Youth Council
- Commission analytical resource to improve our intelligence with regard to links between exploitation and gangs

2.7 The Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) obtained by Thurrock Council to address car cruising in West Thurrock had been tested over the summer and was robustly enforced by the Community Policing Team, in partnership with the Environmental Enforcement Team. Operation Falcon, aimed at tackling the blight that this behaviour places on the community resulted in 30 Fixed Penalty Notices and cessation of the activity to date.

2.8 In April 2020, the Council reviewed and extended the Public Spaces Protection Order in Grays High Street, which continues to be effective in addressing the persistent street drinkers in the area. A total of 52 Fixed Penalty Notices have been served to members of the public linked to breaches of the order and 119 warnings were issued, after the disposal of their alcohol offenders were moved on from the PSPO zone.

### **3. Environmental Enforcement**

3.1 Thurrock Council's Environmental Enforcement Team have issued various enforcement notices and issued a large variety of Fixed Penalty Notices in response to environmental and ASB related offences between the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 and 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020. A breakdown of which is:

- Community Protection Notices issued by Officers: 63 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 58 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020
- Abandoned vehicles removed: 33 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 75 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020
- Fly tipping incidents investigated by the Environmental Enforcement Team: 4653 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 3722 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020

The investigations of these and proactive patrols have resulted in:

- Fixed Penalty Notices for fly tipping: 248 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 323 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020
- Fixed Penalty Notices for littering: 268 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 322 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020
- Unauthorised encampments reported: 60 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 12 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020
- Fixed Penalty Notices progressed to prosecution files for littering offences in the Magistrates Court: 136 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 204 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020
- Community Protection Warnings issued to HGV drivers (and their companies) for parking on the footpath/grass verge, also asked to

move on immediately by the Environmental Enforcement Officers: 55 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 36 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020

- Community Protection Notices issued after they breached the Community Protection Warnings, refusing to move their vehicle: 17 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 55 from Feb 2019 to Sep 2020
- Fixed Penalty notices issued by the Council's contractors (Kingdom Environmental Services). In the main, fixed penalty notices were issued for littering offences, however they also include the following offences, urination, fly tipping, fly posting and failure to produce waste transfer notes on request: 5631 from Feb 2018 to Sep 2019 and 5618 Feb 2019 to Sep 2020

- 3.2 The Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer and Operations Manager have enhanced partnership working and fostered excellent relationships with both internal and external partners. As a result, the team have been instrumental in delivering long-term sustainable solutions. They have seized 4 vehicles linked to fly tipping offences and provided valuable evidence in support of a planning breach, preventing over one hundred acres of land being illegally built on.
- 3.3 An additional dedicated twilight / night team have recently commenced with officers tasked to specific patrols focusing on enviro crime and ASB. This team are also responsible for providing front line partnership support to the Police and partners where required.
- 3.4 The team are part of the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) and also for mobile CCTV in relation to fly tipping. CCTV has some potential to improve officer's opportunity to capture and identify offenders in the act of fly tipping. The CSAS devolved powers, authorised by Essex Police, enable the team to wear a high visibility and professional uniform with the CSAS logo and provide them with the following: -
- Power to issue penalty notices for disorder
  - Power to issue fixed penalty notices for cycling on a footpath
  - Power to require giving of name and address
  - Power to deal with begging
  - Power to require name and address for anti-social behaviour
  - Power to require persons aged under 18 to surrender alcohol
  - Power to seize tobacco from a person aged under 16
  - Power to issue FPN for persons believed to be causing harassment, alarm or distress
  - Consumption of alcohol by a person under 18 or allowing such consumption
- 3.5 The service have recently received the agreed uniform with the correct CSAS Logos. This will make the officers clearly identifiable when enforcing the CSAS Powers that they have been accredited with.
- 3.6 The Environmental Enforcement Team this year adopted the powers to issue FPNs for breaches of household waste duty of care. These powers

will be used to ensure that householders dispose of their waste legally at all times and includes waste from domestic properties, caravans and residential homes.

Householders must ensure that:

- The person who takes control of their waste is licensed to do so
- Take steps to prevent it from escaping from their control
- Store it safely and securely
- Prevent it from causing environmental pollution or harming anyone

- 3.7 In support of growing concerns about pollution and the environment by reducing unnecessary exhaust emissions from vehicles, the Enforcement Team have adopted the power to request vehicle drivers to switch off their vehicle engines while parked and they can issue a £40 fixed penalty notice to drivers if they refuse to comply with the warning.
- 3.8 The service have implemented the new Single Justice Process system to streamline the prosecution process with legal services. This means that the legal process in relation to summary offences will speed up prosecution against offenders.
- 3.9 Of the 351 prosecutions for littering, three trials have been requested by defendants. In all three cases, each defendant changed their pleas to guilty having seen the weight of the evidence supplied. The defendants all received a fine and costs awarded to the Council.
- 3.10 From April 2018, there has been an increase in the fine payable for littering offences, from £80 to £150, resulting in a payment rate dip. Income levels started to increase, but have also been impacted by the unprecedented circumstances due to Covid-19 impact and individual's inability to pay. Steps have been taken to offer extended periods of payment to reduce any further financial impact on offenders and measures are in place to improve the 56% payment rate for fixed penalty notices by conducting more detailed searches on offenders at the time of issuing.
- 3.11 The Council is taking a positive approach to tackling graffiti, the Enforcement Team are working closely with the Cleansing Team, who remove all tags on Council street furniture and buildings immediately as they appear. Through Operation Abercrombie, a joint partnership with Essex Police, which commenced 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019, all tags and offenders are recorded. Consequently, two prolific offenders were arrested and received community resolution for criminal damage. 1 prolific offender has been identified and an Agreed Behavioural Agreement put in place, attached to their Tenancy Contract.
- 3.12 A partnership focused approach, with Essex Police aimed at tackling Anti-Social issues in high footfall areas such as Grays Town Centre and Tilbury has resulted in:

- 112 Public Space Protection Order Warning Notices for Anti-social drinking alcohol
- 80 Fixed Penalty Notices for further breaches of those Notices
- 2 suspects being arrested and restrictions placed on their movements and behaviour by the Magistrates' Court

3.13 In the Tilbury area, Enforcement Officers in partnership with Essex Police have undertaken a series of regular high visibility patrols in the High Street, schools and colleges' to offer reassurance to the community. These patrols named Operation Anglesea have resulted in 7 FPNs for littering and raised public reassurance.

3.14 The Councils proactive and robust approach to tackling fly tipping has resulted in 4 vehicles being seized and the vehicle owners subsequently fined. A number of waste carrier operations have been effectively conducted in partnership with Essex Police. A total of 87 vehicles transporting waste have been stopped and FPNs have been issued for various offences including littering, duty of care offences, failure to possess waste carriers licences, and no vehicle insurance.

3.15 The Environmental Enforcement team led on a media campaign using high visible posters affixed to council vehicles and in hot spot areas to raise awareness linked to fly tipping and the penalties and consequences for offenders. There has been a noticeable decrease in the areas targeted by this media communication campaign. There has also been an increase in residents willing to support and report anyone they see fly tipping across the borough. Overall, this campaign was well received and effective.

### 3.16 Unauthorised Traveller Encampments

3.16.1 Thurrock Council employs the services of Essex County Traveller Unit (ECTU) who investigate unauthorised encampments on the Council's behalf. The turnaround time for eviction, depends on courts availability to approve applications for summons and to evict, however the end-to-end process and turnaround time is normally between 7 to 9 days to evict.

3.16.2 2019/20 has seen a significant reduction in unauthorised encampments, due to the success of the target hardening undertaken, along with the Gypsy and Traveller media outlets reporting that Thurrock Council have been successful in obtaining an injunction. This illustrates the significant impact that an injunction can have on the travelling community. However, it should be noted that there would be occasions when Travellers will come into the area in certain circumstances, for example attendance of a funeral. The total number of encampments is showing a steady decrease:

- 111 - February 2017 to September 2018
- 60 - February 2018 to September 2019
- 12 - February 2019 to September 2020

3.16.3 ECTU only investigate unauthorised encampments on public land, which is not covered by the injunction. The injunction covers some private land, but if the injunction does not apply, Private land owners will be responsible for dealing with encampments on their land, by employing private bailiff companies or by liaising with the police to enforce evictions where appropriate. However, the Council always takes an interest in all unauthorised encampments on private land in our borough and provide guidance to private landowners on the options to address unauthorised encampments on their land.

3.16.4 Due to the significant number of unauthorised encampments across the borough, it was agreed that Thurrock Council would apply to the High Court for an injunction preventing further encampments. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019 the Council applied to the High Court requesting permission to serve the defendants the evidence via an alternative method such as a USB stick.

3.16.5 On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019, the Council successfully applied for an Interim injunction prohibiting unauthorised encampments across the borough. The interim order covers 163 locations across the borough and identifies 107 defendants. The Council were due to return to the High Court and apply for a full order, but due to Covid 19 and the additional evidence required in light of the London Borough of Bromley appeal, this was delayed but it is anticipated that the council will return to the High Court very soon. However, please note that the interim injunction does not have an expiry date and can still be used.

3.16.6 The Environment Enforcement Team proactively identified unlawful development of a traveller's site at Buckles Lane South Ockendon. Working in partnership with Planning Enforcement, the team have secured a temporary injunction on 137 acres of land; a full hearing is due to take place in December 2020 for a permanent injunction.

#### **4. Emergency Planning & Resilience**

4.1 Thurrock has more industrial processes and commercial storage facilities than other councils in Essex due to its strategic location. This poses challenges for the Emergency Planning & Resilience Team who are responsible for the drafting and exercising of plans for managing incidents at hazardous industrial sites, commonly known as COMAH sites. These sites are regulated by HSE and as a local authority; we have a legal obligation to adhere to the requirements under The Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 2015. The team have undertaken five full multi-agency exercises with sites in the area since April 2019 and have developed our response at Silver/Tactical level during COVID to include a virtual tactical cell; meaning that incidents can be managed at Silver/Tactical level with partners all using MS Teams.

4.2 The team continues to administer the Council's 24/7 emergency response service and in addition to the less serious incidents, have managed the Council's response to two 'major incidents', one significant business continuity incident, as well as other significant incidents, including;

- Operation Melrose (Vietnamese lorry deaths in October 2019)
- Evacuation of Collins House Care Home due to a major power failure on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019
- ICL major incident (COMAH site) in January 2020
- Burst water main in South Ockendon in June 2020
- Child death at Alexander Lake, Lakeside Shopping Centre in August 2020

4.3 We thank the emergency response partners, particularly Essex Police and Essex County Fire & Rescue for their support and collaborative approach to emergency planning and for their support in managing these incidents. I would also like to thank the voluntary agencies, particularly the Red Cross who provided an outstanding level of support to our partners and ourselves during our response to the tragic incident that led to the deaths of 39 Vietnamese individuals.

4.4 The Emergency Planning & Resilience Team are actively involved in the Essex Police led multi-agency 'Port Watch' project, which looks to address the learning points from Operation Melrose. Partners meet on a regular basis to share intelligence in relation to immigration criminality. The objectives of Port Watch are:

- To prevent incidents of organised immigration crime, crime, anti-social behaviour, modern slavery & human trafficking
- To identify perpetrators of such incidents
- To bring such perpetrators to justice
- To protect victims from such perpetrator
- To make communities in Ports safer

Activity by this group is also shared with other partners via the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) meetings.

4.5 The team have additionally taken over responsibility for business continuity planning for the Council, working with teams council wide to ensure Business Impact Analysis (BIA) is carried out and robust Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) are in place, enhancing our resilience and ability to continue delivering critical services in the event of a disruptive event.

## **5. Counter Fraud & Investigation**

5.1 The Counter Fraud & Investigation Team supports the Chief Finance Officer in discharging his statutory duty to prevent and detect fraud committed against the council's finances.

5.2 Since the service was formed it has been successful in protecting from fraud across our services, including housing fraud, and fraud in our grants and council tax schemes, recovering £5.5m from criminals and reinvested in to frontline services.

- 5.3 Government sponsorship was received to launch an enhanced service for Thurrock designed to bring advanced crime-fighting capabilities to protect us from developing fraud risks. Part of those enhancements was to also launch a new outward-facing function, known as the National Investigation Service, which supports the wider public sector in serious fraud issues.
- 5.4 The National Investigation Service has been extremely successful in detecting over £35m of fraud against the public sector across the country, bringing criminals to justice and disrupting organised crime.
- 5.5 We entered a national emergency this year, with financial support being awarded to our businesses, through the council, who were affected by the lockdown measures. Our Counter Fraud team worked closely with our Revenues team, who were administering the scheme, to prevent and detect fraud losses. That collaborative approach identified an organised criminal attack on the COVID grant scheme where £85k was lost due to sophisticated fraud. Within a short space of time, having the benefit of the national function hosted here in Thurrock, the criminals were arrested and the monies fully recovered.
- 5.6 Following the obvious success in combating serious organised fraud by our national function, the team have now been commissioned by the government to lead nationally on the response to serious organised crime for COVID-19 support schemes.
- 5.7 The Counter Fraud team is extremely productive in managing the risk from fraud in the council. This year for every pound spent on the service, it detected £3 in fraud.

#### Return on Investment Performance

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>Detected Fraud</b>	£1,622,604	£4,562,032	£1,179,987	£3,426,474	£3,578,285
<b>Service Budget</b>	£880,637	£909,556	£939,313	£945,876	£1,144,949
<b>Money Recovered</b>	(£701,418)	(£3,729,705)	(£889,097)	(£941,155)	(£205,334 <sup>1</sup> )

## **6. Housing Anti-Social Behaviour**

- 6.1 Thurrock Councils Housing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team deal with ASB where the person causing the problem is a council tenant or it affects a council tenant and where the ASB is any act that causes, or is likely to cause, alarm, harassment or distress to anyone living in a different household to the person responsible. Examples of ASB include:

<sup>1</sup> This figure represents the available assets which a court can order to be paid back by criminals to the council under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 or civil remedy, which is different to the amount of fraud that was proven at court. The period was affected by the courts closing due to COVID-19

- Noise nuisance
- Drug taking and dealing
- Threatening or rowdy behaviour
- Violence and disorder
- Vandalism

6.2 As a result of carrying out high visibility out of hour patrols targeting estates and hotspots, which are the subject of intelligence received from residents, local businesses and community partners the team have achieved the following outcomes from the 1st January 2019 to date:

• Community Protection Warnings	20
• Final warning letters issued	44
• Acceptable Behaviour Agreement	11
• Reassurance visits to vulnerable residents	104
• Notices of Possession Proceedings	4
• ASB Injunctions	4
• Demotion Order	3
• Closure Orders	6
• Evictions due to ASB	8

6.3 Private Housing promotes awareness of its regulatory and licensing function to estate agents, landlords, property owners and tenants.

6.4 Landlords must have a license if renting out a large House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and small HMO of 3 or 4 people who are not from 1 household under Additional Licensing. A licence is valid for 5 years. The council has licenced 84 HMOs in 2019/20 and 40 HMOs April to September 2020. Licensing in the private rented sector helps improve property conditions and management standards benefiting residents and neighbourhoods.

6.5 Private housing enforcement action prevents risks to public health and statutory nuisance. The Private Housing Team has increased enforcement measures within the Private Rented Sector to improve housing conditions and provide greater protection to HMO and single dwelling lets in 2019/20 in comparison to 2018/19.

<b>Enforcement Measure</b>	<b>2018/19 No.</b>	<b>2019/20 No.</b>	<b>2020/21 Apr-Sept</b>
Improvement Notice	17	36	13
Prohibition Order	8	3	3
Emergency Prohibition Order	0	0	0
Emergency Remedial Action	1	3	2
Environmental Protection Act S80	21	10	2
Hazard Awareness Notice	2	15	1

Suspended Prohibition Order	3	2	1
Suspended Improvement Notice	2	6	1
Building Act 1984/Public Health Act 1936 Drainage	4	8	2
Public Health Act 1936 Notice	4	3	3
Works In Default	6	10	1
Prosecutions	4	5	0
Civil Penalty Notice	0	15	3
Rent Repayment Order	1	0	0

6.6 Targeted visits and unannounced property inspections are carried out under the Private Housing Enforcement Policy for proactive investigations, such as:

- Suspected unlicensed properties
- Poorly managed private rented properties
- HMO properties subject to incidences of anti-social behaviour
- Properties with a low energy efficiency rating on their Energy Performance Certificate below an E rating
- Unregulated Care Homes
- Untidy gardens

6.7 The Private Sector Housing Team is exploring the business case for a Selective Licensing Scheme, covering certain parts of the borough. This would require all landlords of privately let properties to apply for a licence. Secretary of State Approval will be required for a scheme that covered more than 20% of the geographic area of the local authority area or would affect more than 20% of private rented sector in the area.

## 7. **CCTV Service**

7.1 The borough wide CCTV service has 600 cameras, spread over 40 locations on housing estates and open spaces including town centres. This provides residents with a sense of security and reassurance of feeling safer within their neighbourhood.

7.2 The council's Housing Enforcement CCTV service works in collaboration with Essex Police and internal departments sharing information and intelligence to prevent crime and deter anti-social behaviour.

7.3 Table 1 and 2 highlight the number of incidents captured on camera for Police and Council investigation. Evidence packs are the recordings and statements, which the CCTV operators produce for police and council enforcement officers.

April to March 2019/20

Team	CCTV Incidents	Evidential Packages Produced
<b>Police</b>	1415	375
<b>Council</b>	663	214

April to August 2020

Team	CCTV Incidents	Evidential Packages Produced
<b>Police</b>	369	146
<b>Council</b>	202	71

- 7.4 Cabinet approved a Public Identification CCTV policy on the 15 January 2020 for enforcement purposes and using images of criminal incidents in local publications and on the internet.
- 7.5 Council appeals for public help to identify persons of interest in local publications and on the internet was not needed over the last 6 months.
- 7.6 Enforcement Officers are identifying offenders by other investigative actions such as gathering information, establishing facts, analysing photographs, and evaluating evidence to track and apprehend those caught on camera committing criminal offences.
- 7.7 Some examples of how CCTV evidence has been used in the past year:
- CCTV evidence was provided to the Police regarding a prolific burglary offender caught on camera, which enabled a successful prosecution in Court, the outcome on sentencing is awaiting reports.
  - CCTV evidence was provided to the Police for an assault, threatening behaviour and Public Order offences in Grays Town Centre. The offender was sentenced to 4 weeks imprisonment and a banning order for three years from the Town Centre.
  - CCTV evidence was provided for a case of Criminal Damage against Council property in the High Rise flats at Tilbury. The offender was found guilty and ordered to pay £500 costs to the Council.
  - CCTV was used to identify, arrest and convict a tenant for criminal damage in the communal area George Tilbury House. The offender was seen kicking the glass door panels. Due to this conviction and other Anti – Social Behaviour (ASB) matters the ASB Team served the tenant with a mandatory possession under the Anti - Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
  - A visitor to Gooderham House was seen damaging the CCTV in the lift. The offender was subsequently identified and charged with criminal damage. This case will go before the courts soon. The ASB Team will

consider a proportionate response following the outcome of the court hearing.

- A female was assaulting another female as a result of argument over parking at Poole House. CCTV evidence captured the incident. The police are currently looking at the CCTV images and videos and will update the ASB Team for their input into this case.

## **8. Public Protection**

### **8.1 Licensing**

8.1.1 The Licensing Team continue to administer the Council's licensing functions and have worked throughout the year to ensure that licenced activities are as safe for residents as possible. This work has involved regular work with the Police, Fire Brigade, Ambulance service and other external agencies with an interest in preventing crime and promoting public safety to provide safe solutions for events and regular licenced activity in the area. The team remains at the forefront of our shared services initiative with Brentwood Council reducing the cost of this service and increasing its resilience. Having assumed responsibility for the administration of the street trading scheme in Thurrock, the team have made a positive start in clamping down on unlicensed traders with the successful prosecution of a trader that failed to apply or cease trading. A number of traders are now licensed who would have otherwise undermine legitimate traders and fixed businesses in the area.

8.1.2 The licensing regime for animals covering pet shops, boarding kennels and breeding activities has been overhauled by central government. This is giving rise to an increased demand for work from the team in this area and they have upskilled to meet these new requirements. This has seen an increased number of licensed premises, particularly around home boarding and puppy breeders, with a prosecution progressing through the courts for a home boarder that failed to licence. The team welcomes information about unlicensed breeders and boarders to be emailed to [licensing@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@thurrock.gov.uk).

### **8.2 Food Safety**

8.2.1 The Food Team have had a very busy year dealing with over 150 notifiable diseases including cases of Legionella and E-Coli 157. Work has included the approval of a new bacon factory within Thurrock, intervention at a cheese manufacturer in Thurrock where poor hygiene standards were giving rise to a risk of E-Coli infection, successful prosecution of a butcher for activity giving rise to a serious risk of fatal infections from their products. The team have served 29 Hygiene Improvement notices to protect residents and visitors from poor hygiene and disease during the year.

8.2.2 The team have issued 150 export certificates to allow for companies in Thurrock to export food to non-EU countries. This work is expected to increase following the UK's departure from the European Union and we are in the process of recruitment to provide staff for this activity. Certification and

inspection work on imported and exported food is also undertaken in Thurrock's ports. The Corporation of London's Port Health Teams undertake this dockside work in collaboration with the Food Team. This is particularly necessary when consignments move between port sites and surrounding facilities in Thurrock. The team works with the Corporation of London's officers to streamline as far as practical this process reducing friction at the ports and surrounding business parks. We are currently working on an arrangement to provide jurisdiction for port health officers in the new business park surrounding DP World in Coryton. This arrangement will simultaneously reduce costs for Thurrock and reduce bureaucracy for importer and exporters of food using Thurrock ports.

### 8.3 Trading Standards

8.3.1 Trading Standards team have continued during this year to combat crimes against consumers in Thurrock prioritising activity based on local and national intelligence focusing on doorstep crime, fair trading, intellectual property and mass marketing schemes. Over the last few years, the team have expanded to include the operation of the ports safety project, a nationally funded project that monitors and regulates the safety of products imported into the UK via the Ports at Coryton, Tilbury and Purfleet. Examples of recent seizures include fake hand sanitiser and electronic foot massagers that present the user with a risk of electrocution. This is an increasing area of work and the Government grant to fund this has increased over recent years. The UK departure from the EU will give rise to an increased demand for this work and the team are monitoring the situation nationally to identify any opportunities that exist for additional funding to continue and expand this work stream. The team were finalists in this year's APSE team of the year awards.

8.3.2 Trading Standards have been working with Essex Police to conduct underage sales test purchases of knives. Two operations were undertaken working in partnership. These test purchases have shown limited sales of knives to young people. Where sales have been made, follow up visits have taken place to premises to provide advice to the traders to prevent further sales. Further operations on underage sales are planned for the future.

8.3.3 Responsible Retailer packs have gone out to all the off licences in the area and will continue to go out to all businesses selling age restricted item. These provide advice for traders to prevent sales of alcohol to underage consumers.

### 8.4 Health and Safety

8.4.1 The Health and Safety team are responsible for the regulation of health and safety standards for workers in the majority of businesses in Thurrock. This year they have investigated over 10 accidents, 20 new requests for health & safety in licensable premises, 30 complaints and investigated potential legal failings against two companies for health and safety failures that lead to injuries to staff. In addition to formal enforcement, the team maintain expertise in health and safety matters and advise both external employers and the Council on health and safety issues that impact employees. The team have

used their knowledge to exploit opportunities to offer their expertise to others on a paid consultancy basis. This has so far yielded income from schools and is an area of work that the team hope to develop further.

## 8.5 Environmental Protection

8.5.1 The team continues to deal with a high demand for work on nuisance and pollution issues. From 01.04.20 – 16.11.20 the team received 2005 requests for service. 1083 of which were for Noise including amplified sound, barking dogs and unreasonable DIY. 72 complaints were made for bonfire nuisance, 109 for odours and 46 for rubbish accumulation at premises requiring intervention and public health legislation.

8.5.2 The teams drone service has expanded now working in contract with Basildon District Council to assist their Planning Enforcement evidence gathering and this is creating some income. Thurrock qualified remote pilots continue to train and develop their expertise in this heavily regulated industry and work closely with the CAA to ensure competencies are up to date in full compliance with the law. This service enables the council to continue to enhance its ability to undertake monitoring and evidence gathering in hard to reach locations, which assists officer investigations in taking appropriate legal action where necessary. There are a number of high profile sites in Thurrock due to be overflowed and aerial imagery collected in the near future. Formal consultations and requests for scientific / technical expertise in acoustics, air quality, contaminated land and pollution prevention control continue in high demand and even throughout the pandemic EP have routinely continued to supply this expertise to Thurrock Planning / Highways, external consultants and other government agencies.

## 9. Financial Information

Service area	Revised budget	Year to date actual	Forecast outturn	Budget variance
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Public Protection	1987	429	2030	43
Environmental Enforcement	(279)	232	(274)	nil
Community Safety Partnership	154	82	154	nil
Housing Anti-Social Behaviour	464	95	440	(24)
Counter Fraud & Investigation	341	402	328	(13)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,667</b>	<b>1,240</b>	<b>2,678</b>	<b>11</b>

Note: These figures are as at period 3 and exclude loss of income due to COVID-19. The forecast overspend in Public Protection is due to agency staff cost.

## Community Safety Partnership Funding

2019/20:

<b>Funding stream</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Grant	£24,976	All allocated to CSP priorities
Thurrock Council	£18,347 £17,000	All allocated to CSP priorities For the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA)
Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Funding through PFCC	£123,000	
Cabinet funding	£1,000,000	3 years to fund additional Police and ASB

2020/21:

<b>Funding stream</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Grant	£24,976	All allocated to CSP priorities
Thurrock Council	£18,347 £17,000	All allocated to CSP priorities For the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA)
Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Funding through PFCC	£57,000	