

Report to the Council

Subject: Environment Portfolio

Date: 20 February 2014

Portfolio Holder: Councillor W Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Waste Management

The procurement of the waste contract remains on schedule, with the next round of Competitive Dialogue now underway. It had been intended to reduce the bidders to three at this stage, but due to the closeness of the bids Cabinet agreed, at its meeting on the 3rd, to take four contractors through into this final stage. Once this round of dialogue is completed we are effectively back in the restricted procurement process where further negotiation is not allowed. Final tenders are due to be received at the end of the first week in April.

Discussions with the County Council in respect of Inter Authority Agreement funding have continued under the auspices of an officer group chaired by the Chief Executive of Castle Point Borough Council. Whilst this group is working, the County has agreed in the interim to withdraw its intended funding reductions for 2014/15. This is good news in the short term but we still need to await the outcome of discussions before we can be certain of the financial consequences.

Flooding

Members will appreciate that few good news stories arise from the appalling weather we have recently endured. However, I am delighted to have this opportunity to convey the gratitude of the Hillmans Cottages Management Company and residents for the work the Council's staff - Susan Stranders, Lee Savill and Trevor Baker - and our contractors, Hugh Pearl Land Drainage, undertook in preventing their homes from flooding.

The River Roding at Abridge peaked at its highest recorded level of 2.59 metres on Saturday 1st February. Nevertheless, flooding of nearby properties was averted thanks to the hard work of the Council's staff and contractors, who built a sand bag wall and deployed high-capacity pumps in time to prevent a disaster, and then monitored the situation throughout the weekend. I'm delighted to add my appreciation of their efforts to those of the residents.

Environmental Health & Neighbourhoods (from 29 Nov 2013)

Fly-tipping

A prosecution for fly-tipping at Hornbeam Close, Buckhurst Hill, resulted in fines and costs of £1431. Mr. Benjamin Miller, of The Croft, Chingford, was fined £200 and ordered to pay the Council's prosecution costs of £1211, which included clear up costs of £132, after pleading guilty in Chelmsford Magistrates Court on 3rd December 2013 to an offence of fly tipping waste (which included a saw and other potentially dangerous items) adjacent to a garage area in Hornbeam Close, Buckhurst Hill. He was also ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £20.

Similarly, Carly Titelbaum, was fined £80 and ordered to pay a contribution towards the Council's prosecution costs of £50 together with a Victim Surcharge of £20 after pleading guilty to two offences in relation to depositing household waste on land at the side of the shops in Upshire, Waltham Abbey.

Waste – duty of care

Officers have started a series of visits to commercial premises to check on compliance with the companies waste duty of care, with the intention of ensuring waste is stored and disposed of correctly to minimise the chance of it getting into the hands of rogue traders and being fly-tipped. The intention is to continue with more checks throughout 2014/15.

In line with this theme, the Environment & Neighbourhoods team recently included a page in the Council's Environmental booklet for 2014, explaining how residents can help prevent fly-tipping by complying with their household duty of care and ensuring that their waste is only given to authorised people.

Litter

The Cleaner Essex Group met on 29 January regarding the forthcoming county wide litter campaign. The campaign was initially intended to start in early April, however, due to a purdah period before the May elections, the amount of outstanding work and general preference from the Group for the campaign to start later in the year, a campaign start date has now been provisionally set for the week of 2-6 June 2014, with Friday 6 June being set as the primary day.

A "Love Essex" logo (shown on the attached example artwork) has now been adopted. This logo will be used on all campaign material, but local authorities can also add their own logo to posters etc. that they produce. All the local authorities in Essex are contributing financially towards adverts across the county, for instance at bus stops and petrol stations. The financial contribution made by each authority will be spent in that authority's district. McDonalds franchisees across Essex will also be participating, and the franchisee for the Thornwood McDonalds is keen to work with the Council (the McDonalds in Waltham Abbey is not part of the Essex group). The Environment & Neighbourhoods team will be targeting litter enforcement and education across the district and utilising existing resources to advertise the message that littering is socially unacceptable and could also result in fines and prosecution.