

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 28 July 2015

**Subject:** Environment

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor W Breare-Hall

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## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **Waste Management**

At the time of writing, I can report that the performance of the Council's waste and recycling contractor, Biffa Municipal, continues to improve. However, whilst the number of missed collections and customer complaints has fallen, I am not yet satisfied that the service is operating to the required standard. Accordingly, I continue to put pressure on senior Biffa management, specifically the Managing Director and the Commercial Director, to improve their performance further. I will provide Members with a verbal update on the latest position at the Council meeting.

## **Essex Waste Partnership**

Good progress has been made by the Partnership in achieving the targets of the Essex Waste Strategy. A major piece of infrastructure work under the Strategy is the construction of the Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) plant in Basildon. This plant will deal with all Essex's residual waste. The plant is now in the commissioning phase and, once fully operational, will start to receive residual waste from Epping Forest. All the residual waste received at the plant will be processed, with the output being Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF) that can be used to produce energy.

I have authorised officers to assist the Partnership in reviewing commercial waste arrangements. The purpose of this is to assess the potential for the expansion of the commercial waste collection and disposal service. I am particularly keen to establish if this could result in a more cost effective service for our small retailers and businesses, particularly in the rural parts of the District.

## **Essex Litter campaign**

The Environment and Neighbourhoods team are planning to participate in a renewed Essex wide litter campaign in August/September using similar images/message to the last campaign "Bin your litter. It's a pretty quick, cool, smart, classy thing to do". There are four images with models representing the "pretty, classy, cool and smart" message. Environment and Neighbourhoods officers will be arranging litter enforcement patrols as part of the campaign.

## **Fly tipping**

Evidence gathered by the Council's Environment and Neighbourhood team, assisted by CCTV evidence provided by colleagues in the Community Safety team, led to a prosecution

in Chelmsford Magistrates Court on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015. £3,567 clearance costs and a contribution towards the prosecution costs of £85 were awarded to the Council after Mr. John Edward Newman, of Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey, pleaded guilty to multiple fly-tipping offences in a garage area in Pyrles Lane, Loughton, between 6<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014. Mr Newman was also given a 26 week prison sentence, suspended for one year with a six month curfew between the hours of 10.00pm and 8.00am.

In addition, the Magistrates made a Criminal Behaviour Order on conviction. For a period of five years Mr Newman is prohibited from advertising any waste clearance services and loading or carrying any waste in a vehicle unless he obtains a waste carriers licence or is employed by a licensed company. He was also banned from entering the garage area in Pyrles Lane.

The prosecution was the culmination of many months of thorough investigation work and a number of formal interviews. Several householders were also cautioned for failing to carry out reasonable checks to ensure that they gave their waste to an authorised person, and a builder was prosecuted for failing his waste duty of care.

Fly-tipping in the Pyrles Lane garage area has now ceased.

### **Air Quality/Pollution**

An Abatement Notice has been served on the wood chipping yard in Nazeing following a serious dust nuisance. The Environment Agency has not taken any action regarding permits for the activities on the site.

A permit has been issued to Hoppings Softwood Products following completion of considerable works required by EFDC to prevent the run-off of chemicals into the forest. Areas of the site have been covered and barriers have been created to prevent preserving chemicals from escaping.

### **Flooding and Water**

Without wishing to tempt Fate, the weather has, so far, been generally kind, with flooding incidents few and far between. However, drainage issues appear to be on the increase, with officers spending more than the average amount of time dealing with investigations, and the consequences of what is discovered. The number of planning applications requiring drainage comments has risen slightly, but the professional working relationships built up with some of the commonly used consultants have ensured that the team achieve good outcomes for the sites concerned.

Thames Water's attendance in April at the final Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Panel, which was well received by officers and Members at the time, has so far failed to result in any tangible increase in performance or improvement in working relationships on the ground. However, the meeting did galvanise Thames Water into re-starting a liaison group with EFDC and other councils in the north-east Thames area. The first meeting is due in August 2015.

### **Health and Safety at Work**

Following investigations into injuries caused by Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) treatments, and a prosecution brought by this authority against Saks Beauty Treatments, Essex Health and Safety Liaison Group have been investigating the possibility of district councils taking on the licensing function for such treatments. This is currently the responsibility of Essex County

Council. However, progress has been stalled due to the unwillingness of Castle Point District Council to take on the function.

The project to monitor carbon monoxide emissions from indoor charcoal cooking is almost complete. Results so far show that businesses within the EFDC area are carrying out this cooking safely, and no formal action has been required, with the restaurants concerned being receptive to the advice given.

### **Food Safety**

At the end of April, officers attended a seminar organised by the Essex Food Liaison Group about the amount of salt and sugar added to takeaway food. Letters have been sent to qualifying takeaways within the EFDC area introducing the "Tuck in" Project, funded by Essex County Council, which aims to reduce the amount of salt and sugar used.

### **Noise nuisance**

On 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015, Ms Natasha Thompson, of 22 Longcroft Rise, Loughton, was found guilty of breaching a noise abatement notice and fined £660 in Chelmsford Magistrates Court. She was also ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £66 and a contribution towards the Council's prosecution costs of £200.

A noise abatement notice was served on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014 that required her to limit the volume of music and amplified sound emanating from 22 Longcroft Rise to a level that would not cause a statutory nuisance to the occupiers of noise sensitive premises. The breach occurred on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

### **Pests**

The number of pest complaints is at a higher level than in previous years, with some residents claiming that missed refuse collections are attracting rats. However, subsequent investigations show little evidence of increased activity in most areas.