

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 26 April 2016

Subject: Environment

Portfolio Holder: Councillor W Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Environment & Neighbourhoods

Fly-tipping incidents continue to be a problem across the district, with a number of areas targeted by repeat offenders. This can be particularly difficult to investigate effectively in rural areas where there are no witnesses and CCTV options are limited. However, Environment & Neighbourhood Officers continue to follow up any evidence contained in waste deposits and have a number of cases against suspected multiple offenders pending prosecution proceedings.

Officers are also working closely with colleagues in Safer Communities and using new CCTV equipment in rural hotspots.

The difficulties in catching and prosecuting fly-tipping offenders has prompted officers to look at developing a campaign to try and reduce the amount of waste that gets into the hands of rogue traders who fly-tip for profit. Businesses and households all have a "duty of care" to ensure their waste is handed to an authorised person. Officers have suggested that the more complicated waste duty of care law is promoted as "Check, Challenge and Record" whenever a household or business transfers their waste to somebody else. The idea is being developed as a campaign through the Cleaner Essex Group.

Officers have recently been out on litter and dog fouling patrols in response to complaints about deposits around Limes Farm, Chigwell. Although Officers are ready to witness incidents and issue incidents tickets, for fixed penalty notices or prosecution proceedings, the majority of time is spent making sure that dog walkers are aware of the law and have bags ready to dispose of waste correctly. Potential litter offenders are also made aware of the possible fine for littering (£75 fixed penalty notice, £2500 maximum fine) and in some cases provided with a cigarette butt box before they have an opportunity to litter.

Drainage

The Technical Services Group of the Neighbourhoods Directorate has been successful in securing a new tractor and accessories through the Invest to Save Initiative. The equipment will be operated by Grounds Maintenance staff and used for both routine maintenance of Council owned land and where outside contractors were previously engaged, and can also be used in emergency situations. Sites include Bobbingworth Nature Reserve, the Council Flood Storage Area and other open spaces. The acquisition of the equipment has increased the capacity to undertake additional internal and external work and affords the possibility of generating income for the Council.

Grounds Maintenance

With the winter work programme fully completed and the new mowing season upon us, the Grounds Maintenance gardening teams are now busy cutting the numerous Council owned verges and open spaces across the district. With delivery of the specialist mowing machinery acquired through the Invest to Save initiative, staff are now being trained to operate the equipment in readiness to take on the maintenance of the Council's flood storage sites.

The whole of the Grounds Service will soon be relocated to the new depot being constructed at Oakwood Hill in order to make way for the redevelopment of the Langston Road depot. With the new depot visibly nearing completion the team are eagerly preparing for the transition.

Waste Management

I'm delighted to report that the number of missed collections and customer complaints has continued to fall. To ensure this improvement is maintained, work on training drivers and operatives, obtaining correct information for door entry systems, and enhancing internal communication amongst Biffa 's staff is ongoing.

Street cleansing has continued to improve and the use of the replacement equipment is having a positive effect. We are currently reviewing the computer generated schedules for some areas, as they result in considerable non-productive time, and are developing schedules that will move most of the mobile street cleansing crews into a single area instead of being scattered across the district. This has a number of benefits:

- Less driving time for supervisors and more time instructing operatives.
- Ability to cover areas where there are operational issues.
- Ability to undertake deep cleaning on areas.
- Ensures the linkup between work returns and actual completed work at the daily debriefing.

On the ground co-operation has continued which has led to the faster resolution of issues and the proactive dealing with service quality matters before the public are affected by them.

The effects of the imminent move from the Langston Road depot are still being addressed, especially the storage of tyres, gas bottles, car batteries, liquids, fridges and freezers. Although alternative options are being considered, as of yet no replacement storage space exists and the costs of directly collecting these items from a fly tip or household will, consequently, increase.

Clean for the Queen

On Friday 4 March I was joined by the Leader, Biffa representatives and Council waste management staff for a 'Clean for the Queen' litter pick in Rectory Lane, Loughton. We collected a significant amount of waste for disposal and recycling, including a rather soggy and overgrown mattress.

Clean for The Queen is a campaign to clear up Britain in time for Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday, which will be officially celebrated in June 2016. Litter pick groups were also organised in Matching, Ongar, Theydon Mount and Willingale as well as by residents groups from Oakwood Hill in Loughton and Ninefields in Waltham Abbey.