

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 1 November 2016

**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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## **Flooding**

The Engineering, Drainage & Water Team has applied for a grant available from ECC's Community Flood Improvement Fund -- <http://flood.essex.gov.uk/get-a-flood-grant/community-flood-improvement-fund/>. The grant application refers to a site in High Beach where the configuration of an existing headwall causes issues during heavy rainfall events and it is considered that improvement to the structure will reduce the likelihood of flooding occurring. The Fund is available to town and parish councils, district and boroughs, community groups etc. ECC are currently evaluating bids from across the county to see what offers the best value with the outcomes expected to be announced shortly. The fund is likely to continue for a number of years and hence bids are encouraged, with Officers from the Engineering, Drainage & Water Team happy to assist potential bidders with the application process, not to mention providing technical advice on what may offer the best engineering solutions to their issues.

Officers of the Engineering Drainage & Water Team, along with their consultant and ECC, recently presented to the Neighbourhoods Select Committee an overview of the Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) for Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell. The plan, which officers have worked with the consultant to produce, identifies the main risks of flooding from surface water in the plan area and complements innovative work undertaken by the team a number of years ago. Members were appraised of the purpose of the plan and its uses going forward, especially in respect of the emerging Local Plan, which the SWMP will link to and form part of the Evidence Base. Further studies for Critical Drainage Areas identified in the SWMP will be undertaken in the future. In the meantime, it was stressed that Officers of the EDW Team would continue to provide robust and up-to-date technical advice for new development proposals across the district ensuring that flood risk is managed and reduced through new development.

## **Unauthorised caravan encampments**

A group of eight traveller caravans have moved onto EFDC land off Jessel Drive in Loughton, after previously occupying land owned by Loughton Town Council, adjacent to Rectory Lane. Before this the same group occupied private land in Waltham Abbey and EFDC land off Old Shire Lane in Waltham Abbey. Officers have obtained a court hearing date for Friday 14 October 2016 for possession of the land. There is a risk that the group will seek to camp on other land in the near vicinity. Officers will consider if further legal action can be taken if the group continue to camp illegally in the area.

## **JSJ Wood Recycling Ltd, Hoe Lane, Nazeing**

The fire on the site was successfully extinguished by the fire service and all wood processing activities on the site have currently ceased. The most recent occupier appears to have vacated the site. Investigations are underway in tandem with the Environment Agency to try and confirm the owner's intentions for the site.

Officers are currently working on collating evidence to consider prosecution proceedings for a breach of the dust notice and other waste offences. The Environment Agency (EA) is leading on potential waste offence prosecutions based on evidence obtained by EFDC officers. The EA has already commenced proceedings regarding previous alleged waste offences.

## **Joint Working with Essex Trading Standards**

The Public Health Team of EFDC joined Essex Trading Standards (ETS) on a joint visit to a food storage warehouse, 5 Star Foods International Ltd., in Stapleford Abbots. ETS had received information via the Food Standards Agency that a 'crushed pepper' product sold by the company contained 'ochratoxin A', which was above permitted levels. Ochratoxin A is produced by moulds and has the potential to affect human health. Officers from EFDC found that despite a pest control contract being in place the warehouse had a significant rodent problem and that some rice products contained active grain weevils. Significant amounts of food beyond the best before date was also onsite. Officers also found a small spice and rice packing operation onsite. Contaminated and out of date food is being disposed of at the operators cost. ETS and Environmental Health officers took further food items for sampling and analysis. The officers served three hygiene improvement notices.

## **Formal caution for failing to report an accident**

A formal caution for failing to report a workplace accident was issued to M V Milk Ltd., of Stapleford Abbots. The accident occurred in 2014 and only came to light when the injured employee, who suffered a fractured ankle, contacted the Public Health Team in 2016. Officers were unaware of the business and visited and found a large office employing up to 10 people at the back of a residential property. Buildings had been erected without planning permission and there was no record of the company with business rates. Both relevant departments at EFDC are following up on these issues. Since the accident the company have employed external health and safety consultants and officers were satisfied with current arrangements. There was insufficient evidence to pursue the company for the accident and the company admitted failing to report despite their company policies at the time of the accident stating they would report. The company director accepted a formal caution on behalf of the company.

## **Waste Management**

With the ECC Household Waste & Recycling Centres no longer accepting DIY and builders' waste, the Waste Management Team will be monitoring the location of the sites and surrounding areas to see if there is an increase in fly tipping of this type of material.

Arrangements have been made with Biffa locally to provide an emergency trade waste service to businesses or householders who have a problem with the disposal of DIY waste that in the past would have gone to the Household Waste and Recycling Centres.

The first cleansing using the new gum machine has been successfully completed. To ensure continuity of service Biffa has purchased a second machine to cover servicing and repairs when necessary.

The winners of the 'Clean for the Queen Campaign' poster competition came to an awards ceremony at the Civic Offices on the 6th October. The two winners, Mollie Dunn age 6 from Coopersale Hall School (winner of the infants school category), and Ava Griffith age 9 from Epping Primary School (winner of the junior school category) came to be given their prizes by the Chairman of the Council, with their parents and school teachers. Work is now taking place turning the winning designs into publicity livery for the sides of the waste vehicles.

As a part of joint working with Biffa, the Waste Management team are now carrying out joint Health & Safety inspections on Biffa's operations to further increase the focus on safe working practices.

We now have our first Waste Awareness Officer in post as a part of the DCLG funding bid to increase recycling and reduce contamination in flats. A full survey of all flats will take place to update records on the types of collection taking place, the containers used, space at the flat locations and access and egress issues. Once this is complete we will be carrying out waste analysis at some flats to ascertain the level of recycling materials in the waste stream and the contamination in the recycling stream.

### **Fly-tipping**

Environment & Neighbourhood Officers recently interviewed a fly-tipping suspect who was arrested by the police after he failed to attend a formal interview under caution. Multiple vehicles registered to the suspect have been caught on CCTV being used to fly-tip waste in a remote rural location. The suspect appears to have obtained waste removal work through a Facebook account that has subsequently been removed. Investigations are ongoing.

Officers have issued the first Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to an alleged fly-tipping offender since this new penalty notice for fly-tipping offences was introduced earlier this year. A default level of £200 has been set by central government, with no reduction for early payment. Officers will consider offering a FPN as an alternative to prosecution proceedings for less significant fly-tipping incidents that appear to be a one off event. Normally a FPN for fly-tipping will only be offered if the alleged offender has been interviewed and admitted the offence.