

Report to the Council

Subject: Environment Portfolio

Date: 31 July 2012

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Will Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Waste Management

The County Council has now published the audited data for recycling performance for 2011/12. Our performance for 2011/12 was 59.86% exceeding our target of 58%. However, our target for 2012/13 is 60%, which means that we must continue to work hard to maintain and improve our recycling performance through a range of initiatives including:

- continued introduction of bespoke recycling systems in flats and communal buildings
- recycling of street cleansing arisings
- educative programmes to ensure resident awareness of the importance of recycling remains high

I chaired my first meeting of the Waste Management Partnership Board at the beginning of the month when we discussed a range of issues including those referred to above and a recently completed audit of the waste found in residual bins, the results of which will be important in guiding how we approach our educative programmes in the future.

At Cabinet on 11 July we noted the recent changes in the level of fixed penalty notice (FPN) for offences relating to household waste receptacles and resolved to adopt the Government default level of £60.00, reduced to £40.00 if paid early. It is worthy of note that we have only issued 10 such FPNs compared to nearly 50 in relation to fly-tipping and associated offences. We shall continue our approach of assisting and guiding residents who do not recycle or handle their household waste properly, reserving the use of FPNs for the most intransigent.

We are continuing our attempt to attract funding from Government towards the introduction of a food waste collection in flats. This proving to be a lengthy and complex process, the outcome of which remains uncertain.

Environmental Health & Neighbourhoods

In the first quarter of 2011/12 the Environment & Neighbourhoods Officers (ENOs) team carried out routine litter and dog fouling patrols in High Road, Loughton,

Queens Road, Buckhurst Hill, Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, High Street, Epping and Roding Recreation Park in Loughton/Buckhurst Hill.

Five fixed penalty notices have subsequently been offered for littering offences, three have been paid, two at a discounted rate of £50 and one at the full penalty fee of £75. (1 FPN was cancelled and reissued). One FPN was unpaid and the case is due to be passed to Legal to instigate prosecution proceedings.

Officers noted that there appeared to be a change in behaviour since they started patrolling in 2011/12, with clearly more litter being placed in bins. In part this appears to be due to members of the public being more aware of uniformed officers targeting littering offences, but there appeared to be a general improvement in the use of litter bins. On the theme, the ENO team participated in the annual Crucial Crew Event, educating all year six EFDC school children in private, state and home schooling, running sessions on littering and dog fouling.

As well as the programmed work, the ENO team have been as busy as usual at this time of year with noise and other nuisance complaints. The recommencement of the Epping to Ongar Railway (EOR) in mid-April with steam and diesel trains operating has caused a considerable number of complaints, particularly from residents living close to the stations at Ongar and North Weald. ENOs have met with the owner and manager of the site and raised various concerns predominately in relation to noise and air pollution. A positive response has been received from EOR but it remains to be seen if they are able to make any significant changes and manage the operation of the EOR without bringing them into conflict with some residents. There has subsequently been a drop in the level of complaint, after the initial busy opening weekend, with some reports that there has been an improvement in the level of disturbance, but complaints still persist. The ENO team is currently seeking clarification on the legal position of pursuing formal action before liaising with EOR and investigating the complaints further.

At the start of the quarter Members of the Cabinet agreed to support the implementation of Dog Control Orders (DCOs) subject to a wider consultation and consideration of any comments that are received. The final consultation documents are currently being drafted. Subject to finalising the consultation documents and arranging for the consultation to be on our website the consultation should commence before the end of July, for a period of two months. The possibility of introducing DCOs was initially raised by the Corporation of London with regard to public land in their control. Members decided that consultation be undertaken on the introduction of Dog Control Orders in respect of:

- (a) the fouling of land by dogs and removal of dog faeces;
- (b) the putting, and keeping a dog on the lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer; and
- (c) limiting the number of dogs which a person may take onto any public land to four.

The ENO team continue to spend a considerable amount of time investigating fly-tipping offences. In May, three fly-tippers were successfully prosecuted resulting in fines of £165, £500 and a six month community order, with a two month curfew between 8pm and 6am. Costs were awarded to the Council totalling over £2,200. The ENO team currently have two cases pending prosecution, where the defendants have elected to go to Crown Court rather than be heard in the Magistrates Court.