

## ***Report to the Council***

**Subject: Environment**

**Date: 31 July 2012**

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

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**Recommending:**

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

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### **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%. Whilst this is excellent news, our target for 2012/13 is 60% so there is no room for complacency if we are to maintain and improve our recycling performance. We intend to do this through a range of initiatives including:

- the continued introduction of bespoke recycling systems in flats and communal buildings
- recycling of street cleansing arisings
- educational programmes to ensure residents are aware of the importance of recycling

At the start of the month I chaired my first meeting of the Waste Management Partnership Board where 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 this audit will be important in guiding how we approach our educational programmes.

At Cabinet on 23 July we noted the recent national 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 worth noting that, since February 2010, we have issued just 10 such FPNs, compared to nearly 50 in relation to fly-tipping and associated waste. We will 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 is proving to be a lengthy and complex process, the outcome of which remains uncertain.

## **Environmental Health & Neighbourhoods**

Ratings for hygiene standards in food businesses within the district can now be found on the Food Standards Agency website, along with those from more than 300 other local authorities, as part of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The ratings enable consumers to check the hygiene standards at the business at the time of the last inspection by the authority's Public Health Team, with scores ranging from 0, meaning urgent improvement is required, to 5, where hygiene standards are very good. All businesses that fall in the scheme are given a window sticker showing their rating but there is currently no requirement to display this. It is, however, reasonable to assume that businesses securing a high rating will wish to advertise this to their customers.

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 issued for littering offences; three have been paid, two at a discounted rate of £50 and one at the full penalty fee of £75. One FPN was cancelled and reissued and one remains unpaid. The latter case is due to be passed to Legal for them to instigate prosecution proceedings.

Officers noted that there appeared to be a change in behaviour since they started patrolling in 2011/12, with 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 same theme, the ENO team participated in the annual Crucial Crew Event, running sessions on littering and dog fouling for all year six EFDC school children in private, state and home schooling.

As well as the programmed work, the ENO team have been busy with noise and other nuisance complaints. The recommencement of the Epping to Ongar Railway (EOR) in mid-April with steam and diesel trains 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. Whilst there has subsequently been a drop in the number of complaints they do still persist so 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) 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.

### **Flooding**

The very heavy rain experienced in April, May, June and early July kept the Engineering, Drainage and Water team very busy. April was the wettest month on record since 1961 for the Roding (North London) and since 1920 for the Lower Lee. This caused river flows to rise dramatically during the third week of the month. Unfortunately, this resulted in significant internal flooding to eight properties in Ongar Road, Abridge. The very heavy rain also resulted in flash flooding in a number of locations across the district.

In the months that followed, the significant rainfall created an additional problem to that of rising/overflowing river and drainage ditches. The rain caused a lot of surface water run-off to flow from the land and onto the roads, which overflowing drains were unable to carry away. As one of the few authorities in Essex to have its own land drainage team, this Council worked hard to help residents avoid flooding, and to cope with it if it occurred.

### **Depot relocation**

Given the impact the existence, or otherwise, of a Council owned depot will have on the next waste management contract, identifying an alternative depot site to replace that which will be lost through the proposed redevelopment of the Langston Road site remains a priority. Work therefore continues on this and I will report further as and when there is further news on the matter.