

Report to the Council

Subject: Environment Portfolio

Date: 23 April 2013

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Will Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Waste Management

In my last report to Council I mentioned the establishment of a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group, whose role would be to assist me and officers in formulating the next waste management contract. I am pleased to say that the Group has now had its initial meeting, with all political groups and non affiliated members represented. At that first meeting we completed the very important task of agreeing the brief for the consultants who will be appointed to advise the Council. The procurement exercise for those consultants is now well underway, with the tender documents having been issued and due for return on 24 April. I have also published a Portfolio Holder decision recommending that the Members of the Advisory Group also undertake the interviewing of the consultants selected through the tendering exercise. Despite the new contract not commencing until November 2014, the time frame for the procurement exercise is extremely challenging.

In my last report I also made mention of a trial, to be carried out by Sita, in respect of the recycling of some street cleansing arisings. I am pleased to be able to inform Members that, at the last meeting of the Waste Management Partnership Board, it was reported that the trial was going well, and I hope, after a final consideration of the trial outcome, to be able to extend the service across a wider area of the district.

As Members will be well aware, chewing gum stains have blighted our high streets and pavements for a long time. I am, therefore, pleased to announce the commencement of a gum cleaning service by Sita. A high pressure gum stain cleaning kit has been purchased and Sita crews are currently being trained in its use. Initially the kit will be used to cleanse the worst areas in the district. Members will be pleased to note that this service is being provided from within existing budgets.

Environmental Health & Neighbourhoods

Prompted by evidence detailing alarm, harassment and distress obtained from residents by an Environment & Neighbourhood Officer, the police prosecuted Mr. D. Bicker of 5 Clifton Road, Loughton, for breaching an existing anti-social behaviour order on six occasions. Mr. Bicker was arrested on 25 February 2013 and subsequently sentenced to 18 weeks in prison. Mr. Bicker is also subject to noise abatement notices to control shouting and music.

Evidence gathered by the Council's Environment & Neighbourhood Team led to a prosecution in Chelmsford Magistrates Court on 20 March 2013. Mr. Zeshan Ali of Hillside Gardens, Walthamstow, pleaded guilty to fly-tipping waste (about five recycling bags) in Luxborough Lane, Chigwell. He was fined a total of £75 and ordered to pay £200 towards the Council's prosecution costs.

Fly tipping around communal waste bins at Oakley Court, Loughton, led to Miss Nyree Hilton being fined in Chelmsford Magistrates Court on 20 March 2013. Miss Hilton failed to reply to a formal request made under Section 108 of the Environment Act 1995 for her to answer questions in relation the incident. She told the Magistrates that she had not replied to the request for information as she had been threatened against doing so by the boyfriend of the person who had deposited the waste. The Magistrates felt that Miss Hilton could have answered some of the questions and given reasons for not answering others. Having heard all the evidence and giving Miss Hilton credit for her guilty plea, and taking into account her financial circumstances, they fined Miss Hilton £25 and ordered her to pay a contribution towards the Council's costs of £25.

The Environment & Neighbourhood Team have been increasing their use of legal powers to require answers from people or companies involved in fly-tipping incidents. It is an offence to fail to reply to, or to provide false information to, an authorised officer. The answers provided cannot be used against the person providing the answer, but information obtained can be used for further investigations.

The Team have recently published articles in the Council's Forester magazine and Housing News to try and encourage residents and local businesses to store and dispose of their waste correctly, to comply with their duty of care and avoid waste getting into the hands of potential fly-tippers.

Land Drainage/Flooding/ Land and Water Quality

The Engineering, Drainage and Water Team are actively trying to resolve some of the flooding incidents that have occurred over the past few months. The Team continues to liaise with Thames Water and ECC Highways to resolve some of the outstanding problems.

A contaminated land site investigation, under the Environment Protection Act 1990, has been carried out on the Hill Farm (former landfill) site in Chigwell. The first round of intrusive works has been completed and results will have to be assessed before it is known whether any further works are required.

There has been another successful prosecution for breach of the Council's Land Drainage Byelaws, and the Council's four year contract for Works and Maintenance of Watercourses and Related Assets has been awarded, following competitive tender, to a local company; Hugh Pearl of Bobbingworth.