

Environmental Health Service Update Report

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Purpose of the Report

To provide members with a brief update of the work of the Environmental Health Service in the last twelve months and to look forward to future challenges. Alasdair Bell, Environmental Health Manager will attend the meeting to give a presentation and answer any questions.

Recommendation

That Members note the report.

Public Interest

The Environmental Health Service is a frontline service committed to protecting public health and safeguarding the environment. The majority of work undertaken by the service is required by law with very little discretionary work. The Environmental Health Service Plan that outlines the work of the service along with key service standards and the service action plan can be found on the council website at:

http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/569271/service_plan_eh_15-16.pdf

Report

The work of the service continues to go well with staff dealing with a wide variety of matters including routine inspections and enforcement activity. Pressures on the Council's budget mean that since the last report further budget savings have had to be found which has reduced the ability of the team to do much beyond the statutory minimum requirements.

Food and Safety Team

The Food & Safety Team both enforces legislation and provides advice and assistance to food and other businesses. The main emphasis of the team is to contribute to the success of the local economy by helping food businesses avoid problems of food poisoning etc. and the severe economic consequences that can result. The food safety element of the work of the team includes the approval and audit of food manufacturers, food sampling, premises inspections, the investigation of food complaints and food poisoning as well as responding to national food alerts. The health and safety element includes inspection, advice, complaint and accident investigation. In Area West in the last 12 months 329 food inspections have been carried out, 84 cases of suspected food poisoning have been investigated and 24 accidents reported/investigated. Much of the work carried out is routine 'behind the scenes' and the public is generally unaware of what is going on until something significant happens such as a major food poisoning outbreak. Key achievements to note;

- The continued roll out of the National Food Hygiene Rating scheme ('scores on the doors'). This is a national scheme whereby all food catering businesses are given scores dependant on their food hygiene and management practices.
- All planned interventions and complaints successfully dealt with
- National food safety Week 2015 supported

- Changes resulting from the free school meals initiative dealt with.
- The rollout of the turkey 'pop up' thermometer scheme at Christmas which generated much positive publicity for the council.
- Development of the Better Business for All (BBfA) project.
- Delivery of business information covering new food Information/ allergen regs.
- Ongoing management of 'Flexible Warranting' scheme to allow cross boundary working throughout Somerset
- Programme of advice and guidance on Legionella and asbestos control delivered to local businesses as part of the Health & Safety Action Plan.
- Maintaining a multi-agency Safety Advisory Group(SAG) for events being held in South Somerset

Environmental Protection Team

The EP Team deals with pollution control and environmental monitoring as well as the enforcement of environmental legislation. The Team checks local air quality and investigates a range of complaints about nuisance, in particular noise and smoke. The Team issues permits and inspects premises under the Pollution Prevention and Control regime (PPC). The Team also undertakes private water supply sampling, contaminated land assessment and the investigation of private drainage complaints as well as acting as a statutory consultee on planning and licensing applications. The delivery of the Pest Control service and public health burials are also part of the service provided. The Streetscene enforcement team is now part of the EP Team and deals with a range of issues including dog control and fly tipping. During the past 12 months 100 noise complaints have been investigated and 514 calls were taken regarding pest control in Area West. Significant points to note;

- Work has continued on the planned remediation of an old gas works site in Langport.
- The Private Water supply sampling and risk assessment programme has been successfully completed.
- The Permitted installation inspection programme(PPC) has been fully completed
- All actions from Streetscene audit have been implemented.
- Active participation in new multi -agency Yeovil One project.
- Somerset wide work with Councils and Police to implement new Anti-social behaviour provisions

Housing Standards Team

The Housing Standards Team deal with private sector housing advice and enforcement. This includes investigating complaints about sub-standard rented housing, the inspection and licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and the licensing of caravan sites. The team also provides advice/assistance/grant aid to improve energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty. The team also processes applications for home repairs assistance grants, disabled facilities, HMO and empty property grants, and helps administer the WRT home loan scheme. The team works closely with the Housing Options Team in seeking to tackle the potential housing crisis that is developing in South Somerset. Significant points include;

- The running of two Landlord Forum events held at Holy Trinity Community Centre, Yeovil with over 70 local landlords attending.
- The future impact of Housing Benefit changes on rented accommodation
- Increased enforcement action to do with substandard housing and HMOs.
- £600,000 of Disabled Facilities Grants paid
- Over £250,000 of flood resilience Grants paid to flooded premises

- HMO Licensing scheme completed
- Over eighty empty properties brought back into use.

Financial Implications

There are none attached to this report.

Corporate Priority Implications

The work of the unit helps contribute towards the delivery of a range of our Corporate Priorities but perhaps most importantly towards Aim 3 To improve the Health and Well-being of our citizens and to Aim 5 to promote a balanced natural and built environment

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

The work of the unit contributes towards this NI with it's work on fuel poverty

Equality and Diversity Implications

As part of the EH service plan a full equalities and diversity assessment was undertaken.

Background Papers: *Environmental Health Service Plan 2015/16*
Food & Safety Service Plan 2015/16
Health & Safety Action plan 2015/16
Private Sector Housing Strategy 2012-15
Housing Implementation Strategy 2015 update
SSDC Corporate Plan 2012-15
