

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 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. Discussion of the up and coming Transformation programme is dominating our thinking at the moment and staff resources are being allocated to help plan the future arrangements.

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 team is also involved in tackling food fraud, which can be very harmful to public safety, economic development and fair business competition. The food safety element of the work of the team includes the approval and audit of food manufacturers, food sampling, premises inspections which includes local delivery of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, the investigation of food complaints and food poisoning as well as responding to national food safety alerts. The health and safety element includes inspection, advice, complaint and accident investigation. In Area West in the last 12 months 279 food inspections have been carried out, 70 cases of suspected food poisoning have been investigated and 7 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;

- All planned interventions/inspections and complaints successfully dealt with
- National food safety Week 2017 supported. The theme being Food Waste Reduction.
- Development of the Better Business for All (BBfA) project.
- Working with South West Illegal Meat Group

- Ongoing management of 'Flexible Warranting' scheme to allow cross boundary working throughout Somerset
- Food Hygiene Rating System –anticipated introduction of charges for rescoreing.
- Supporting a multi-agency investigation into wild game poaching with local Police, RSPCA and Trading Standards
- Maintaining a multi-agency Safety Advisory Group(SAG) for events being held in South Somerset
- Working with FSA on 'Regulating Our Future' programme.
- Working with Public Health England on new Gastrointestinal Disease Policy.

The Food safety Team is obliged by the FSA to produce it's own service plan that can be found following the attached link;

https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/570103/fs_service_plan_2016-17.pdf

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 and risk assessments, contaminated land assessment and the investigation of rural 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, abandoned vehicles and fly tipping. During the past 12 months 141 noise complaints have been investigated and 382 calls were taken regarding pest control in Area West. Significant points to note;

- The Private Water supply sampling and risk assessment programme has been successfully completed although there has been a lot of work going on regarding the village supply at Allowenshay. Ombudsman complaint not substantiated.
- The Permitted installation inspection programme (PPC) has been fully completed
- New contaminated Land Inspection Strategy adopted
- New Enforcement policy adopted
- Four Public Health funerals dealt with
- Last year 89 abandoned vehicles were investigated in Area West resulting in 12 being removed and destroyed. The team have seen a marked increase in the number of abandoned vehicles across the district since the start of the year.

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 Prevention grants, Disabled Facilities Grants, 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.

- On-going enforcement action to do with substandard housing and HMOs including the enforced sale of an empty house.
- £850,000 of Disabled Facilities Grants paid
- Several key grant funded building projects underway including two projects on South Street, Yeovil.
- Over fifty empty properties brought back into use.
- Active participation in multi-agency Yeovil One and Chard One projects to include work on anti-social behaviour and rough sleeping.
- New grants and loans policy adopted following change in funding arrangements for DFGs via the Better Care Fund.
- New mobile home grant/loan initiative launched working with Ridgeway Energy.

Research and support

The Environmental Health service is supported by the Research and Specialist Support Team who maintain and update the Environmental Health back system Civica APP, inspection records and web pages as well as providing finance support, management performance information and produce the annual government returns.

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 Council Plan aims including the aims to:

- Protect and enhance the quality of our environment
- Enable housing to meet all needs
- Improve health and reduce health inequalities

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 2017/18*
Food & Safety Service Plan 2017/18
Private Sector Housing Strategy 2016-21
Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2017
Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants and Loans -January 2017
