

Council Meeting – 8 October 2019

Report of Councillor Alan Wedderkopp – Environmental Services

Environmental Health & Private Sector Housing

Overall summary

Overall this service area is under pressure as we have been unsuccessful in filling vacancies following transformation, despite two attempts but are currently back out to the market again, with market factors applied to the roles and are hopeful that we will attract qualified and experience candidates.

We have secured 2 agency members of staff to help support Private Sector Housing and Environmental Protection but to date have struggled to secure agency staff for Food Safety. This has resulted in backlogs increasing for food inspections and this is a key priority to tackle this. However we are using a consultancy firm to help with our inspections.

We recognise that various policies require updating and once we have fully recruited, we will programme in some work on this on a risk based approach to ensure all our key policies are fully up to date.

Food Safety

Although we have a large number of outstanding food inspections, we are targeting these by risk and 'A' & 'B' risk rated premises continue to be our priority (with 13 inspections outstanding) alongside higher risk 'C' premises.

In the current round of recruitment we are hoping to attract an experienced Environmental Health Officer along with Food Safety Officers to help with rebuilding the team. In the short term however we are continuing to try and recruit agency staff and will continue to use consultants for inspection work to help manage and ultimately reduce the inspection backlog.

Private Sector Housing

We currently have 2 members of staff working within the private sector housing team, an experienced agency officer and someone working towards becoming a qualified Environmental Health Officer. As a result there is no backlog in this area and complaints are being dealt with in a timely fashion. We have begun to review our policies and are working closely with Sedgemoor Council to align these as far as possible which will help landlords that have properties across both Districts.

Environmental Protection

It has been a busy summer period for Environmental Protection but our agency Environmental Protection Officer has significantly helped with keeping on top of complaints. We also have a new Business Support Team (BST) who are picking up complaint work well, with training, and supporting the officers.

There are between 15-20 inspections due this year for permitted processes (petrol stations, dry cleaners etc). There are no issues expected with achieving these inspections in the next coming months.

Air quality monitoring

The Council has a duty to review and assess air quality in its area and produce a yearly Air Quality Report for DEFRA. This has been delayed due to staff shortages but we will address this and produce it in November.

Private Water Supplies

There is a backlog of 39 inspections across the district and an officer has been tasked with prioritising PWS inspections until the backlog is cleared. This is also being supported by an agency member of staff covering Environmental Protection work.

Dog Warden Service

The service is contracted out to the St Giles Animal Centre (or Somerset Dog Warden Service). The contract continues to work well with no issues to note.

Street Cleansing

IdVerde carry out the Authority's street scene cleansing under 2 separate contracts. These cover the cleansing of streets and public spaces. It excludes open spaces (parks), flytips, graffiti, servicing of public toilets (10), removal of dead animals, bin emptying (excluding dog bins) and litter issues, minor repairs in public toilets, litter bin replacements which is all undertaken by the DLO..

The West Somerset covers the cleansing of streets and all public spaces, including open spaces (parks), flytips, graffiti, removal of dead animals, bin emptying including dog bins and litter issues.

Challenges that we are currently addressing is commercial and residential waste being left out too early and littering the town centre and residential areas, flytipping and graffiti. We are working with Somerset Waste Partnership and Environmental Health to address these issues and are writing to those identified as the first step of enforcement.

Household Collections

Somerset Waste Partnership is continuing to move forward with Recycle More, which will be Somerset's next big leap forward in driving up recycling in the county.

The change will see a range of new materials added to weekly recycling collections: household and food plastic pots, tubs and trays; food and drink cartons, household batteries, and small electrical items.

The upgraded service will start rolling out across the County during 2020, at the same time as a brand new fleet of collection vehicles and the switch for rubbish from landfill to resource recovery, pumping energy into the national grid. All householders will be informed well in advance of any changes happening in their neighbourhood.

With so much being taken out of the waste bin each week, the frequency of rubbish collection will then be able to reduce to three weekly with garden waste and clinical waste collections remaining unchanged.

New Bereavement Services Manager

Localities are please to confirm that following an intensive recruitment process we have appointed a new Bereavement Services Manager. Richard Brown moved to this area of work on the 9th September and I am sure that like me you will welcome him into this new role.

Mud Working Group update

The Mud Working Group presented to Scrutiny on 5th September and allowed Member to understand the work that has been undertaken at Watchet Marina and harbour and the direction of travel for the group.