

Full Council Meeting – 7 February 2023

Portfolio Holder Report for Environmental Services – Cllr Andrew Sully.

It gives me great pleasure to present my report to Full Council on the varied activities of the Environmental Services Portfolio.

Street Scene

- Environmental Improvement Team

In January the team have taken delivery of 441 trees and planting them in various parks and open spaces across the district. They will then be completing the street washing programme in the town centres.

- Litter Strategy
 - Litter Bin Labels

Bin identification numbered labels have been purchased and will be placed on all litter and dog bins which include a QR code to enable the public to scan and report broken/overflowing bins using a smartphone. This will provide accurate recording of the bin issues reported and enable the service to monitor emptying schedules and vandalism.

- Environmental Enforcement Trial:

Between April 2022 – Dec 2022 a total of 1062 FPN's have been issued to individuals disposing of litter incorrectly through the trial.

The team have been working closely with local business to improve litter around their premises and engaged with stakeholders and provided education and guidance. This has included:

- Town and parish councils
- Butlins
- First Bus
- Avon and Somerset Police
- Arc
- National Highways

To support the Somerset West and Taunton litter strategy in regard to changing behaviour, the Council purchased 500 stubby pouches (portable ashtrays) which will be handed to individuals caught throwing cigarette litter on the ground and are available for individuals to collect from the Deane House Council offices. This scheme started in December 2022.

Parks and Open Spaces

The teams are working through the winter works programme to improve areas with additional pruning of shrubs and hedges, replanting and vegetation clearance.

Work on the 2023 Green Flag submissions have been undertaken for the January deadline.

The next phase of the Grassland Management Strategy and mapping has been completed for 2023. The work builds on previous year's successes and lessons learnt. This will increase the number of re-wilding areas which will also be signed so the public are informed.

The ELIF Budget has funded improvement works such as the new path in Vivary and Walkers Gate this has made a significant improvement to the users.

Bereavement Services

Essential electrical rewiring works were completed to Crematorium building between October and December. Being a listed and operational building did make this a difficult project to deliver but was completed to time with as little impact on our customers as possible.

Refuse and Recycling (Somerset Waste Partnership)

- Collection Service

Minor disruption to collections in December and January as a result of icy conditions and access, affected parts of Exmoor and then flooding. Overall, collection day changes due to bank holiday planned worked smoothly.

Williton depot works continued and are due to be completed in February. Opportunity taken to carry out some general repairs and maintenance work on site.

- Recycling sites

Preparation for the new regulations surrounding the handling of 'upholstered household seating' (sofas, upholstered chairs etc) were completed. New skips are available at all sites ready for 1 Jan, with temporary signage (longer term signage being developed by WRAP). This is to reduce the environmental risk that could be posed by possible presence of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in the fire retardants historically used on such items

Environmental Health & Licensing

Street Trading Policy

Licensing has opened a consultation on a proposed new street trading licensing policy.

SWT is proposing to replace the two existing policies for West Somerset and Taunton Deane respectively with one policy for the Somerset West and Taunton area, which would remain in force until such time as Somerset Council adopts a

policy of its own. It is not yet known when how soon that might be, so it is important that our area has a policy that is fit for purpose until then.

The Council is carrying out a public consultation on the proposed policy which will run for 8 weeks, closing on the 7th of March. Our preference is that responses to the consultation are submitted online at

www.somersersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/consultations.

A working group consisting of Council Officers and Elected Members (Councillors) has been created. Once the consultation has finished, the working group will consider any responses, before preparing a final draft of the policy, which will then be recommended to the Council's Licensing Committee at its meeting on the 20th of March.

- **Blue Anchor Coastal Defence**

I am pleased to report that vessels have now been definitively secured to deliver the required rock armour from Glensanda Quarry in western Scotland.

It is proposed that 13,500 tonnes of rock will be delivered in late April/early May 2023 and transported by sea going vessels to Blue Anchor and transferred at sea to a barge to land the rock on the beach. The rock will then be placed against the cliffs to prevent wave undercutting.

Planning permission has been deferred as we are undertaking a re-design process for the upper slope works. Early indications are that this will be a positive decision as there have been no adverse comments to date. It is now anticipated that final documents will be provided by 10th February with determination planned by 24th March 2023.

It is now considered that the scheme to protect the B3191 will begin to be delivered from April 2023.

- **North Hill - Minehead**

WSP have been appointed (following a tender process) to carry out a design scheme for the slope stabilisation at North Hill, Minehead. The initial cost is £62k. The majority of the hill is owned by SWT.

Initial investigations – using abseiling techniques given the severity of the slope – have led to an initial report which outlines the preferred design solution.

Work is now underway to design a high tensile steel fence that will be erected along the base of the cliff above the houses along Quay Street. This fence will be designed to 'catch' any falling debris such as soil, stones and rocks. This is deemed to be the most effective solution given the difficulty of working on a cliff face that is near vertical in places.

The design is expected to be completed in March 2023 with tender works following shortly afterwards should finances be available to deliver the scheme which is expected to cost between £750,000 and £1m.

- **Minehead Seafront Drains clearance**

The work to clear sand from the blocked drainage gullies on the seafront at Minehead began on 9/01/2023

Sand will be removed and taken from site allowing water to flow off the promenade into the drains. This is not a permanent solution to the issue as the drains are blocked by sand from their outlet side (on the beach) and this cannot be easily or cheaply remedied.

- **Coastal Defence General**

There continues to be movement of the cliffs to the west of Watchet. The allotment site in Watchet belonging to Watchet Town Council has been closed due to land slippage and this area continues to erode through wave action and through inherent instability of the ground which is worsened through heavy rainfall

The cliffs in this area will continue to erode, the Council has provided warning signs on the West Street slipway.

Ultimately we will work with the new Council and the Environment Agency to consider a project to realign the B3191 in the area and at the same time to protect the cliffs.

I would like to give my personal thanks to all the officers in the various teams that make up the portfolio who are delivering exceptional services in challenging times.

Councillor Andy Sully