

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 22 February 2018

Subject: Environment

Portfolio Holder: Councillor W Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Waste Management

A review of the existing recycling-bank sites within the District has commenced. The review will identify usage, including tonnages and the types of material collected, to determine whether it is financially sensible for the Council to continue providing these sites. The review is being undertaken mindful of the fact that the Council offers a comprehensive door step recycling collection service, with no limit on the amount of recycling that can be presented.

It is estimated that it costs Essex County Council, who are the Waste Disposal Authority, £1.5 million a year to pay for the disposal of clothes that could be reused. 99% of used textiles are recyclable. As Members are aware, this Council offers a comprehensive textile collection service, allowing residents to present their unwanted clothes in a carrier bag on any collection day for them to be taken away and reused or recycled.

The clothes collected in Epping Forest are transported to a sorting warehouse in Canning Town, where each item is checked by hand and those that are of sufficient quality are separated, baled together, and exported to countries overseas. The journey from a doorstep in our district to a community market in Africa or a shop in Eastern Europe takes our discarded clothes about four weeks. Items unsuitable for reuse are separated by their material type to be recycled. Absorbable materials, such as cotton and linen, will be cut into industrial wiping rags. Other materials, such as wool, will either be shredded and made into felt or pulled to make new yarn.

DCLG Recycling Rewards

As previously announced, we launched Epping Forest Recycling Rewards late last year, the funding for which was provided by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The Scheme consists of recycling incentives for up to 100 blocks of flats across the District, consisting of around 1600 properties.

All of the 75 businesses signed up to the Scheme are now represented on the Recycling Rewards web site and mobile app. We have sent the first business update newsletter and charity partner newsletter, which act as reminders of how the Scheme works and what we have done so far. Scheme members receive their e-newsletter at the end of each month. January's included information on what could be recycled; what contamination is, and a reminder not to put polystyrene in the recycling.

430 residents have so far activated their rewards account, representing 26% of the total number of households in the scheme. As Epping Forest Recycling Rewards is the most

recent rewards scheme to be launched this is a positive start. A comparison with other schemes is listed below:

- Bexley 31%
- **Epping Forest 26%**
- LB Hackney 25%
- Waltham Forest 25%
- St Helens 12%
- Kings Lynn 5%
- Coventry City Council 2%

We plan to introduce a web-based module in May for the Recycling Rewards Scheme, called the Food Waste Challenge. This module will inform members what can be placed in the kitchen food waste caddy; tips and ideas on how to reduce food waste, and useful hints on items that might be missed e.g. coffee grounds and cooked food. It also explains how food waste is recycled and what the end product is.

Residents have the opportunity to vote for one of their favourite charities to benefit from an annual donation. This year's Recycling Rewards charity partners are: Epping Forest Community Transport; Epping Forest Food Bank; Chigwell Riding Trust, and Safer Places. They will each receive a share of the total sum donated.

Grounds Maintenance Service

During January, the South East of England (along with many other parts of the UK) experienced some severe weather conditions. The exceptionally high winds kept the staff of the Grounds Maintenance Service busy dealing with numerous phone calls reporting fallen or dangerous trees, and then organising the required clear-up operations. The team dealt with various requests for help from the County Highways Department and local Police, to remove fallen trees and branches blocking roads and footways. Members of the public also reported hazardous trees in gardens and open-spaces that required inspection and making safe.

Like all of us, the team are hoping for a more settled period of weather, which will allow them to progress with their planned winter-work programme, including tree and shrub planting, before the motor-mowers are dusted off for the first grass cut of the year in March.

Drainage and New Development

After a relatively dry October and November, December saw well above average long term rainfall and, on occasion, storm conditions across the District. Localised flooding was experienced in a number of locations and the Engineering Drainage and Water Team were called on to identify problem assets and advise residents on the best course of action to both remedy issues and to protect against future 'rainfall events'. The Environment Agency issued a number of Flood Alerts during the period covering the rivers Roding, Stort and Lea but, whilst the rivers did respond to the rainfall, no overtopping occurred. It's highly likely we will have further 'rainfall events' in the coming weeks and months so the Team continue to monitor and maintain the Council's three Flood Storage Areas, 50+ storm grills and key watercourses to ensure they remain in the best possible condition to deal with future events.

On the planning side of the Team's drainage responsibilities, 2017 saw an all-time high of just over 1200 planning applications that required assessment to ensure the drainage designs were robust and met both local and national standards. With the Draft Local Plan now at the submission stage, more credence can be given to the draft policies within the

Plan, so the Team can be more stringent when assessing new applications to ensure they meet the very latest technical requirements. Ensuring good drainage principles will also dovetail in to the requirement to Master Plan some of the larger development sites that are currently proposed around the District, and this area of work is expected to ramp up later in the year as developers start to engage with the Local Plan team.

Fly-tipping

Fly-tipping incidents continue to remain at a high level, with some areas in Stapleford Abbotts being particularly badly hit with commercial sized fly-tipping.

It is tempting to link the increase in fly-tipping in these areas to the restrictions imposed by Essex County Council on the Recycling Centres for Household Waste (RCHW) in Chigwell and elsewhere. However, most of the new fly-tips in this area appear to be from commercial waste sources, of a size and content that should never have been legitimately taken to the RCHW.

Officers are attempting to cover some of the areas with covert cameras. However, cameras in rural areas often rely on batteries that limit their effectiveness and increase the level of maintenance. There is currently no ideal solution for covert CCTV monitoring in many rural locations.

“Fly-tipping - It’s a crime not to care”

The Council’s Environment & Neighbourhood Manager recently participated in the final “crime not to care” campaign film, highlighting our shared responsibility for reducing fly tipping. If Members would like to watch the campaign films they are available via the Council’s YouTube web page.

The message is a simple one; if we all care enough to check who we hand our waste to and keep our waste out of the hands of rogue traders, we will reduce fly-tipping. I encourage all Members to continue to spread the word and raise the profile of the important waste “duty of care” law.

Linked to the “crime not to care” campaign and enforcing the household “duty of care”, the Government are currently consulting on the introduction of a new fixed penalty notice (FPN) for household waste “duty of care” offences as an alternative to prosecution: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reducing-crime-at-sites-handling-waste-and-introducing-fixed-penalties-for-waste-duty-of-care>

The Environment & Neighbourhoods team support the introduction of an FPN to deal with this type of offence as a proportionate and less costly enforcement tool than prosecuting in court. FPN income can also be used by the Council to fund further enforcement and education, and publicity around the introduction of a new FPN should help raise awareness of the problem and what we can each individually do to help reduce it.

If any of us use someone else to dispose of our waste that third party must have a waste carriers licence issued by the Environment Agency. However, it’s fair to say that obtaining a licence is little barrier to rogue traders. Accordingly, officers are working with Essex County Council Trading Standards (TS) and the Waste Recycling team to try and establish a “Buy with Confidence Scheme” for waste disposal companies. The Scheme would rely on companies agreeing to be audited by TS and paying a fee to join and be listed on the Scheme’s website. Officers are currently in the process of identifying local companies to assess the level of interest.

Fixed penalties for fly-tipping

Environment and Neighbourhood officers have recently identified a number of small scale fly-tippers and are offering the offenders the opportunity to pay fixed penalty notices (FPNs) of £200 for these incidents. From 1 April 2017 to date, officers have offered 11 FPNs for fly-tipping incidents. 10 of these have been paid resulting in a total penalty of £2000. The use of FPNs for fly-tipping is under-reported because no offence has been formally admitted. However, FPNs are an effective way of dealing with low level fly-tipping carried out on a non-commercial basis.

Fly-tipping on Claypit Hill, Waltham Abbey

Mr Loredan Ilias, of Gascoyne Road, London E9, was ordered to pay a fine and costs amounting to £1686.81 after pleading guilty to fly-tipping on Forest land in Claypit Hill, Waltham Abbey. The Magistrates also ordered Mr Ilias to pay compensation for clearance of the waste of £150 to the Corporation of London.

Evidence gathered by the Council's Environment & Neighbourhood team led to a prosecution in Chelmsford Magistrates Court with an eventual hearing on 14 December 2017. Mr Ilias admitted to fly tipping paving stones, rubble and roofing material from a Mercedes Sprinter van on 10 January 2016. He had failed to attend a number of hearings in 2016, leading to a warrant being issued for his arrest.