

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 17 February 2015

Subject: Environment

Portfolio Holder: Councillor W Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Waste Management

I chaired the first meeting of the Waste Management Partnership Board on Monday 26 January and received an update on relocation from the Langston Road Depot in Loughton to the Biffa depots in Waltham Cross and Edmonton; the purchase of the new fleet of vehicles; collection of new materials in the recycling stream; the introduction of enhanced ICT systems and, most importantly, the move to a four day collection week (Tuesday to Friday).

At this stage Biffa are working on the new collection routes for the four day service. As soon as we have details of the resultant day and time changes, and who will be affected, residents will be informed through a district-wide publicity campaign. I will ensure Members are notified of these changes in a timely fashion.

On Monday 2 February I attended a meeting of the Essex Waste Management Partnership Board in Chelmsford. At this meeting it was agreed that the Board would replace the Inter Authority Agreement Working Group, and there was extensive discussion of the need for less extensive discussion. Accordingly, in the prevailing spirit of action, the Board agreed that one of its first priorities would be to coordinate a county-wide publicity campaign to reduce the amount of recyclable material that is discarded in black sacks. A further meeting of the Board, to discuss this campaign, is planned for March so I will keep Members informed of developments in this area.

Litter

Last year's Essex-wide "Love Essex" anti-litter campaign, which this council participated in, has been short-listed in the Keep Britain Tidy Diamond Jubilee Awards, for the Diamond Jubilee Partnership Award. It has been nominated against London's "Capital Clean-up" campaign.

Flooding

During 2013 and the early part of 2014 many properties in the country suffered damage as a result of the severe weather experienced. The Government has now extended the period for certain schemes allowing householders and businesses affected by flood damage to apply for financial assistance. Applications for support can now be made for damage experienced between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014.

The District Council has put in place a number of measures to support residents and businesses impacted. These measures include Council Tax Exemption, the Business Rates Relief Scheme and a Repair and Renew Grant. The Council administers the scheme for:

- Residents whose home was flooded, in the form of flood resilience
- Businesses affected by flooding, in the form of business rate relief and/or flood resilience grants

Residents or businesses that were affected by flooding during this period should contact staff dealing with business rate relief or the Private Sector Housing Grants Team as appropriate.

Unauthorised Encampments

Two gypsy caravans recently arrived at Traps Hill car park, Loughton, on land owned by EFDC. The caravans moved off the site the night before a possession hearing in court. The Environment and Neighbourhoods team proceeded with obtaining a possession order to prevent the occupiers returning to the same site and this was granted.

The caravans moved to Epping Forest College land in Borders Lane and have subsequently split up, with one remaining on College land and one moving to private land near the Wake Arms roundabout.

It is unusual in this district for unauthorised encampments (UE) to remain in the area for long periods. However, Harlow have an ongoing problem with UE in large groups (up to 90 caravans in total in the summer), simply moving from one site to another, often before any legal action can be taken to prevent them returning.

Essex Police have restricted the use of their discretionary power to remove six or more caravans from land, under s.61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. There is a risk, therefore, that more UE may be on their way to EFDC in the near future and that the removal of these will rely on landowners (including EFDC) pursuing possession proceedings to evict trespassers. Unfortunately, this process that can take weeks to be effective.

Noise Abatement

A resident in Crossways, Loughton, accepted a simple Caution on 9 January 2015 for breaching a noise abatement notice to control music and amplified sound. The Caution was offered for this first offence, after the resident was formally interviewed and she accepted she was guilty of breaching the notice.

Fly-tipping

Chris Farran, of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, was fined £400 and ordered to pay the Council's prosecution costs of £705.40 (inclusive of clearance costs of £91.16), together with a Victim Surcharge of £20, after pleading guilty to two offences in relation to some fly-tipped waste found in Pick Hill, Waltham Abbey.

He had handed waste materials from kitchen refits he was working on to an unknown person without taking reasonable care that the person was authorised to transport waste and without exchanging a written description of the waste. Evidence gathered by the Council's Environment and Neighbourhoods team led to a prosecution in Chelmsford Magistrates Court on 4th December 2014.

When a business, however small, produces waste, that business has a legal 'Duty of Care' to ensure that the waste is stored and disposed of correctly. The Duty of Care applies to everyone involved in handling the waste, from the person who produces it to the person who finally disposes of it. As such, Duty of Care is one of the main ways to combat fly-tipping by keeping waste out of the hands of rogue traders who fly-tip waste for profit.