

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 21 December 2017

Subject: Environment

Portfolio Holder: Councillor W Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Fly-tipping

I'm sorry to report that fly-tipping incidents remain at a high level. Recently some new areas have been hit with multiple larger fly-tips (Gutteridge Lane, Stapleford Abbots; Pudding Lane and Millers Lane, Chigwell). Alongside the "normal" level of fly-tipping, we have also suffered large industrial size fly-tips, with a full lorry trailer discarded at the roadside (Vicarage Lane, North Weald) and two large stolen roll on/roll off containers, filled with waste then dumped on Brooker Road and Pick Hill, Waltham Abbey. As Members will appreciate, this criminal activity is by no means restricted to Epping Forest, but our area, perhaps given its proximity to London, does appear to suffer more large industrial-scale fly-tipping than other areas of the county.

Clearance of fly-tipped waste from private land

The fly-tips in these new areas have resulted in some landowners querying the Council's responsibility for clearing fly-tipped waste. For clarity, I can confirm that EFDC is responsible for collecting litter and refuse from the public highway, which includes fly-tipped waste. EFDC also clears fly-tipped waste from other land that it owns or maintains. The majority of this waste is classified as household waste for the purposes of disposal, and Essex County Council pays for the disposal of household waste.

Waste fly-tipped on private land is not collected by EFDC, and Essex County Council will not pay for the disposal costs. This means that private landowners who are the victims of a criminal fly-tip have to arrange and pay for clearance of the waste from their land. Ditches at the side of the public highway are predominantly the responsibility of private landowners and can be particularly badly hit by fly-tippers in rural areas, as waste is deposited from passing vehicles.

Whilst recognising the significant burden criminal fly-tippers place on private landowners, EFDC has no responsibility to clear waste from private land. Assisting landowners would represent a huge cost to the Council, both financially and in terms of the resources involved. It is, therefore, vital that private landowners take as much action as reasonably possible to protect their land from fly-tippers (i.e. additional lighting, CCTV (see below), strong gates/locks etc.).

More information is available on the Council website at:

<http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/residents/your-environment/crime-safety/fly-tipping>

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

Environment & Neighbourhood Officers (ENO’s) continue to find evidence of the perpetrators of fly-tipping, and have many on-going cases to investigate, but it is clear that catching fly-tippers first-hand is difficult. In order to try and cut off the supply of waste to rogue traders who are intent on fly-tipping for financial gain, the Environment & Neighbourhood team have recently been involved in a “Crime not to care” campaign, in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy and other authorities in Essex.

A lot of fly-tipped waste appears to be collected by rogue traders cold calling when they spot waste outside a property and ready to be taken away. The ENO team have been out in the district cold calling at premises that look to have waste ready for collection, providing advice about using a registered waste carrier, enabling residents to comply with their duty, reduce the amount of waste getting into the hands of rogue traders, and potentially provide evidence that will help trace fly-tippers.

The Environment & Neighbourhood Manager has recently participated in the final campaign film aimed at social media, where small waste collection services are regularly advertised.

The film is available to view and share at:

<https://youtu.be/jd83Bie2q28>

<https://www.facebook.com/essexcountycouncil>

https://twitter.com/Essex_CC/status/935135582698790917

If you have any difficulty viewing or sharing the videos, further advice can be obtained from Sarah Kits (Social Media and Customer Services Officer) on 01992 564262.

CCTV

Officers receive a number of requests or questions about the use of CCTV to detect and deter fly-tipping. Private landowners are encouraged to use overt CCTV to deter fly-tipping on their land and also covert CCTV to catch offenders.

The ENO team have access to a limited supply of covert equipment. Fixed, permanently powered, systems can provide very good images with fewer resources to maintain. However, cameras in rural areas often rely on batteries that limit their effectiveness and increase the level of maintenance. There is also a risk of the equipment being damaged or stolen if it cannot be stored securely on or in a building. There is currently no ideal solution for covert CCTV monitoring in many rural locations; the team are trialling the use of smaller stand alone “wildlife” cameras as a cost effective alternative to provide some cover, and looking at other options that may be cost effective, but CCTV is not the immediate solution that many believe it to be. We are also aware that organised fly-tippers may use false or cloned number plates making identification even harder.

Future action

Officers are currently looking at how vehicle seizure powers may be effectively used in the future and whether the Trading Standards “Buy with Confidence” scheme <https://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk/> could be used to provide a list of audited waste

collection companies for residents and businesses, in an attempt to further restrict waste getting into the hands of rogue traders.

However, at this time, because the cost of disposing of waste is high and the chance of being caught fly-tipping is relatively low, it seems likely we will continue to suffer from high levels of fly-tipping.

Wood yard, Birchwood Industrial Estate, Hoe Lane, Nazeing

The “wood yard” that has caused a lot of concern in the past has recently changed hands and the site is now in the control of the adjacent business (J&R Haulage Ltd). J&R Haulage are seeking to use the site for waste transfer activities, and it seems this will not involve the stockpiling and shredding of large amounts of wood waste, which has caused problems in the past. The owner of the business appears keen to correctly regularise the use, working with the Environment Agency to obtain and comply with the correct waste permits. Officers will continue to monitor developments.

Waste Management

As Members know, the Council issues calendars to all residents twice a year with information on the days of waste and recycling collections and other relevant information. In order to avoid residents accidentally disposing of these as junk mail we will trial the next calendar in the form of a bin hanger. If this proves successful we will consider making the change permanent.

At the last meeting of the Neighbourhood Select Committee, Members discussed the issue of contamination and the high tonnage of residual waste produced per household. Officers are considering various strategies to help address this, with a bin hanger that will highlight the problems of contamination and the need to put the right materials in the right container being one option. If the bin hanger is deemed feasible it will be issued sometime next year.

One of the hardest aspects of waste collection to control is contamination of recycling materials in blocks of flats, where the entire contents of a communal bin can be contaminated by a small amount of non-recyclable waste. The Council has implemented various strategies to reduce this contamination. The latest initiative is the introduction of lockable aperture lids for some of the communal recycling bins. This has reduced contamination and produced better quality recycle. I have asked officers to monitor the performance of these bins over the next few months to see if the trend continues, following which a decision on a District wide roll out of such lockable lids will be taken.

DCLG Recycling Rewards

I am pleased to be able to provide an update on the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) funded Recycling Reward Scheme, which has allowed us to provide recycling incentives for up to 100 blocks of flats (around 1600 properties) across the District. The scheme will encourage households in the selected group of flats to recycle more, and better, in return for special offers and discounts with local businesses.

All planned publicity material, the welcome pack and associated Scheme information was delivered in October, ahead of the planned door-step engagement activities. The dedicated Recycling Rewards web site, mobile app and social media platforms went live on 31 October. In the first two weeks of November, 311 residents had signed up to the scheme. Discount cards have now been dispatched to members.

A team of experienced Recycling Advisors visited flats in the Scheme offering help and advice at residents' homes. This included information on the Scheme, help to register for the rewards and explanations of recycling activities, along with general advice and guidance on recycling.

There are now 75 businesses signed up to support the Scheme with special offers to members. All these businesses can be found on the Recycling Rewards web site and mobile app. Discussions are also taking place with Places for People about offering Recycling Rewards members a voucher package and a discount on all leisure centre activities.

The first e-newsletter went out in November; this issue welcomed members to the Scheme and provided information on how to earn points and how the discount card works. The next and subsequent e-newsletters will run feature stories about one of the four charities supported by the Scheme, providing recipients with an insight into the work and activities their efforts will help assist. Residents have the opportunity to choose one of the four charities to benefit from a donation. This year's Recycling Rewards charity partners are: Epping Forest Community Transport; Epping Forest Food Bank; Chigwell Riding Trust, and Safer Places.

Grounds Maintenance Service

Due to the mild Autumn, grass cutting operations went on throughout November. Once the grass has finally stopped growing and the mowers are stored away, the staff will move onto their 'winter works' programme. These tasks include bed maintenance, hedge trimming and shrub pruning as well as the planting of spring flowering bulbs, hardy shrubs and over 100 new street trees.

In September this year, the Council took possession of a new area of public open space in Epping. The additional four acres of green space became available through the redevelopment of the St John's School site in Tower Road. This area is now a housing development with a recreational space for residents and visitors to enjoy. Grounds Maintenance and Countryside staff have been working together on the landscape design and will be developing plans that will both enhance wildlife habitat and increase biodiversity at the new site.