

Report to the Council

Subject: Environment Portfolio

Date: 22 April 2014

Portfolio Holder: Councillor W Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Waste Management

The final tenders for the new waste management contract were received on Friday 4 April. The officer project team has spent the two weeks between then and the date of this meeting carefully checking the tenders to ensure that they are valid, ensuring the financial components are correct and assessing the required eleven method statements against strict criteria. The Member Interview Panels are scheduled for the 1st and 2nd of May, with the final recommendation going before a special meeting of Cabinet on 19 May. Subject to any procedural issues, it is intended that the new contract be signed before the end of June, enabling mobilisation to commence at the beginning of July. This has been a lengthy and complex procurement exercise and the first time that the Council has used the "Competitive Dialogue" process. I believe that, despite its complexity, "Competitive Dialogue" has proven to be very beneficial, especially given the potential value of this contract, and that its use may well be applicable for similar complex procurements in the future.

I was delighted to present awards to two pupils and their schools, Belle Liggitt (6) from Epping Primary School and Patsy Stow (10) from Alderton Junior School, for their winning entries in designing recycling posters to be displayed on the district's refuse freighters. Competitions such as this are important in engaging children, their parents and the public with the recycling message. Whilst there could only be two winners, I would like to offer my congratulations to all the pupils who took part. Belle and Patsy's designs will appear on our freighters in the coming weeks.

Environmental Health & Neighbourhoods

Fly-tipping

On 3rd March 2014 at Chelmsford Crown Court, Kathy Aziba of Torrington Gardens, Loughton, was given a two year conditional discharge and the Council awarded £500 costs after she pleaded guilty to permitting controlled waste to be deposited on land in Burton Road, Loughton. Ms Aziba pleaded not guilty to the offence originally and elected to be tried in the Crown Court, but on the morning of the trial she changed her plea to guilty. His Honour Judge David Turner QC told Ms Aziba that her not guilty plea had been a complete nonsense and it was little short of a disgrace that she had elected a Crown Court trial. She should have pleaded guilty at an early stage in the Magistrates Court. The Judge stated that he understood that the Council officers involved in the investigation would be disappointed with the result but he had to take into account the Court guidelines and financial position of Ms Aziba in sentencing her. Ms Aziba could have arranged for the Council to make a special waste collection for a relatively small fee and saved herself over £450 and a criminal conviction.

Fly-tipping in Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey, led to Peter Marvata of Horton House, Field Road, London, being fined £300 and ordered to pay the Council's prosecution and clearance costs of £606 together with a victim surcharge of £30. In Chelmsford Magistrates Court on 18th March 2014, Mr Marvata pleaded guilty to failing in his duty of care, by handing waste materials from a house renovation 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.

Waste – duty of care

The Environment & Neighbourhood team published an article in the Council's Spring edition of the Forester magazine encouraging residents (and businesses) to comply with their duty of care, in order to keep waste out of the hands of rogue traders who tip waste for profit. Residents must take reasonable steps to ensure that the person they give their waste to is authorised to take it. Commercial premises also have similar requirements.

"It is illegal to dump here" & "Fly-tipping is illegal" stickers

In the continued battle against fly-tippers (which also includes local residents who persist in dumping their waste in public areas near to where they live), the ENO team are now placing stickers on any fly-tips they come across or visit to investigate, to explain that "Evidence of this incident has been recorded". It is hoped that the highly visible stickers will act as a deterrent to others and inform residents that the Council is aware of the deposit. The stickers should also help prevent incidents being reported more than once and provide local residents with the name of the officer dealing with the deposit.

Abatement notices

The tenants of the Garnon Bushes public house in Coopersale received noise abatement notices (that are still subject to appeal) to control music and amplified sound. Despite warnings and meetings with the area ENO, the public house continued to play music too loudly. The duty noise officer was called out on 21st March and witnessed a statutory nuisance. We are continuing to try and work with the public house to avoid any breach of the notices.

Large multiple bonfires on "Chalkhills" Upshire Road, Waltham Abbey, on 27th March resulted in a statutory nuisance due to large amounts of smoke blowing towards residents of Ninefields and beyond. Despite action by the person responsible to curtail the bonfires, and reassurances that any future bonfires would only be carried out after consulting the area ENO, an abatement notice was served to control the level of smoke emitted in the future. The risk of further nuisance if green waste remaining on the site continued to be burnt was felt to be too high to simply accept the reassurances that were given.

Woodyard, Hoe Lane, Nazeing

The Woodyard in Hoe Lane, Nazeing, has been rented to a new tenant and wood has started to be imported again. The site is primarily subject to control by the Environment Agency (EA). Local residents have expressed concerns about the use starting again, particularly in light of the previous fires on the site, when a considerable amount of wood went up in flames. Council officers have been liaising with the Environment Agency and are in the process of arranging a meeting with the EA and the District/Parish Councillors to discuss the residents concerns and examine the regulatory control of the site.

Litter campaign

Artwork for the Essex Wide Litter campaign (2-6 June) has now been received. Final plans are being drawn up for a week of high visibility enforcement and education. The Waltham Abbey and Thornwood branches of McDonalds are now both participating. The campaign aims to help make littering socially unacceptable.