

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 July 2017

Subject: Environment

Portfolio Holder: Councillor W Breare-Hall

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Waste Management

ECC has published the first draft of the County's waste and recycling performance for 2016/17. The final figures will be published when all the data has been audited, but it is unlikely this process will significantly alter the results. I am pleased to inform Members that we have performed better than last year with a recycling rate of 58.3%. This is excellent news and I would like to thank our residents, for their ongoing commitment to recycling, and the Council's officers and contractor.

I previously informed Members that after the successful launch of the recycling scheme in the Civic Offices we would introduce a similar scheme at the Council's depot in Oakwood Hill. I am pleased to report that officers in the Waste Management team, in conjunction with Facilities Management and the Environmental Coordinator, have now introduced that scheme.

Members will be aware that the Council was successful in obtaining a significant grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for the introduction of a Recycling Rewards Scheme. Officers, working closely with DCLG, have conducted market research to establish the scope of a scheme tailored to the needs of the District. The procurement exercise for appointing a suitable contractor to implement the scheme is underway. Tenders are currently being assessed and it is anticipated that the contract will be awarded by the time this report is presented. The first phase of the project, which will start in September/October, will consist of door knocking activities in selected blocks of flats. The scheme will also consist of improved information in communal recycling bin stores to help residents reduce contamination. A key element of the scheme is the creation of a website to promote and issue recycling rewards to blocks of flats based on their recycling performance. I have asked officers to provide further information via the Bulletin.

The joint campaign with ECC to increase the number of items donated to Epping Forest Reuse has resulted in an additional nine tonnes being directed to them over two months.

The new national strategy on street cleansing has been issued and we will be working with Biffa to identify how it can be applied to the District.

Fly-tipping

Michelle Pettengell, of Eversley Close, Loughton, was arrested after failing to attend court, fined £200 and ordered to pay £400 towards the Council's prosecution costs, together with a

Victim Surcharge of £30 after she admitted failing to comply with her waste household duty of care at a hearing on 24 April 2017 in Chelmsford Magistrates.

She had carried out work at her property and had allowed a man who had knocked on her door to take it for £40 cash in hand without checking that the person taking the waste was registered to do so. Her waste was later found fly-tipped in a garage area in Pyrles Lane, Loughton.

This is exactly the type of case that the Council's Environment & Neighbourhood Officers are hoping can be avoided in the future by raising awareness of the waste duty of care, through joining forces with Keep Britain Tidy (KBT) and other local authorities in Essex to promote that it is a "*Crime Not to Care*".

Eleven authorities across Essex, including Essex County Council, have signed up to promote the duty of care message using KBT artwork. A six week campaign is planned for September 2017 followed by prolonged use of the artwork and campaign material to raise awareness of the duty of care, and to reduce the amount of waste getting into the hands of rogue traders who fly-tip for profit. Officers recommend that whenever businesses or householders give their waste to somebody else to dispose of, they should always "Check, Challenge & Record", to ensure they comply with their waste duty of care responsibilities. Businesses and householders who fail in their duty can expect to be prosecuted.

Wood yard dust and fire - Birchwood Industrial Estate, Hoe Lane, Nazeing

Council officers served abatement notices on the occupiers of the site on 10 May 2017 under s.80 Environmental Protection Act 1990 to control wood dust emissions, after visits on 8 and 9 May 2017, that confirmed earlier concerns about the lack of dust suppression on the site.

The notices require the operators to "cease wood recycling activities and wood handling activities, where dust suppression and handling techniques do not sufficiently suppress wood dust and contain it within the site boundary".

At the same time, officers notified Essex Fire Service and the Environment Agency (EA) regarding the potential for a fire on the site and strongly suggested to the EA that they remove forthwith the exemption that the site operates under. The exemption allows the site to accept, store and shred wood (without a waste permit issued by the EA) subject to a number of conditions.

The EA confirmed they would be visiting and removing the exemption, however before that could take place, there was another large fire on the site on 16 May, which burnt any remaining un-shredded wood. The exact cause of the fire is unknown. It is alleged that old shredded wood on the site was spontaneously combusting, spreading and igniting new waste wood.

Potential waste offence investigations are ongoing at EFDC and at the EA. The EA removed the original waste exemption, but a new exemption was immediately registered. At this time the site is not operating but the long term plans of the site owner are unknown so officers will continue to monitor the situation and liaise with the EA.

Out of hours noise service

At this time of the year, noise complaints increase as windows and doors are left open and activities move outside. The Council provides a restricted call-out service for noise complaints covered by Environment & Neighbourhood officers on a stand-by rota.

The service can be accessed by telephoning 01992 564000, however residents are always encouraged to initially report noise issues in normal working hours, so that officers can provide advice and try to establish if the matter can be resolved informally. Further information is available on the EFDC website.

Public Health Team

The Public Health Team promoted National Clean Air Day on 15th June. Claire Jaggard, Environmental Protection Officer, led the campaign for the Council by focusing on primary schools and idling cars during pick up times. A range of posters and electronic communications were sent to schools for dissemination to pupils and parents. On the Day itself, officers were outside one school in Buckhurst Hill handing out leaflets, stickers and posters for children to colour in, as well as speaking to parents who were sat in idling vehicles in the nearby streets. Additionally, a range of social media messages were published utilising the councils Twitter and Facebook accounts supported by the Public Relations Team.

There is provision under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002 for authorised officers to issue fixed penalty notices (£20) to drivers who refuse to turn their engines off when asked. The Council is actively considering using these powers as part of a package of measures to tackle air pollution.

The Public Health Team are utilising social media to promote catering businesses who attain and retain the highest food hygiene rating of 5.

And finally, the Public Health Team recently executed a warrant in a joint investigation with Essex Trading Standards and supported by Essex Police. The investigation surrounds the alleged illegal slaughter and provision of unfit meat. The investigations remain ongoing so no more information can be provided at this time but I will update Members when I can.