

**COUNCIL MEETING – 17 DECEMBER 2002**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MULLINS – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**Environmental Protection Team.**

- The public consultation phase for the declaration of two discrete Air Quality Management Areas at East Reach and Henlade is now complete. The way is now clear formally to declare these areas which will be done in the form of an Order, as required by legislation. We are in close consultation with Somerset County Council's Economy, Transport and Environment Department to develop an Action Plan to reduce levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in these areas.
- The annual programme for the routine sampling of private water supplies, which was severely disrupted by the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, is now back on track as a result of a successful 'catch up' programme.
- Progress is on schedule to identify and prioritise potential land contamination sites across the Borough. The legislation requires a more detailed examination of all high risk sites by the end of 2003 and we are on target to achieve this.
- Work has commenced to provide the long awaited first time rural sewerage scheme in the Blagdon Hill and Pitminster areas and is scheduled for completion in January 2003.

**Housing Standards Team**

- The Team participated in a recent successful Landlords' Forum at which copies of the new 120 page TDBC Landlords' Guide to HMOs was distributed. The Guide will be made available free of charge to all HMO Landlords.
- A recently commissioned HMO Survey has revealed the existence of 12 previously unknown HMOs within the Borough, which have now been prioritised and added to the Inspection Programme.
- Following the announcement that some 300 Asylum Seekers are to come to TDBC, work has commenced to identify and address the many Housing Standards issues involved.

**Recycling**

- We have just received news that the SWP in partnership with Avon FoE have been successful in winning £370k of DEFRA funding to provide a collection service from "difficult to access" properties such as blocks of flats. The new service will utilise 2 special vehicles shared between SDC,

MDC, SSDC and TDBC to collect recyclables from micro recycling sites. An example of real joined up partnership working.

## **Food Safety**

- **Indian takeaway and restaurant initiative**

Food safety officers often have difficulty communicating effectively with people whose English language skills are limited, particularly when trying to explain technical requirements. There can also be cultural barriers to overcome. This year we have engaged a Bengali speaking officer from another local authority to go into each Indian premises to advise on food safety issues, and to assist our own officers by training them in aspects of the culture of the Bengali community.

While it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this initiative there have been clear benefits, with improved standards of hygiene reported after the advisory visits programme.

## **Licensing**

- From May 2000 to date the number of fee paying PEL holders has risen from 40 to 85, this has been as a direct result of effective enforcement, the premises are safer and better policed than they ever were and the licensees are happier as there is now a "Level Playing Field"
- The Licensing Unit has a new Licensing Officer, Nicky Easton who has joined us from Trading Standards at Somerset County Council she has replaced Natasha Mounce who had worked for TDBC for over 6 years.
- Following the Queen's Speech the Licensing Unit and myself are looking forward to the challenge of Liquor Licensing being transferred from the Magistrates to the Local Authority.

## **Environmental Health Challenge**

- Environmental Health decided to hold a challenge workshop for members of the Health and Leisure Panel and the Executive to fundamentally challenge the provision of the EH service as part of their best value review. It was felt that a workshop would be more likely to generate discussion than a report being presented to the panel. The Members were given information about the service, the results of the consultation exercise and a list of questions to consider before the workshop. The discussion at the workshop was then based around the questions. The workshop went well and officers were pleased with the outcomes.

## **Finally**

**My I wish all the staff of Taunton Deane together with all Councillors.**

**A MERRY CHRISTMAS.**

Councillor Melvyn Mullins

