

COUNCIL MEETING 22 APRIL 2003

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MULLINS – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

- **Asbestos**

A fire in a derelict barn in Cotford-St Luke caused the asbestos roof to shatter and fragments to be scattered over a wide area close to a housing estate. Within hours, the owners (Area Health Authority) had been contacted and had agreed to decontaminate the site, warning barriers had been erected by Somerset County Council to keep passersby away from the building, and the residents of every potentially affected house had received a letter describing the action that was being taken and the measures that they could take themselves to safeguard their health.

During the following days, licensed asbestos Contractors appointed by the landowners removed and safely disposed of all traces of loose asbestos cement and returned within a week of the incident to remove remaining undamaged roof sections from the barn.

This was a good example of inter-Agency working, showing that swift and effective action could be taken to deal with a potential health hazard, without the need for enforcement action.

- **Air Quality**

A touch-screen information kiosk has been sited in the main Reception area for use by members of the public. The kiosk will give access to the Council's website and will also be used to display monthly Air Quality charts. In future weeks it is hoped to install new software that will enable air quality information to be updated on a daily basis, using the results logged by the monitoring stations direct.

- **Dog Bins**

Ten new dog bins have been purchased and will be installed on 23 April. The sites selected were the ten top scorers in a Borough wide risk assessment exercise.

- **Asylum Seekers**

A preliminary meeting has been held with representatives of Clearsprings. The Company has been given full details of the housing standards adopted by the Council in respect of private lettings, so that time is not wasted in surveying unsuitable premises. Dialogue between the Housing Standards Team and Clearsprings will continue, as the latter's search for accommodation gains momentum.

Arrangements are now in place for members of the Housing Standards Team to inspect every potential letting notified, and they will be given the opportunity to comment on the standards and any improvements that may be required, so that the necessary works can be completed before the occupants move in.

- **Licensing**

The Licensing Bill has gone on to the House of Commons, but nothing much more is known as yet, expect Royal Assent of the Bill in July 03 at the latest.

The transfer of Street Trading, Promotional Events, Pavement Cafes and Street Canvassing Permits was officially transferred from Peter Cottell from the 1st of April.

- **Food Safety, Health and Safety**

In both of these service areas the inspection programmes set in the BVPP have been exceeded, (95% and 90%).

Well done to all staff involved.

And finally...

- **Recycling**

Most of Taunton, Wellington, and the main residential villages in the Deane have now been introduced to the kerbside service as planned. Participation by householders and the amount of recyclables set out for collection remains high. Inevitably with a new service delivered to 35000 plus properties there are gaps and some properties have been missed. These will be rectified as and when waste services become aware of them.

The next phase of the roll out is to identify and introduce groups of "Difficult to Access" (DTAs) properties to the service.

A new Waste Management Officer; Isobel White has started work with Waste Services.

Initially, Isobel's main tasks will be to bring DTAs into the service by offering collection bags to those properties not suitable for boxes and to assist in developing a new service for flats. (The SWP won £400k from DEFRA for this). She will also be responsible for actively promoting the service and feeding back to customers to maintain participation, yield and quality.

MELVYN MULLINS