

Council Meeting – 11 December 2018

Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services and Climate Change

1. Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning

- 1.1 The contract continues to run smoothly as we approach the third year. This year has seen the completion of the zonal maps for code of practice and our own PQMS survey system which will allow us to inspect and score cleansing levels across Taunton Deane. The information will then be collated on the Idverde web page. A link will be provided once inspections have been completed. The first inspections will be joint and carried out by a Council Client Manager and Idverde Contract Manager. In the future any officer from the Council will be welcome to join the monthly randomly generated inspections.
- 1.2 The contractor continues to support community/Parish litter picking groups, and supply a considerable amount of litter pickers, bags, personal protective equipment as well as collection of the waste. These events are also supported by ensuring that a mechanical road sweeper is within the area as the event is happening. Groups that have had support throughout the year and will continue to be supported are: - The Canal and Waterways Trust, Otterford Parish Council, North Curry Parish Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Holway Local Action Team, Wellington Transitional Group, Milverton Parish Council, Priorswood Community Centre, Hardy's Road (Monkton Heathfield Community Group) and many more.
- 1.3 Litter/rubbish collected in Wellington and Taunton Town Centres is now sorted and where possible recycled. This system is working well, after beginning the sorting process at the earlier part of the year. Materials that are sorted are cans, plastic and cardboard/paper.
- 1.4 Fly tipping is still occurring but not increasing. Cameras to catch offenders continue to be deployed and all fly tip material is examined for evidence of ownership.

2. Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP)

- Tonnages of waste generated by Somerset households have continued to decline – a 1.6% (-4,080 tonnes) decrease in overall household waste arisings. The majority of this decrease occurred at the recycling sites;
- SWP's overall recycling rate at the kerbside and at recycling sites was 52.3% (down 0.4% on the previous year). The kerbside sort system meant that, even in the face of global challenges to the recycling industry, over 90% of everything we collected was recycled in the UK;

- Because of how we recycle (our kerbside sort system) and how much we recycle, SWP remain independently ranked in the top 10% nationally in terms of our carbon saving;
- Missed collections at the kerbside have been an area of particular concern during the year. This has been driven by staff shortages (affected by the national driver shortage and the challenging labour market in Somerset), the ageing vehicle fleet and the hot weather we saw over the summer. SWP have worked closely and robustly with Kier to ensure improvement plans are put in place;
- SWP's recycling rate of 77% is amongst the highest in the Country. 79% of what could be recycled stayed in Somerset and 94% stayed in the UK. The number of visits to recycling sites was slightly down on the previous year. This is believed to be largely due to the success of the permit scheme in reducing trade waste abuse and out-of-County usage; and
- It is noted that the numbers of reported flytips across Somerset fell by 4.6% (226 fewer flytips) compared to 2016-2017.

So far in the current financial year (April 2018 – November 2018) key achievements are:-

- Enabling the recycling of plastic pots, tubs and trays at all Somerset recycling sites – this is all processed in the UK at a state-of-the-art facility in Kent;
- Sharing tens of thousands of copies of our 'Pledge Against Preventable Plastic' with Somerset residents, giving them top tips on how to reduce their unnecessary use of plastic. It also reminds residents what they can recycle at the kerbside;
- Acting as Somerset co-ordinator for the Refill campaign, encouraging local cafes and retailers to enable people to refill their reusable water bottles, with the aim of reducing the reliance on single-use plastic water bottles;
- Agreeing a contract extension with Viridor which delivers considerable savings to Somerset County Council. All of our recycling sites will remain open but with amended opening hours to better reflect need and demand (including opening all sites all weekend, all year round); and
- Significantly increasing SWP's reach on social media (in particular Facebook), so that we can keep residents up to date and influence their behaviours. This will become increasingly important as we get ready to roll out the Recycle More programme.

Ongoing major projects and key pieces of work coming up over the next 12 months include:-

- Getting ready to stop using landfill as the disposal route for residual waste by 2020. Our commitment to reuse and recycling will not be diminished by this move;

- Completing the procurement of a new collection contractor in Spring 2019, ahead of them commencing service in Spring 2020;
- Preparing for the rollout of Recycle More from 2020 onwards, including a very significant communications and marketing campaign; and
- Continuing to work with planning authorities to ensure that new developments are built with waste in mind.

It is also an intention to address the difficult situation for multi-occupancy buildings where space for recycle storage is limited or non-existent. Currently we have limited resources and will only investigate where the residents are interested since the schemes depend on active participation by them.

3. Cemetery and Crematorium:

- 3.1 All the initial projects have now been completed.
- 3.2 We are placing additional planting into the woodland walk to beautify the area and give it a good softer landscape start while we are in the planting season.
- 3.3 The cremation walkway has seen several sales already and we expect this to be a very popular choice.
- 3.4 Both St Mary's and Wellington Cemeteries new graves are ready for sale and have now been formally numbered and mapped. Wellington Cemetery also has the addition of 48 columbaria niches (above-ground ashes depositories) for further cremation memorialisation choice.
- 3.5 The Babies (dear Mum) Garden is now ready and being rested for the planting/turfing to have a chance to establish but will be ready for an official opening in the New Year.
- 3.6 The Crematorium Waiting Room Extension had made good progress, as follows:-
 - i) The outside lavatories have now been completely refurbished making it possible for the existing internal waiting room toilets to be closed;
 - ii) The temporary waiting room is now in place and the surrounding area has been substantially remodelled to facilitate the workforce relocation and future retail opportunities on site; and
 - iii) We have created a safer pedestrian walkway from the car park to the Chapel. We are now ready to tender the internal remodel of the waiting room element of the project. We are working with the Procurement Team in doing this and expect to have a tender out before the end of January 2019.

- 3.7 The Crematorium Manager, Garry Bowles, is leaving the Council's employment in January 2019 and he wanted to make the following statement:-

“As you may be aware I am leaving Taunton Deane and it would be remiss of me not to thank you all for the support the service has received from the political body. I absolutely believe that our Bereavement Service is now in a position to become a market leader in our sector. This could not have happened without the assistance, support and belief from you all.

I have enjoyed my time at Taunton Deane immensely and only hope I have been an asset to the Council and am sorry to be leaving. I am leaving a dedicated team who I am sure will continue the good work.”

- 3.8 We have seen a considerable change at the Crematorium since Garry arrived with us and we appreciate the effort and thought he has put into improving these facilities. I am sure that all of us appreciate the results.

4. Environmental Health (EH)

Health and Safety

- 4.1 A successful prosecution of WH Smith relating to an accident that occurred in 2014 has recently been concluded. The EH team are to be congratulated for their perseverance in this case and finally bringing WH Smith to face up to their responsibilities.
- 4.2 WH Smith (Retail Holdings) Limited has been ordered to pay fines and costs totalling not far short of £½ million after a member of the public was left with life-changing injuries caused by falling into a basement through a trapdoor on the shop floor at the Taunton WH Smith store, which had been opened during trading hours.
- 4.3 After the accident at Taunton, WH Smith moved the items that had been stored in the basement to a store room, locked the basement out of use and completed a written risk assessment for accessing it should the need arise.
- 4.4 Food Hygiene Inspections remain on track although we may be behind by the end of the financial year due to staff involvement in recruitment.

Private Water Supplies (PWS)

- 4.5 The legislation around PWSs has recently changed in 2018 and as one Council we will be in the top five in the country for the number of supplies and people relying on these for their drinking water.
- 4.6 The new Council will have just over 1,594 supplies to look after including risk assessment plus sampling every one-five years. One third of the population

in West Somerset is on a PWS. New legislation will require accreditation with the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) for officers carrying out this role.

Safety Advisory Group

- 4.7 Officers attended the Safety Advisory Group for Christmas events in Taunton on 6 November 2018, where advice was given regarding public safety at the light switch on event.
- 4.8 The team is extremely busy at present.

5. Licensing

- 5.1 The Licensing service achieved its performance target between July and September by completing over 95% applications within 14 days.
- 5.2 Officers are getting to grips with new changes in animal licensing legislation, which were introduced in October 2018. Kennels, catteries, dog breeders, pet shops and so on, can now expect clearer guidelines and more comprehensive inspections, which will inform and control an out-of-five star rating and length of licence they receive, the maximum being three years where previously it was one.
- 5.3 Preparations are being made to enable officers to use the National Register of Taxi Licence Revocations and Refusals, or 'NR3' for short.
- 5.4 Once the Licensing Committee has adopted a policy governing how it will be used, officers will write to those who have had licences refused/revoked to inform them that their details will be submitted and make them aware of their rights in relation to the General Data Protection Regulations.

Councillor Patrick Berry