

## **Council Meeting – 20 March 2019**

### **Report of Councillor Patrick Berry – Environmental Services and Climate Change**

#### **1. Street Sweeping and Toilet Cleaning**

- 1.1 The contract continues to deliver in accordance with the requirements and Idverde continues to support any volunteer or community group who wish to carry out community litter picks and have even helped two local Primary Schools with social awareness projects.
- 1.2 The PQMS (Professional Quality Management Services) system is now up and running. This allows both the contractor and client to monitor and score the street cleansing from 10 randomly chosen sites chosen by computer. So far we have completed three months of inspections (with the Client Manager) and the results have been good.
- 1.3 The town area is becoming prime focus as we head towards the summer and planned events which include the International Cricket Council (ICC) World Cup. Plans are being made to ensure the town centre sparkles during these events. One of the main issues in the town centre is the increasing number of unsightly chewing gum blobs on the paving. Quotations are being sought for a one-off removal, however it may be worth including this work in the South West and Taunton Council's regular maintenance programme.
- 1.4 In the past, the mechanical road sweepers have experienced difficulties where the level of parking is very high. This occurs in several areas of Taunton, which are relatively close to the town centre. The outcome is usually that the drainage channels are not properly swept. We have successfully carried out a leaflet drop in these areas where all adjacent properties received a leaflet advising them not to park on that road until after the road had been swept. All parked vehicles also received the leaflet. The response by both residents and parked vehicles was extremely positive. Success rates have varied between 60-80% depending on the area. Roads completed by using this method are Middleway and the Cranmer Road area near the Cricket Ground.

#### **2. Somerset Waste Partnership**

- 2.1 Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) has had another successful year, with a recycling rate of around 53% in Quarter 3 of 2018/2019 and continuing to recycle over 95% in the UK (over half staying in Somerset). SWP have increased the scope of their recycling centre contract with Viridor, enabling residents to use every recycling centre to recycle cartons/tetrapaks and plastic pots, tubs and trays. SWP remain on track to move away from landfill by 2020, with the construction of an Energy from Waste plant at Avonmouth.

- 2.2 SWP has been focussing on changing behaviours, including:-
- Visiting over 100 primary schools through their 'Schools Against Waste' programme, working with Carymore Environment Trust;
  - Distributing over 10,000 Pledge Against Preventable Plastic cards;
  - Promoting the refill initiative in Somerset; and
  - Doubling its Facebook reach over the last year
- 2.3 SWP's key programme of work is to procure a new collection contractor who will roll out the Recycle More service. The Somerset Waste Board will make a decision on the preferred contractor at its meeting on 29 March 2019, with the announcement of the new contractor planned for 13 May 2019. Considerable work in building a new fleet of recycling vehicles will be undertaken ahead of the new contractor commencing services in March 2020 - ensuring that our vehicles are designed to collect even more recycling every week (plastic pots, tubs and trays, tetrapaks/ cartons, small electrical items and batteries) and have the technology to support excellent customer service.
- 2.4 With all the recycling collected each week the frequency for collection of residual waste will reduce to every three weeks. A major communications campaign will be undertaken ahead of these service changes. SWP expect this to increase their recycling rate considerably, whilst maintaining its excellent environmental performance.
- 2.5 Nationally, there is considerable change coming up in waste policy - in particular through embedding the 'producer pays' principle to underpin substantially improved national recycling performance. SWP was proud to be the only Local Authority case study in the national strategy - held up as an exemplar for the quality of recycling we collect and our history of innovation in being the first food waste collection at scale.

### **3. Cemeteries and Crematorium**

- 3.1 The dedicated Bereavement Services Team based at Taunton Deane Crematorium are responsible for looking after the Crematorium and four operational cemeteries – Taunton Deane, St Mary's and St James Cemeteries in Taunton and Rockwell Green in Wellington.
- 3.2 The majority of the cemeteries date from around the early 1900's, with new burial plots still available in all cemeteries apart from the St James Cemetery. The last 12 months have seen 78 burials carried out in both new and existing graves.
- 3.3 The Crematorium opened in 1963, and became Grade II listed in 1998 for reasons of architectural interest. In the last 12 months 2,468 cremations have taken place. The large chapel can seat 140 people comfortably, with services exceeding 300 people with standing. Facilities include webcast, DVD and CD recordings of services for those who are unable to attend or would like to have a memento of the service for their loved one. Also provided are visual tribute screens and a personal viewing room into the crematory.
- 3.4 The Council has recently invested in several improvements to the service which

include:-

- More memorial options available to families out in the grounds;
- Ground works to create new burial, interment of ashes and niches for ashes in the majority of the sites; and
- Natural burial and interment of ashes have also just been introduced.

- 3.5 On the 28 March 2019 the official opening of the new Children's Garden will take place at the Taunton Deane Cemetery and Crematorium on Wellington New Road.
- 3.6 Following some delay to the procurement process, tenders are due to be issued shortly for the extension to the waiting room and in order to facilitate this work, much of it will be carried out outside normal working hours. A temporary waiting room facility is now almost ready for use to ensure the least possible disruption to the service.
- 3.7 An informative and educational open day is to be planned for later this year.

#### **4. Licensing**

- 4.1 The Licensing Service achieved its performance target for October to December but customers are being advised to expect delays from March onwards, whilst the Council's new operating model beds in and until the bulk of customer self-serve licence applications are made available on the Council website. The taxi trade is likely to be most affected and the Licensing Manager has sent licence holders a letter, set of FAQs and advice to help staff to help them during this time.
- 4.2 Officers are now spending longer attending to applications for animal activity licences, following the implementation of new regulations. Clearer minimum standards have been introduced and for the first time, licensees will be given a star rating for how well they comply with those standards, similar in some respects to the hygiene ratings given to food premises. Those that achieve the higher ratings will also now make financial savings as they can receive longer term licences; up to a maximum three years.
- 4.3 A taxi mystery shopper exercise carried out in partnership with Compass Disability before Christmas produced mixed results. Of sixteen attempts to use a taxi, by volunteers in wheelchairs, only six resulted in a fare being carried out. Two of those were without fault and the drivers were complemented on their manner. Officers are now giving thought to the introduction of mandatory disability awareness training.

#### **5. Environmental Health**

- 5.1 This team is as usual extremely busy and in the midst of transformation, as are all other teams. Erica Lake who has been in charge since before I took up my role in 2015, is now about to take up a new role and is covering more than one role.
- 5.2 Her report shows that Members of staff who have left the team are:-
- Nicola Sambells - Food Safety Officer;

- Lis Kennard – Environmental Health Officer;
- Lisa Plenty – Environmental Health Administrative Assistant;
- Melanie Pike - Environmental Health Administrative Assistant; and
- Louise Evans - Environmental Health Administrative Assistant.

New Roles secured:-

- Emily Vining and Matt Hill – Environmental Health Specialists;
- Joanne Toogood – Case Manager Lead; and
- Case Managers - Claire Haines, Kim Lewington, Simon Moon and David Alford.

5.3 Erica is currently covering Environmental Health Line Management, Corporate Health and Safety and starting her new role in Performance and Governance as the New Authority's Project Management Officer.

5.4 The Environmental Health Team has not taken any enforcement action recently and have not had any significant cases to report on.

## **6. Portfolio Holder**

6.1 I should like to add my personal thanks to all the staff in the teams and departments I have been working with and reporting on. Their professional approach and dedication to their work have made my work as portfolio holder more interesting and more enjoyable as a result.

Councillor Patrick Berry