

Full Council Meeting – 29 September 2020

Report of Councillor Sarah Wakefield – Environmental Services

Flood and Coastal Protection

Flood Board

- The West Somerset Flood Board has been reconvened under my chairmanship after a six months break. I am conducting a review of its terms of reference and intend to rename it as an SWT body (to include the former TDBC area) and also to include coastal protection (as SWT is the coastal protection authority and the issues are often related). West Somerset Flood Group will continue to exist as a contributor body along with the EA, IDB, SRA, Wessex Water and representatives of parishes and other interested parties.

Splash Point

- Replacement work on the Splash Point wall failure started on 7th September, this follows an extensive period of design, contracting and licensing. This solution will reinstate the defence wall, the overtopping wall, and the beach access. Works are planned to take 12 weeks to complete, subject to weather conditions remaining favourable.

Blue Anchor

- Emergency repair works to the Blue Anchor sea wall have been carried out. This work was enabled as SWT have been awarded £385k following a bid to the Environment Agency for funding to undertake the necessary emergency works to the existing sea defence at Blue Anchor. Phase One of this was actually completed during the bidding process and Phase Two will start in early October (to extend the rock armour sea wall). This emergency scheme gives some protection and allows us to buy time for the delivery of a permanent solution.
- Further and more permanent works to protect the B3191 (which is close by at this point) are now possible, as SWT are in receipt of a proposal from SCC to contribute £4 million of Government funding primarily to protect the highway which will also give much needed protection to affected properties at that location. This capital input should allow the more extensive rock face and cliff protection works to be carried out. This matter is planned to be coming forward to Scrutiny, Executive and Full Council for discussion and decision in October.

Street Cleansing (IdVerde)

- Additional Litter - With the beautiful weather and lockdown, we have experienced large numbers of visitors to our coastal towns, which has required litter bin emptying to be increased. Cleansing will continue to address the changing needs as well as undertaking the scheduled street sweeping and cleansing activities.
- Additional Fly tipping - This has been a varied period for the Cleansing Team. Lockdown has seen increased levels of fly-tipping across the Authority's area, which has also been experienced across the County and nationwide. The recycling centres are now fully open, which has seen a reduction in the number of fly-tips now being reported.

Refuse (Somerset Waste Partnership)

- Additional Waste - Throughout the period of lockdown, increased amounts of waste, particularly glass and card, was presented by residents. This was due to home clear-outs, internet shopping and the temporary closure of the recycling centres, in accordance with the Government operating guidelines. Green waste collections have re-commenced from June and all recycling centres re-opened and are now accepting all materials.
- Recycle More - Somerset Waste Board agreed a new timetable for the introduction of Recycle More. The service will be launched in the first phase to Mendip from October 2020, coming to the rest of the county in three phases over the following 18 months. The new service will be introduced area by area, so SWP's five depots can be upgraded to handle the thousands of tonnes of extra recycling.
- Slim My Waste - Food waste tonnage collected was up by more than a quarter in recent months, partly as a result of the successful Slim My Waste campaign, in which residents black bins were encircled with 'Slim My Waste' tape and an information left to promote the recycling of food waste.
- SWP New Contractor (Suez) - It has been a challenging period for SWP, with the commencement of the new collection contract at the same time as lockdown, the scheduling of the RecycleMore rollout and the re-opening recycling centres within the guidelines, during which they have delivered a service to our residents and performance has been improving week by week from a somewhat shaky start.

Bereavement Service

- COVID19 - The Bereavement service has been at the forefront of preparedness for the response to the COVID19 pandemic. The whole team has remained on duty and delivered outstanding bereavement services to the public. Extra measures taken included:
 - Engaging with the Local Resilience Forum through the Excess Death Group so that there was a clear understanding of capacity issues across Somerset from a range of stakeholder perspectives

and to build a full picture that was able then to deal collaboratively with emerging problems.

- Extension of the cemetery at Taunton Crematorium and the preparation of 100 prepared graves (so far we have not had to use any of them).
- Supported Musgrove Park Hospital NHS Trust by siting a body storage facility at the crematorium.
- Identified a number of staff members from the organisation who were willing to assist with administrative functions and trained them in advance to be called upon as necessary as the pandemic progresses and retrained past crematorium staff to provide resilience in cremation and grave digging activities
- Proactively secured the servicing of the cremators so that we are ready for the seasonal peak that winter will bring. (This is a 2 week operation)
- Regular COVID 19 updates to our stakeholders through a regular newsletter, informing them and the public of changes in legislation and of any adaptations to service requirements
- Improved Appearance of site
 - The team have developed the grounds yard to an appropriate and safe standard and visually attractive which included replacement of defective mains storm drains.
 - Installed a new access footpath to provide easier and safer access for the public to access the chapel and car park.
 - A new florist, Stems of Taunton are now renting one of the underused buildings which generates an income and offers a service that compliments the site.
- Paperless working – the team introduced paperless and remote working practices that extended to wider stakeholders including registration offices, Funeral directors and doctors and hospitals. This paperless remote model will become the standard service delivery.

Staffing

- Appointment of Assistant Director for Commercial Services – Stuart Noyce who started in post on the 28th August 2020.
- Most office staff continue to work from home or slightly altered working arrangements