

Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

Report of Councillor Andy Sully – Environmental Services

It gives me great pleasure to present my report to Full Council on the varied activities of the Environmental Services Portfolio.

Parks and Open Spaces

Programme of work

- The summer grounds maintenance programme has been completed and the winter programme of works started.
- 70,000 winter bedding plants and 25,000 bulbs have been planted across parks, open spaces and housing land.
- The winter stream clearance works has now started, which is a few weeks earlier than previous years.

Street Cleansing

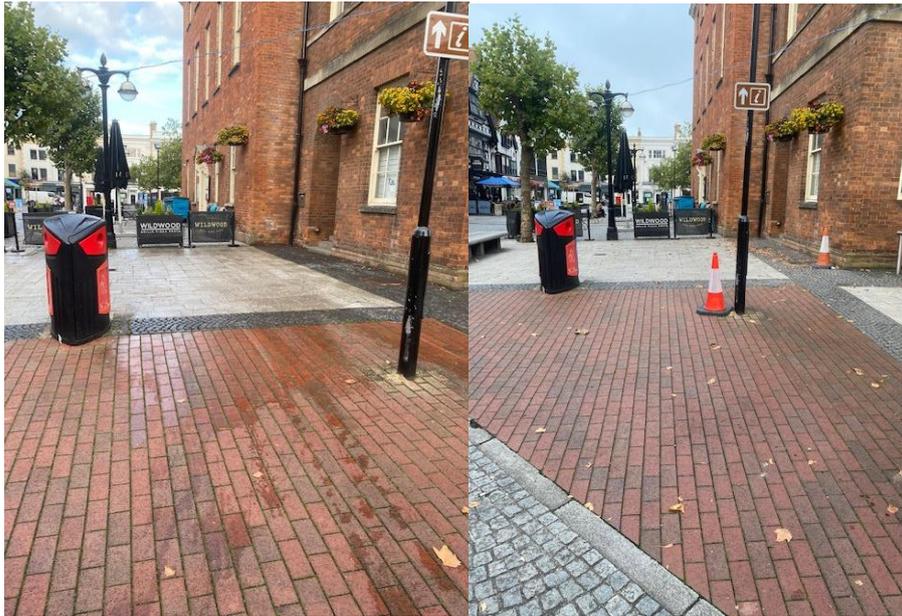
Town Centre Pavement Cleaning

- Through our cleansing contractor, Idverde, we have invested in the use of an Aquazuura Street Washing Machine and Operator, for a three-month period from September to November. A programme of works was agreed, to include areas in Taunton, Wellington and Minehead. The programme has been successful, with both paved areas and street furniture cleansed in the listed areas.

The photos below show some of the progress that has been made.



North St, Taunton



Market House, Taunton before and After

Litter and Dog Bins Replacement

- 130 of our new litter / dog waste / recycling bins have been ordered with the initial batch of 30 bins, bought using the WRAP grant, due to be installed in December. It is expected the remainder of the order to be installed in January and February.
- Some parishes have shown an interest in purchasing additional new bins for their areas. We have currently ordered nine, smaller, multi-purpose bins so far and one of the larger units.
- The Supplier has experienced significant issues with obtaining steel for manufacture of the bins and coupled with very high levels of orders, this has increased lead times from seven to fifteen weeks.



Refuse (Somerset Waste Partnership)

RecycleMore

- The new RecycleMore service commenced on 1st November 2021 in the Taunton area. The remaining roll out is due to take place in early 2022 to incorporate the old West Somerset area and Sedgemoor.

- The new blue bags were delivered to households on schedule, with, so far, minor reports of customers not having a delivery.
- There were some delays in the final leaflet, containing a new collection calendar, being delivered to homes. This has been reported as a failure on the part of Royal Mail, but, again, it is believed that the vast majority of households did receive the correspondence, all be it slightly later than planned.
- Early indications are showing good completion of collections and participation, but it is anticipated that there may be minor issues due to the large volumes of material presented for collection caused by day changes to the collection schedule.
- Two extra refuse collections were deployed on Saturday 30th October and Saturday 6th November, to ensure that no household went beyond the new three weekly collection service for refuse.
- The new Transfer Station at Walford Cross, Taunton, is now operational and is currently dealing with the vehicles involved in the Recycle More roll out.
- Planning for Phase 4 (West Somerset and Sedegmoor) of the service roll out is underway.

Licensing

- The team have been busy with a number of complex cases involving taxi drivers which have resulted in licences being revoked and suspended.
- Enforcement notices were served at West Bay caravan site following slippage of the cliff which was directly impacting on a number of the park homes on the site. This remains under review.
- There was a change to the legislation around caravan site licensing and site managers/owners to be 'fit and proper persons'. This change has been successfully implemented and applicants can apply online with no fee until April 2022 when we will start to charge for this service.
- The trade had requested a review of taxi fees, that they can charge the customers. A paper has been drafted and will be going out to consultation very soon, harmonising the charges across the previous West Somerset and Taunton Deane areas.
- There are currently two 'tables' of maximum fares for the areas that were formerly the districts of West Somerset and Taunton Deane. Neither table of fares has been increased for over 9 years. As part of the proposal, fares would be increased, and a single table would be introduced for the whole district. A public consultation is taking place between the 18th of November and 6th of December.

Private Sector Housing

- A new Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) application form has gone live on SWT's website which will improve the experience for the customer and the team. It requires payment to be made at the time of the application and for all relevant supporting documentation to be submitted such as property plans, electrical, gas and fire certificates etc.
- We are started work on the HMO project and are engaging with landlord and tenants to establish the current use and condition of properties and identify any unlicensed HMOs.

Environmental Protection

- The statutory DEFRA Air Quality report will be submitted w/c 14th November.
- The team have had a busy summer with increased neighbourhood complaints following the lifting of Covid restrictions.

Food Safety

- 8 weeks over the summer we employed an Environmental Health 1st year student to undertake a project funded by the FSA focusing on new food businesses. 127 businesses were contacted, and food safety advice was given and further information was gathered regarding their activities to help us focus resources and priorities inspections.
- The team have been busy with a number of complex cases dealing with issues such as illegal slaughter, food fraud, rat infestations and overall poor conditions in food premises. This has resulted in a significant increase in improvement notices being served, PACE interviews being undertaken and the emergency closure of a food business. Prosecution action is being considered.
- Two new Firmstep forms have been launched online, the first allowing food business operators to register their businesses online and this information being shared with the FSA and Trading Standards automatically and the second form allowing a food business operator to request a revisit following a food hygiene inspection. This is a chargeable service and payment is now made-up front at the time of application meaning the team are not chasing payments and requests and revisits can be made more quickly.

Coastal Protection

- Blue Anchor
The Marine Management Organisation have started the 28-day consultation period for the permanent coastal defence scheme at Blue Anchor. We are expecting the MMO to grant permission for the scheme by the end of the year. Contractors have been appointed for the design process and this will be completed during winter 2021 with work on site scheduled to start in June 2022.



I would like to give my personal thanks to all the officers in the various teams that make up the portfolio who are delivering exceptional services and are always very helpful to me in my role on the Executive.