

# Full Council Meeting – 6 December 2022

## Portfolio Holder Report for Environmental Services.

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

### Refuse and Recycling (Somerset Waste Partnership)

- Collection Service

SWP have continued working hard with their contractor, SUEZ, in order to reduce repeated collection failures. There were several collection issues through September and October. These were generally down to staffing issues which caused rounds to be dropped. Recovery of work was good with extra Saturdays implemented in order to complete the backlog.

The Transfer Station at Walford Cross, Taunton is complete, except for a permanent power supply and continues to be operated via a generator. Work continues at The Williton Depot to complete the work started on re-developing the transfer area.

### Street Scene and Fleet

- Litter Bin Replacement Programme

The roll out of the new bin infrastructure with recycling compartments has continued, with the completion of 54 more bins this year. In addition, we have fitted a further 15 bins on behalf of local parishes.

- Fleet

The first batch of 22 electrical vehicles for the Councils fleet following the 2 vehicles taken on the fleet for testing last year are due for delivery in January 2023. This date has been pushed back from October 2022 due to manufactures issues which is a market issue. These are vehicles which are due for replacement this year and the additional cost of EVs compared to fossil fuel vehicles was funded through the savings made from the new fleet contract which started in 2021.

- Environmental Improvement Team

The team which started in 2022 have been working on Street Washing in town centres since the last update. The commencement of our Street Washing was delayed slightly due to re-assignment of the staff following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. We re-commenced at the beginning of October and began the service in Minehead, covering the Sea Front and Quay Street. Work in Taunton is next before we move onto Wellington.

- Environmental Enforcement Trial

The first six months review will now take place looking at the performance, financial data, education, and promotional campaigns and how actions to date meet the requirements of the Councils litter strategy. To date the trial is showing early indication that the trial is achieving its aims and has been a success.

From April 22 – September 22 the enforcement team have issued a total of 872 FPN's for littering offences. This means that the cost of the services is being covered by income received from fines as per the original business case.

The education which has been provided through face-to-face interaction, press releases, social media and interacting with key stakeholders such as Neighbourhood Police, the Superintendent of Avon and Somerset Police, local businesses within and outside of the town's centres, National Highways and Town and Parish Councils, in addition to this the team are in the processes of purchasing 500 portable ash trays which officers will hand out to individuals who are caught disposing of cigarettes inappropriately.

To support objective five of the litter strategy "to promote the understanding of cleansing schedules for emptying bins and the use of our customer systems to address extra collections that are necessary or fewer collections needed". QR codes have been purchased and are due to be installed on the dual litter and recycling bins within the district to support members of the public to report a full or damaged bin via their smartphone.

### **Parks and Open Spaces**

The Grounds Maintenance Team have completed the summer cutting schedule and been working on bedding in all the Parks and HRA flower beds. The team have also started the winter streams clearance works due to be completed by Christmas.

The Nursery has finished production of all the winter bedding plants and deliverers have been made.

The tree team has been working with Exmoor National Park to plan the tree planting programme for 22/23. Tree planting work will begin in January.

### **Bereavement Services**

Essential electrical rewiring works began on 26/09/2022 with work being undertaken at weekends and Mondays and Tuesdays. The project is on schedule for completion by 12/12/2022.

### **Environment and Coastal**

- Blue Anchor

Rock armour is to be built at Blue Anchor to prevent further erosion to the cliffs. An order was placed for vessels to deliver 13,500 tonnes of granite to Blue Anchor in Autumn this year for the rock armour. The necessary permissions for this work are in place, however, the delivery vessels ordered were retained on a project in northern

Europe meaning they were not available to deliver the rock to Blue Anchor as scheduled and no suitable alternative vessels were available. Rail delivery options are being explored as an alternative, but this is proving extremely difficult. Therefore, a definitive date for Spring 2023 delivery via vessel is being sought. Further work to refine the designs for the upper slope works, which will be undertaken once the rock armour is in place, are also taking place to ensure the project remains within budget. Planning permission has been deferred whilst the profile of the upper slope design is finalised. Work on site is expected to start in Spring 2023. In the meantime, the emergency works installed in 2020 continue to protect the cliff at its most vulnerable point.

- North Hill Stabilisation

The design work for this project is ongoing. Designs will be shared as soon as they are available.

#### Norton Fitzwarren Playing Fields

Significant progress has been made on the project at Norton Fitzwarren to create a new playing field including a football pitch, tennis court, car parking area and multi use games area (MUGA). Planning permission was obtained in September and works have now begun on site. The first phase of work will involve the creation of a tennis court, MUGA and car parking area whilst the work to create the football pitch will take place in spring 2023.

#### **Regulatory Services**

Environment Protection complaints such as noise and nuisance are beginning to drop off now we are into the winter season, and the team are focussing on the complex cases remaining from summer.

Environment Protection have also been working successfully in partnership with Musgrove Park Hospital on public health funerals. MPH have been undertaking some of the funerals for the Council, which has helped reduce the cost to the Council and spread the load.

Due to capacity with external providers, the team have brought water sampling back in house, which again has reduced the cost of the service and improved the sampling performance.

The Food Protection team are working hard to support businesses who are recording poor scores on their food hygiene inspections. We are seeing an increase in poor scores which is largely due to the financial pressures on small businesses currently, but are continue to aim to carry out re-rating visits earlier than the designated 3 month timescales to help businesses.

We are expecting three new food traders in Taunton sigh street. New electric points installed were installed to enable this, and Licensing have been working with the

Council's, who advertised for expressions of interest. Three new traders have been selected and given the green light to make street trading consent applications.

A new SW&T Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy and SW&T Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy was adopted at Full Executive on 16/11/2022. The previous policy was no longer fit for purpose and protects the authority between now and vesting day. The policies have been written in conjunction with the Environmental Health Local Government Reorganisation work-stream, with the policy envisaged to be adopted by the new authority.

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 in challenging times.

**Councillor Andy Sully**