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Report to:

Council

Agenda
Item

11(b)(v)

Meeting Date: 5th March 2019

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Environment & Transport Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Chris Southward**

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Litter Picking From Highway Verges

February saw the start of our programmed activity to clear litter from many of our highway verges. This is a high-risk process with our teams working under the protection of professional traffic management to collect litter strewn by a minority of irresponsible road users. Litter in the verges is not only unsightly, painting a negative picture of Carlisle, but it is harmful for wildlife, and is expensive to remove placing our staff and other road users at risk. We estimate that we cover some 94 miles of verges and are averaging over 100 bin bags of litter collected every day.

We engage the services of a professional traffic management company to reduce the risk to our staff working close to moving traffic on some high-speed rural roads. When you factor this cost with the cost of our own staff diverted to this activity then we estimate that each programmed clean-up costs about £22,000 when this resource would be better directed towards our core role of keeping our streets and neighbourhoods clean.

It is anticipated that two programmed clean-up activities will be needed each year if we do not see a change in this selfish behaviour by a minority of road users.

There is some positive feedback with the team reporting that the amount of litter collected is reduced compared to the previous clean-up in 2018, possibly due to increased public awareness of plastic pollution. And, maybe this is also down to increased awareness of the new powers to fine drivers for throwing litter from their vehicles.

Members will be aware the Civil Enforcement Team was restructured in 2018 and we now have a more flexible team of officers trained and able to respond to environmental crime seven days per week. New officers have now been recruited to this team and having now completed their induction and training programme we expect to see positive impact and greater presence in our town centres and streets. Additional enforcement officers are currently being recruited to join our 'new' team.

The team continues to take enforcement action for littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping offences and when necessary we also pursue cases through the courts. In this regard a couple of our recent successes include the magistrates' court fining a Carlisle resident £300 for failing to support our investigations into a fly-tipping offence. And, a fine for a Brampton resident totalling £630 in relation to an abandoned vehicle.

Note: In the last three month period the team have issued:

- 17 fixed penalties for littering
- 1 for dog fouling
- 3 for fly-tipping

This is slightly down on previous trends but is due mostly to the turn-over of staff, recruitment and training of new team members. Officers need to be qualified / competent to issue fines so a lot of the focus last year was about providing advice to residents. All new team members are now fully trained so we expect to see performance increase, particularly as we are currently recruiting more officers.

Recycling campaign

Since January, a new awareness raising campaign has been launched scheduled until June 2019, which is to encourage more participation in recycling. Information has been sent to all councillors about this with links to the new dedicated webpage which includes some short videos to show what happens to the recycling collected and challenge any myths that may exist as well as the County Council's new Rubbish Rebels educational programme, again with some interesting short videos, targeted at primary school children (key stage 2).

GREEN SPACES & BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

Carlisle Skate Park - There are some upcoming works to install a number of additional skate features, plus new seating and a litter bin, to the existing skate park on Devonshire Walk. We have consulted skate park users with the co-operation of the 'Skaters of Carlisle' group and identified a small number of features which we can construct to improve the standard of provision, further details can be found in the attached document.

We have now appointed a local groundworks and civil engineering firm to carry out the construction and surfacing works and are scheduled to start work on site during the week commencing Monday 4th March. The skate park will be fully closed to users for approximately four weeks to allow all aspects of the project to be completed safely and without any risk to the public. Advance warning of this closure will be advertised via on-site signage and with the assistance of the Skaters of Carlisle.

Melbourne Park Tree Work - At Melbourne Park we have been continuing our project to remove and replace the rows of poplar trees, planted decades ago and now becoming a safety risk as their large, heavy branches are prone to wind damage. Stumps and roots have been ground out and the non-native poplars have been replaced by 70 newly planted native broadleaved trees.

Stony Holme Golf Course - The Green Spaces team has been carrying out ongoing maintenance of Stony Holme golf course following the voluntary liquidation of the former private operator. Our Grounds Maintenance team has been doing basic maintenance tasks and a specialist contractor was engaged to maintain the greens, including treating a fungal disease attacking grass roots. This has meant that the greens and fairways have been kept in a condition to allow the course to open should a new operator be found. In the meantime, we are having discussions with the club about future options for the course.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Burning household waste

The months of January and February often see an increase in the number of smoke related nuisance complaints. This trend occurs as householders prepare their gardens for the next horticultural year. The Housing and Pollution Team are working with the

communications team to inform residents intending to have bonfires about the need to be sensitive to neighbours and how good practice can prevent excessive smoke and stay within the law.

Private Water Supplies

The Council's annual private water supply return to the Secretary of State was returned at the end of January 2019. All our private water supplies that should have been sampled, have been sampled in the calendar year and the risk assessment process is ongoing for these supplies. New regulations came in April 2018, with some changes to the sampling process. Officers are attending an update course in February, so we can confirm our processes continue to be best practice and the wholesomeness of the private water supplies in the district are protected.

Animal Welfare

Since the introduction of the new Animal Welfare Licensing legislation in October 2018, a significant number of new business enquiries have been made to the department, particularly from those within the dog breeding sector. The legislation introduced a new definition for what is a dog breeding business, and new controls over the number of litters permitted and a requirement to advertise the licence number when selling animals. A considerable amount of resources has been allocated to this important area of work.

Food Safety

The Food and Public Protection Team are busy ensuring targeted food businesses are inspected before the end of the financial year, which will be reported back to the Food Standards Agency in April.

The team have exceeded their food sampling targets for the year, covering a variety of initiatives including cooked meat products, hygiene standards in catering premises, safety of milk-based drinks (e.g. milkshakes/smoothies) and also the hygiene of touch screens used in restaurants to order food. The main outcome of the sampling identified hygiene issues within those businesses who prepare milk-based drinks. These have since been followed up by officers and improvements have been made.