

PORTFOLIO:

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Report of
Portfolio Holder:

**COUNCILLOR
RAY BLOXHAM**

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Carlisle is joining in with other Cumbrian Environmental Health Sections and contributing to a publicity scheme using bus advertising to encourage people to leave their cars and either walk or use the bus. Carlisle has 5 air quality management areas where the levels of traffic pollution can be a risk to health for people living in the areas. The publicity campaign, which will run in the summer, will be part of an action plan to reduce traffic pollution.

Michael Cunningham, an Environmental Health Officer dealing with food and health and safety in Carlisle, was successful in obtaining one of the 15 places nationally available from the Food Standards Agency to attend a European Union Training Course in Portugal. The course, fully funded by the EU, was delivered between the 14th and 18th March, aimed to ensure consistency of approach in applying food safety legislation and practices across the European Union and other countries who have adopted the practices. Michael was joined by food safety professionals from the Ukraine, Estonia, Norway, Finland, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, and one candidate from Indonesia. The course provided a useful refresher of how to inspect and audit high risk food premises, and gave an insight into how different EU countries enforce the legislative requirements. This is the second time Carlisle has been successful in applying for one of these training courses. Carlisle has 53 food premises out of a total of 1171 which would be categorised as High Risk.

In a difficult case the Section successfully cleared a property in Carlisle which was affecting its occupier but also nearby neighbours. On visiting it was found that the property was full of rubbish making access to some of the rooms impossible. The case required liaisons with the Police, Social Services and the Fire Service. Failure to co-operate by the occupier resulted in a Public Health Act Statutory Notice being served. As the occupier failed to clear the property themselves it was necessary for the Council to employ a private contractor for which the occupier is being recharged. Five skips of rubbish were removed from the property including rotting food, soiled clothing and bedding. After the property had been cleared the Section arranged for Pest Control to bait due to an infestation of mice.

Following a recommendation by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Team has produced a leaflet to discourage attracting seagulls. Environmental Health will be working with street cleansing and the city centre manager to distribute the leaflets and encourage people to stop feeding seagulls and dropping food.

Scott Burns has started as the Environmental Health Manager.

WASTE SERVICES

As part of the Council's 'transformation' process, Local Environment's Waste Services section implemented efficiency measures to its refuse collection service at the beginning of March. The changes involved reducing the number of collection vehicles dedicated to the collection of refuse from 6 to 5 thus delivering significant recurring revenue savings for the authority.

In practice, the reduction in refuse collection vehicles meant a change in the collection arrangements for about 10,000 properties, mainly a change to the day of collection. It also meant that our refuse collection crews have been given new collection rounds. The new collection rounds have been in place for over a month and have been introduced with the minimum of disruption to householders. Our refuse collection crews have risen to the challenge in a positive and constructive manner so that we can make efficiency savings and continue to provide essential services to residents.

It's now 4 years since our new 'alternate weekly collection' system was introduced. I'm pleased to be able to report that recycling remains as popular as ever and that our service enjoys a high level of participation. Whilst we are still awaiting the final data from our various partners, provisional figures suggest that our recycling rate for 2010/11 will be on a par with that recorded last year. We are expecting that when the dust finally settles, we will record a recycling rate of over 46%.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & GREEN SPACES

Fit To Grow in Currock is a joint allotment/community gardening project with Riverside, jointly funded by the Healthy Cities initiative, Riverside and the City Council. It aims to spread the health and well being benefits of allotment gardening to the wider community. It is also renovating derelict allotment sites. This is the first site which is ready to go but it is hoped to spread it further afield using other derelict allotment sites (both Riverside and City) and also involve land attached to larger places of work for employees to Grow Their Own at Work. The initiative will be launched on Sunday, 10th April.

At Chances Park a new natural play feature has been created from the timber of an ancient oak tree that used to grow in the park. The whole crown of the tree was removed from the rotten trunk and transported across the park to be sunk in the ground with the protruding branches making a perfect climbing frame.

The entrance to Rickerby Park from Rickerby village has been improved by the installation of a new car-parking area, installation of new gates and removal of clutter.

Drop-kerbs have been incorporated to allow controlled access for maintenance vehicles and show traffic. The 3rd Border City Steam Fair will take place on the park over the weekend of 27th - 30th May.

A new children's play area is under construction at Richmond Green (Yewdale) using the City Council's own capital funding. Featuring modern, stainless steel equipment the play area will provide safe, challenging play for all children and should be completed later this month. At Hammond's Pond (Upperby) the new play equipment provided by the Friend's Group after a successful £50,000 grant bid has now been installed.

The second annual Friend's Groups Forum was held at Tullie House on 24 March. Attended by 10 different groups, the Forum took the form of a workshop on the topics of Fundraising; Growing Your Group; and Publicity and PR. Thanks to all who took part - growing the capacity of local communities is a key objective of the Corporate Plan and this event was a great success in achieving this aim.

Work to produce a new playtrail linking the play area in Bitts Park and the Skate Park near Devonshire Walk car park is in progress. The new footpath will allow children and families to walk between the two sites safely, without having to walk on the highway. Work on the footpath is complete and two of the play features have been installed. In the next few weeks the large mosaic chairs and 'TV' will be installed. Strategically placed colourful signs will also direct a safe passage for children and young people to the playtrail. Play sessions will be held in Bitts Park to enhance the profile of the playtrail and promote physical activity and wellbeing - a key Corporate objective.

The majority of funding has come from a BIG Lottery grant. The playtrail is aimed at children and young people aged between 5 and 19 years old. It will be accessible to all.

Further enhancements to the scheme are also planned in July 2011 which will include sensory equipment aimed at children and young people with disabilities – this may include a musical theme. The £20,000 required to do the additional work will come from Cumbria County Council's Aiming High fund.

HIGHWAY

Following the damage caused to roads and car parks due to the severe winter weather a programme of permanent repair is now underway to repair the most badly affected areas. The work may cause some inconvenience to users of the areas affected but the work is essential. It is hoped that the City will receive further funding from the County Council for further work during the spring/summer, especially in view of the extra funds recently announced by the Government.

A consultation into the future of CCTV was undertaken in March with comments invited from key partners such as Parish Councils, Councillors, the Police and businesses in the City Centre. Whilst the proposals mean that CCTV will not be manned 24 hours a day, the CCTV service is not being stopped altogether. Monitoring will continue at key times such as Friday and Saturday nights and the

cameras will still run 24 hours a day. Footage can still be reviewed, even when unmanned and this will be an on-going crime deterrent.

Road reconstruction works are underway on Willowholme Industrial Estate to repair very badly damaged areas of road. This is a jointly funded scheme with the County Council Phase 1 has just been completed, Phase 2 starts after Easter.

CEMETERY/CREMATORIUM

City Council Website has been updated with revised prices relating to Bereavement Services.

Distington Hall Crematorium was shut for refurbishment for a week commencing 14th March 2011. Carlisle City Council provided bereavement services to the West of the County during this period so that the impact on the community was minimised.

Councillor R D Bloxham
Local Environment Portfolio Holder