

PORTFOLIO:
ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING

Report of
Portfolio Holder:

**COUNCILLOR
RAY BLOXHAM**

HOUSING

Homelessness, Prevention and Accommodation Services

Homelessness Services

We held a Homelessness briefing session for all members on 2nd November 2011. The purpose of the session was to update members and give an overview of the homelessness processes and statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority.

We conducted an official rough sleeper count on 10th November 2011 during the hours of 2am – 4am in the urban and rural areas of Carlisle which were identified through local intelligence as `hot spots`. We found one rough sleeper who was from out of the area and was the first night sleeping rough. The person was offered temporary accommodation but declined the offer.

Hostel Services

The Hostel Services has continued to provide our in house pre-tenancy training to all clients living in our temporary accommodation. We have also facilitated 3 successful taster sessions of the `Get Into Reading` project through the Healthy Cities programme within John Street and Staffield house. The sessions have been well attended at John Street with the average group size being 6. The group has engaged well with the activity, with several attempting to read and with one regular reader. The level of discussion is positive, most appear willing to engage, offering opinions and listening to others. The discussion is not just around what is happening in the story, but challenges participants to understand why and whether or not this is good or bad, right or wrong.

In addition to this we have facilitated advice and activity sessions including:

- Riverside HA
- Community Development Officers (community engagement)

- Healthy Aspiration and Learning Outcomes (HALO) project activities
- A fancy dress Halloween Party for the families and children currently accommodated within our temporary accommodation

A Christmas party was held for the families and children accommodated in our schemes and we provided food and presents for residents over the Christmas period.

Replacement family women and family accommodation

Plans were submitted for planning on 30th September 2011 and were approved on 16th December by the Development Control panel.

Shaddon Gateway Centre & Dispersed Foyer Services

Carlisle YMCA have appointed Tim Linford as the Centre Manager who has been in post since 28th November 2011 based within the Civic Centre initially to enable closer working with Officers and to share knowledge and information. The manager will be based within the centre once handover is complete and contract management arrangements agreed.

The construction phase of the centre is almost complete with practical completion expected 20th December however there will be ongoing work throughout the Christmas period / New Year and snagging following this. Officers are currently working with the YMCA to update the project, communication and financial plans.

We held a stakeholder meeting on 28th November at which we had 18 attendees from a range of key agencies, we discussed the work on the centre to date, introduced the YMCA (who gave a presentation) and had a discussion around the future services and development. We agreed to have the next meeting in January at the Shaddon Gateway and evaluation / feedback forms have been sent to all attendees asking them to indicate what and how they wish to be involved. This will be followed up by Tim Linford to explore business opportunities / leads on a 1:1 basis.

Supporting People

All Supporting People (SP) contracts are due to come to an end in March 2012, including 3 of the current contracts within Carlisle City Councils temporary accommodation which provide an income of £305, 622.

On 14th November we received via email notification letters stating that we were not successful for the single homeless hostel but were appointed to the panel for the mini competition stage for the Homeless families Hostel along with the Oaklea Trust and Stonham which will begin 5th January 2012 with successful award notification in the beginning of February 2012.

Next steps

- We are currently reviewing delivery options within the hostel services ensuring that sufficient temporary emergency accommodation can be retained in order to continue to meet the authorities' statutory obligations at a neutral cost
- The delivery options will be based on a pathways model of assessment, providing a 24/7 service of temporary accommodation, and out of hours emergency homelessness response to ensure that we can meet our statutory and safeguarding obligations

We will not know the full implications within the District of the changes in services and providers and their impacts on vulnerable people until appointments following mini competition have been confirmed in March 2012.

Welfare Advice Service

- £1,404,037.90 ~ total benefit gains for the period 1st April 2011 to 16th December 2011
- We delivered a training session to workers and volunteers at the Citizen's Advice Bureau about our service on 6th December 2011

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Dog fouling continues to be an emotive issue. The Clean Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers have received 272 complaints about dog fouling so far this year. The team were invited to work in partnership with the Primary Care Trust and the local community to raise awareness of the problems with dog fouling in the Old Harraby area. Shops and community centres have been displaying posters and the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Officers have undertaken 10 surveillance exercises since the beginning of October, including a letter drop to residential properties. Although problems of dog fouling are continuing in the area the partnership approach to tackling this antisocial practice has been welcomed and will hopefully result in successful joint initiatives in the future.

The cold weather and dark nights associated with this time of year result in smoke and light nuisance complaints being made to the Environmental Health Service. The Service has received 83 smoke complaints and 5 artificial light complaints so far this year. The increased popularity of woodburning stoves can be particularly problematic as the flue height allowed is often less than a traditional open coal fire. Commercial and domestic security lighting should be angled downwards to only illuminate specific areas, it should not overspill and illuminate neighbouring properties. The Environmental Health Service would ask that at this time of year users of solid fuel fires and security lighting just check outside when their appliances are being used and make appropriate corrections to their appliances

should they notice smoke blowing or light over spilling and affecting their neighbours.

One of our Environmental Health Officers was successful in securing a place on a Better Training for Safer Food course in Copenhagen in November this year. The courses are EU funded and aim to update participants on EU law and to assist in achieving consistency in the application of food controls throughout the EU. The subjects covered were the microbiological criteria of foods and outbreak investigation. Places on the courses are restricted however Carlisle City Council has a good record of acceptance with three officers having now attended a range of courses which are pertinent to environmental health work.

The first Food Hygiene Training course (organised and led by officers from the EH Team) at Talkin Tarn on 19th December. The course will involve 13 staff involved in catering at outlets run by Neighbourhoods and Green Spaces and Communities Housing and Health.

WASTE SERVICES

Waste Minimisation campaign in Botcherby

The results from the Botcherby waste minimisation campaign reported in September has yielded a consistent waste reduction of 2 tonnes of residual waste per collection. The waste minimisation officer will continue to monitor this to ensure that the residents maintain this reduction in their waste and continue to recycle.

New Interim Waste services Manager

Rob Bellamy is the new interim Waste Services Manager to replace Mike Gardner Rob is covering the post for 3 days and Jan Magnay (Waste Services Operations Manager) will be covering the post for two days.

Round Review

We are currently reviewing our plastic and cardboard rounds to improve the efficiency of the collection and help to realise further savings for the council.

We have purchased a new larger Plastic and cardboard vehicle to enable us to do this. The grant for the purchase of this vehicle was provided by the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership. The larger 24 tonne 50/50 split bodied vehicle will allow the rounds to be done more efficiently as this vehicle has more capacity than three of our current vehicles and will further reduce the collection fleet by one.

The new collection rounds will start the 1st march and are reflected in the new recycling calendars.

NEIGHBOURHOOD & GREEN SPACES

Rickerby Park Cenotaph Railings

Work is due to start on the refurbishment and repair of the railings around the cenotaph early in the New Year. The work is being financed from the War Memorials Trust and from Carlisle City Council's Environmental Enhancement Fund. The work will involve removing all the existing paint work, the replacement of all broken finials, a new entrance gate, and repainting of the all the railings. The work is planned to be completed by end of April 2012.

Friends of Rickerby Park

On a cold, wet and windy Saturday morning the Friends of Rickerby Park met to plant 1000 native daffodil bulbs planted around the park. The friends also took part in the Stanwix Big Tidy up when they carried out a litter pick around the site.

Carlisle Countryside Volunteer Team

In September a volunteer group was set up to carry out practical conservation tasks in the countryside sites around the city. Work carried out by the group so far has included footpath maintenance, coppicing, fence removal and scrub clearance. In the new year they will be clearing out ponds, building board walks and carrying out seasonal maintenance throughout Carlisle's countryside sites.

CNDR mitigation through Kingmoor North Nature Reserve

Over the last few years a proportion of Kingmoor North Nature Reserve has been lost for the development of the CNDR. In mitigation for this, a piece of woodland which was previously part of Kingmoor Business Park has been given to Carlisle City Council as an extension to the nature reserve. 60 bat boxes have been put up in the Kingmoor Nature Reserves, orchids have been translocated to the sites and two ponds which contain Great Crested Newts will be cleared to preserve their habitat in the future.

Neighbourhood Services Team

On Tuesday 1st November working with Probation Service and Ruth Crane (funded the skips) we resolved a long running problem with 2 rear lanes:

1. Trinity Buildings - removed builders rubble that had been a refuge for rats.
2. Peel St – removed a derelict fly tipped caravan and strimmed the area.

On 2 December the team was helped by members of Carlisle Rotary Club to clean up the new cycle path along the Caldew behind the industrial estate at Denton Holme.

Over the 17th and 18th November the team was involved in a partnership project to tidy up the Shady Grove Road/Orton Road areas. As well as staff from Neighbourhoods and Green Spaces, our partners included Riverside HA and their grounds contractor (ISS) and the Community Payback unit of the probation service.

Work included litter and fly-tip removal and re-landscaping a number of shrub-beds which had become overgrown and untidy.

Cemetery and crematorium

The cremators have just undertaken their annual independent emissions tests (1st December). Initial feedback from the assessor is encouraging and we are confident that the results will be positive.

A Remembrance service for the fallen from wars took place at Richardson Street Cemetery on Thursday 10th November at 10.30am led by Reverend Batson with the Mayor and Mayoress in attendance.

HIGHWAYS SERVICES

SUPER FAST BROADBAND

City and County staff are liaising with a contractor working for BT who will be installing 77 cabinets around the urban area to enable fibre optic cables to be taken closer to people's homes. The work is due to take place over the next few months and should result in broadband speeds of up to 40mps, existing speeds vary between 8 and 20mps.

CAR PARK SURFACING

It is proposed to resurface Civic Centre and Bitts Park car parks in early January as soon as the Xmas shopping rush is past. The car parks will then be remarked and updated signage provided. This work is hopefully the forerunner of further improvements to other car parks subject to funding being allocated.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Our staff continue to carry out a range of maintenance activities funded by the County Council under Claimed Rights. A scheme is underway at present on Holme Acres Drive to repair damaged concrete roads, similar work will start shortly on Knowefield Avenue.

Councillor R D Bloxham
Environment & Housing Portfolio Holder