

Meeting Date: 2nd March 2021

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Elizabeth Mallinson**

HEALTHY CITY TEAM

Play Areas

Planning for the complete upgrade of Hammonds Pond play area, in Upperby, continues. Designs received from suppliers of new equipment, based on the results of a public consultation held in Autumn 2020, are currently being refined and evaluated whilst further feedback on the scheme has been invited from local charities who support children with disabilities. Some of the existing items on the site, which are still in good structural condition, will receive refurbishments as part of the process.

Smaller scale refurbishments and enhancements to individual items of play equipment or surfacing at sites in Cummersdale, Hunters Crescent (Garlands), Hadrian's Gardens (near Houghton) and Chances Park (Morton) are also planned for the coming months, ensuring high standards of play provision for children across the area.

Space to Talk Partnership

Carlisle City Council has been approached by Newcastle City Council, who are interested in adopting the Space to Talk model. We have also been asked to present at the next UK Healthy Cities meeting in mid-March on the Space to Talk initiative.

Food Carlisle

After a long delay, because of the Covid-19 situation, we have now successfully appointed a Co-ordinator to reinvigorate the Food Carlisle partnership. This post is part funded by the Sustainable Food Places run by the Soil Association.

As part of the Co-ordinator's role, we continue to support the national 'Sugar Smart' campaign such as 'Fizz Free February'.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Customer Services has remained busy since the last Portfolio Report. We have been the first point of contact for Business Grants, Track & Trace payments and Council Tax Recovery. Early on January we had increased volume due to weather events which caused disruption to waste services collections and an element of response to localised flood risk. We have also been dealing with a number of persistent complainants. The general mood of contact has been one of frustration, where people seem less tolerant. In the circumstances, the team have done a fantastic job handling these calls professionally.

We have been supporting other services by seconding members of our team to other departments that are on the front line of our Covid-19 response. Three members of our team, including the reception team, are working with Track and Trace. We have also assisted by providing a team member to support the crematorium team during particularly busy periods. Customer Services are using a web based phone system which enables us to work from home. A number of other departments have had need of this system including, Track and Trace, Building Control, Planning, Council Tax Processing, Recovery and Economic Development. We have set up these systems and trained over 60 users so our services keep running with minimal impact on the customer.

Telephone Contact

December and January are typically quiet months but we have seen no let up. We handled 24,936 calls in this period which is an increase of 14,037 calls in the same period last year, for the reasons stated above.

Emails

We handled 3913 emails in December and January which was an increase of 1949 from the same period last year. This was mainly due to Council Tax recovery actions. Our target of dealing with 90% of emails within 48 hrs was once again achieved with a performance of 93%. Advisors volunteered for overtime to achieve this target.

Supervisor Call Backs

As referenced in previous reports, Supervisor call backs are in place for the less digitally inclusive for the assisted completion of online forms including, Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit. This has remained successful with a further 17 appointments completed in December and January.

Foodbank Referrals

We are still supporting Foodbank Referrals with our automated system. We referred 52 people to the foodbank in December and January.

Domestic Abuse Code of Guidance draft amendments

The Domestic Abuse Bill continues to pass through the parliamentary process and will introduce a new category of priority need which effectively removes the 'vulnerability' test for those who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

Cumbria awaits notification of the allocation of funding to support the implementation of the new duties. Work is currently underway to map existing emergency accommodation and support needs / trends to ensure that essential services can continue.

Carlisle City Council currently delivers specialist supported accommodation to victims and their children as part of the Cumbria wide Domestic Abuse Partnership. The external funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) for these posts ends 31st March 2021.