

Environmental Health Service update report

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Purpose of the Report

To provide members with a brief update of the work of the Environmental Health Service in the last twelve months and to look forward to future challenges. Alasdair Bell, Environmental Health Manager will attend the meeting to answer any questions.

Recommendation

That Members note the report

Public Interest

The Environmental Health Service is a frontline service committed to protecting public health and safeguarding the environment. The majority of work undertaken by the service is required by law with very little discretionary work. The Environmental Health Service Plan that outlines the work of the service along with key service standards and the service action plan can be found on the council website at: http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/569271/service_plan_eh_15-16.pdf

Report

The work of the service continues to go well with staff dealing with a wide variety of matters including routine inspections and enforcement activity. Discussion of the up and coming Transformation programme is dominating our thinking at the moment and staff resources are being allocated to help plan the future arrangements.

Food and Safety Team

The Food & Safety Team both enforces legislation and provides advice and assistance to food and other businesses. The main emphasis of the team is to contribute to the success of the local economy by helping food businesses avoid problems of food poisoning etc and the severe economic consequences that can result. The team is also involved in tackling food fraud, which can be very harmful to public safety, economic development and fair business competition. The food safety element of the work of the team includes the approval and audit of food manufacturers, food sampling, premises inspections which includes local delivery of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, the investigation of food complaints and food poisoning as well as responding to national food safety alerts. The health and safety element includes inspection, advice, complaint and accident investigation. In East, in the last 12 months 304 food inspections have been carried out, 72 cases of suspected food poisoning have been investigated and 11 accidents reported/investigated. Much of the work carried out is routine 'behind the scenes' and the public is generally unaware of what is going on until something significant happens such as a major food poisoning outbreak. Key achievements to note;

- All planned interventions/inspections and complaints successfully dealt with
- National food safety Week 2016 supported. The theme being Food Waste Reduction.
- Development of the Better Business for All (BBfA) project.
- Delivery of business information covering new food Information allergen regs.
- Supporting the Community Council for Somerset with an advice workshop for village hall operators on complying with the new national allergen controls
- Ongoing management of 'Flexible Warranting' scheme to allow cross boundary working throughout Somerset
- Programme of advice and guidance on working at height in the high risk warehousing sector
- Supporting a multi-agency investigation into wild game poaching with local Police, RSPCA and Trading Standards
- Maintaining a multi-agency Safety Advisory Group(SAG) for events being held in South Somerset

Environmental Protection Team

The EP Team deals with pollution control and environmental monitoring as well as the enforcement of environmental legislation. The Team checks local air quality and investigates a range of complaints about nuisance, in particular noise and smoke. The Team issues permits and inspects premises under the Pollution Prevention and Control regime (PPC). The Team also undertakes private water supply sampling, contaminated land assessment and the investigation of private drainage complaints as well as acting as a statutory consultee on planning and licensing applications. The delivery of the Pest Control service and public health burials are also part of the service provided. The Streetscene enforcement team is now part of the EP Team and deals with a range of issues including dog control and fly tipping. During the past 12 months 83 noise complaints have been investigated and 620 calls were taken regarding pest control in Area East. Significant points to note;

- Work on the remediation of an old gas works site in Langport following a successful bid for funding from DEFRA has now been completed.
- The Private Water supply sampling and risk assessment programme has been successfully completed although a lot there is a lot of work going on regarding improvement works required to the village supply at Allowenshay.
- The Permitted installation inspection programme (PPC) has been fully completed
- New contaminated Land Inspection Strategy adopted
- New Enforcement policy adopted
- Four Public Health funerals dealt with
- Enforcement Officers are continuing to implement new microchipping legislation following the success of two free microchipping events held by them in March at Ham Hill and Yeovil Country Parks. 197 dogs were microchipped at the two events.
- Last year 28 abandoned vehicles were investigated in area East resulting in 12 being removed and destroyed. The team have seen a marked increase in the number of abandoned vehicles across the district since the start of the year.

Housing Standards Team

The Housing Standards Team deal with private sector housing advice and enforcement. This includes investigating complaints about sub-standard rented housing, the inspection and licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and the licensing of caravan sites. The team also provides advice/assistance/grant aid to improve energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty. The team also processes applications for home repairs assistance grants, disabled facilities, HMO and empty property grants, and helps administer the WRT home loan scheme. The team works closely with the Housing Options Team in seeking to tackle the potential housing crisis that is developing in South Somerset. Significant points include;

- The running of two Landlord Forum events held at Holy Trinity Community Centre, Yeovil with over 70 local landlords attending.
- On-going enforcement action to do with substandard housing and HMOs.
- £800,000 of Disabled Facilities Grants paid
- Several key grant funded building projects underway including two projects on South Street, Yeovil.
- Over fifty empty properties brought back into use.
- Active participation in multi-agency Yeovil One project to include work on anti-social behaviour and rough sleeping.
- New grants and loans policy adopted following change in funding arrangements for DFGs.
- New Private Sector Housing Strategy 2016-21 adopted.
- New mobile home grant/loan initiative launched

Research and support

The Environmental Health service is supported by the Research and Specialist Support Team who maintain and update the Environmental Health back system Civica APP, inspection records and web pages as well as providing finance support, management performance information and produce the annual government returns. The team are currently working with the Streetscene Service to implement the Civica APP back office system at Lufton Depot.

Financial Implications

There are none attached to this report

Corporate Priority Implications

The work of the unit helps contribute towards the delivery of a range of our Council Plan aims including the aims to;

- Protect and enhance the quality of our environment.
- Enable housing to meet all needs.
- Improve health and reduce health inequalities.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

The work of the unit contributes towards this NI with its work on fuel poverty

Equality and Diversity Implications

As part of the EH service plan a full equalities and diversity assessment was undertaken.

Background Papers: *Environmental Health Service Plan 2016/17*
Food & Safety Service Plan 2016/17
Private Sector Housing Strategy 2016-21
Housing Implementation Strategy 2015 update
SSDC Council Plan 2016-21
Policy for Awarding Private Sector Housing Grants and Loans -January 2017