

Area North Committee – 26th November 2008

9. Environmental Health and Community Protection Service Update

Portfolio Holder: Ric Pallister, Health, Housing, Inclusion & Revenues & Benefits
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Purpose of the Report

To provide Members with a brief update of the work of the Environmental Health and Community Protection unit. This report is to accompany a short power point presentation to be given to the Committee. Members will have the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the delivery of the service.

Recommendation

That Members note and comment on the report.

Introduction

Environmental Health and Community Protection is a frontline service committed to protecting public health and safety and safeguarding the environment. The service deals directly with a wide range of clients from individual residents in single domestic premises to the whole community, from small family run businesses to major international companies. The majority of work undertaken by the service is required by law with only a small amount of discretionary work where the need has been determined by Committee decision and/or corporate policies. An annual Service Plan published on the SSDC website provides further detailed information on the costs, structure and work of the unit as well as performance information.

Report - Service Description

The service comprises the following teams:

Food and Safety Team

Providing food safety and health and safety enforcement and advice. The food safety element includes the approval and audit of food manufacturers (South Somerset has more of these than most local authorities), food sampling, premises inspection (there are approximately 1,800 food premises of which 434 are in Area North), investigation of food complaints, incidents of food poisoning, and the response to national food alerts. Health and Safety includes inspection, advice, complaint and accident investigation to approximately 3,000 commercial premises. This team also deals with the enforcement of the smokefree workplaces and public places legislation and was instrumental in developing the Health and Well-being Strategy of the Council. All the food premises in Area North are inspected by the team.

Environmental Protection Team

Providing pollution control and environmental monitoring as well as the enforcement of environmental legislation. The monitoring of local air quality, the development of the Air Quality Strategy and the investigation of a range of complaints about nuisance, in particular noise and smoke (in 2007/08 there were 70 noise complaints in Area North, just over half of these were domestic e.g. barking dogs and music). The issuing of

permits and the inspection of premises under the Pollution Prevention and Control regime. Private water supply sampling, contaminated land assessment and remediation as well as private drainage complaints. The delivery of the Pest Control service and public health burials. Staff are regularly monitoring noise/nuisance complaints in Area North.

Housing Standards Team

Providing enforcement, advice and grant aid for private sector housing. Includes investigating complaints about sub-standard rented housing, inspection and licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) (of the 52 licensed HMO's there are none in Area North) and the licensing of caravan sites. This work can affect properties occupied by migrant workers in Area North. The team 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.

Home Aid and Handyman Services

Our in-house home improvement agency is part of a joint arrangement with Taunton Dean Borough Council, and organises works for disabled facilities grants applicants and provides the Handyman Service. The Home Aid service is jointly funded by social Services, Somerset PCT and Supporting People. With an increasing elderly population the role of the service has been and is set to increase further. 35 clients in Area North had their Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) approved in 2007/08. North Expenditure on DFGs is a major part of the Council's capital programme and could well increase.

Emergency Planning and Civil Contingencies Team

Providing corporate emergency planning advice and guidance as well as compilation and maintenance of the generic emergency plan and specific high-risk plans. Ensuring the Council fulfils its role as a 'Category 1' responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Providing support and advice to Heads of Service in the production of business continuity plans for services, and the maintenance of the out of hour's response for all council services. Recent flooding incidents have been dealt with by the team.

Licensing Team

Licensing people and premises for a range of activities including sale and supply of alcohol, late night refreshment, entertainment, gambling, taxis, lotteries, zoos, road closures, tattooists, acupuncture, sex shops and various establishments relating to animal welfare (there are 181 licensed premises in Area North). The service has recently been developing an expanding role in the enforcement of new animal welfare and charity legislation.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

The work of the unit helps contribute towards the delivery of a range of our Corporate Priorities but perhaps most importantly towards Aim 3 To improve the Health and Well-being of our citizens and to Aim 5 to promote a balanced natural and built environment.

Background Papers: *Environmental Health and Community Service Plan 2008-09*
Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007-12
