

7. Environmental Health and Community Protection 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 and Community Protection service. 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 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.

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 1,500 food premises of which 489 are in Area West), 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 West 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 107 noise complaints in Area West,

81% 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 West and there has been recent involvement of the team with the development of the old Horlicks site near Ilminster.

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 6 are in Area West) and the licensing of caravan sites. This work can affect properties occupied by migrant workers in Area West. The team provides advice/assistance/grant aid to improve energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty. The 'Warm Streets' project is targeted at Chard to provide extra insulation grants in the town. 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 has recently been involved in the enforcement of HMO licensing to do with properties in Hope Terrace, Chard.

Home Aid and Handyman Services

Our in-house home improvement agency is part of a joint arrangement with Taunton Deane 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 West had their Disabled Facility Grants approved in 2007/08. 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 227 licensed premises in Area West). 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 2008-9*
Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007-12