

Area West Committee – 17th July 2013

9. Environmental Health Service Update Report

Strategic Director: Vega Sturgess, Operations and Customer Focus
Assistant Director: Laurence Willis, Environment
Service Manager: Alasdair Bell, Environmental Health Manager
Contact Details: alsadair.bell@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462056

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 give a verbal update and 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.

Report

In April this year an End of Year Report 2012/13 was produced outlining the work of the Environmental Health service during the previous 12 months. A copy was sent to all members and will be discussed along with this report. The work of the service continues to go well with staff dealing with a wide variety of matters including routine inspections, enforcement activity and project work. Pressures on the Council's budget mean that since the last report further budget savings have had to be found, mostly by more staff going part time or retiring.

Food and Safety Team

The Food & Safety Team both enforces legislation and provides advice and assistance to food and other businesses. The food safety element includes the approval and audit of food manufacturers, food sampling, premises inspections, the investigation of food complaints and food poisoning as well as responding to national food alerts. The health and safety element includes inspection, advice, complaint and accident investigation. In Area West in the last 12 months 310 food inspections have been carried out, 90 cases of suspected food poisoning have been investigated and 15 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. Significant points to note:

- The continued roll out of the National Food Hygiene Rating scheme ('scores on the doors'). This is a national scheme whereby all food catering businesses are given points dependant on their food hygiene and management practices. The businesses are encouraged to put up their score certificates in visible locations. Their scores have been put up on a national website, linked to the SSDC website, so that consumers can make an informed decision about where to eat. Anyone can now see

how their local restaurant or pubs rates in terms of food hygiene. The scheme has proved very useful in driving up food hygiene standards in food businesses.

- The prosecution of the owners of the Travellers Rest public house Roundham who were found guilty of 8 food hygiene offences and banned from selling food.
- An audit by German inspectors from the Food & Veterinary Office of the EU that resulted in many positive comments about the Team such as 'exemplary' and 'a standard setting performance'. A really excellent result.

Environmental Protection Team

The Environment Protection 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. 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. During the past 12 months 91 noise complaints have been investigated and 405 calls were taken regarding pest control in Area West. Significant points to note:

- Work has continued on the investigation of an old gas works site in Langport following the successful bid for funding from the Government.
- Staff featured on a TV programme serving notices to deal with anti-social behaviour resulting in eviction of problem tenants.

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:

- Increased working to identify and deal with empty homes.
- Delivery of over 100 Warm Streets Grants to tackle fuel poverty.
- The advent of the Government's 'Green Deal'.
- Running of two Landlord Forum events.
- Future impact of Housing Benefit changes on rented accommodation.
- Increased enforcement action to do with substandard housing and HMOs.

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 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.

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 Environmental Health Service Plan a full equalities and diversity assessment was undertaken.

Background Papers: *Environmental Health End of year Report 2012/13*
Environmental Health Service Plan 2012/15
Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007-12
Food & Safety Service Plan 2013/14
SSDC Corporate Plan 2012-15
