

Bromsgrove District Council 20th April 2016

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Aligned to Help me to Keep my Place Safe and Looking Good

I am pleased to present my report to councillors for the areas covered by my portfolio. In so doing I would like to look back over recent events and forward to emerging issues affecting our council and our residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Land Drainage

Callow Brook flood alleviation scheme in Rubery has been constructed and will protect 6 houses from very significant flooding.

Green Lane flood alleviation scheme has been completed and protects 20 houses.

In Hagley, Severn Trent, WCC Highways, Environment Agency and North Worcester Water Management are working together on an integrated model, which can be used to understand the combined flood risk from the watercourses, highway drainage system and surface water flooding. The idea is to identify any measures that can be taken to reduce flood risk from these sources, complementing a proposed Severn Trent scheme.

We are working with Severn Trent to combine resources and opportunity to solve the issues where approximately 40 homes in Bournheath village are at risk of flooding that has been occurring from the foul sewer discharging, overland surface water flow and the culverted watercourse escaping. We have attracted £20k for a modelling study from Environment Agency and have put a bid in to attract £110k towards the costs of work. Separately Severn Trent are committing funding to upsize the foul sewer and disconnect surface flows to sort the foul flooding. We hope to hear in the next few weeks if we are successful with the £110k bid.

Free Evening Parking trial

Environmental Services have supported the Evening & Weekend Task Group that was set up in September 2015 to consider the trial. The Group has suggested a number of recommendations, one of which was that the Council needs to formulate a clear Economic Development strategy that includes car parking.

Multi-storey Car Park

We highlighted issues of increasing anti-social behaviour and vandalism sustained at the multi-storey car park in Bromsgrove. Following reports from the Police, Community Safety and the Engineering team, money has been allocated to undertake measures to reduce this anti-social trend.

New Refuse Vehicles

This year we have invested in our refuse service by purchasing 4 new 26 tonne refuse collection vehicles. These have the latest Euro 6 engines with 360 degree camera recording systems together with route optimisation and communication software.

Waste Collections

- We now have 100% AWC collections within Bromsgrove District. Every property in Bromsgrove now receives a recycling service;
- For the very first time BDC has hit the 50% recycling rate in quarter 1. The overall annual recycling rate currently stands at 46%
- New WRAP imagery was used for promotion of recycling in houses and flats with good feedback, using pictures rather than words to convey the message;
- New vehicle livery promoting what can be recycled was used on all RCVs;
- 5 short media films were uploaded to the Council Youtube channel to address issues of contamination with much interest;
- A Recycling Ready campaign was broadcast via Twitter using images to identify what can be recycled and what cannot, which was later rolled out to other H&W authorities;
- A 7 day roadshow ran during August addressing contamination issues with the general public;
- Updated planning guidance was developed to assist planning and development of dwellings suitable for our waste collection services;
- On behalf of all 7 collection authorities in H&W, BDC along with Wychavon, led on the review of waste collection arrangements to ensure compliance with The Waste (England and Wales)(Amendment) Regulations 2012 and produce the necessary TEEP review;
- Liaison with third parties has improved. Developers, BDHT, and Environmental Health have all contributed in resolving waste collection issues throughout the district;
- In-cab technology units have now been ordered:

WM In-Cab: The full mobile technology solution

Every day, problems occur on collection rounds. From access problems to contaminated waste and missed bins. The problems are often not picked up by crews or picked up on paper systems which are not available to back office staff when customers complain or enquire.

WM In-Cab provides a simple to use, practical In-Cab solution connecting the back office to the crews in real time. Solution includes problem reporting, tracking, completion of rounds and because it is designed by Webaspx, the data is seamlessly integrated with our optimisation software which was purchased in 2012/13.

Key Benefits

- Improve the responsiveness of the service to the public. Connecting crews to the back office directly so that collection problems such as contaminated bins, none presented bins, damaged bins, swallowed bins, unauthorised bins, can be reported as they happen by crews.
 - Building a history of problem areas and properties for education and action.
 - Vehicle tracking – know where a vehicle is and know where it has been and where it has not been. Predict when a vehicle is going to finish.
 - Use of tracking data for optimisation of routes.
 - Integrate seamlessly with WMDesign Optimisation and other back office systems.
- Through the Route Optimisation Software we have been able to accommodate the 3,500 new developments throughout the district with out requiring additional resources in 15/16;
 - We are continuing to share resources across BDC and RBC to accommodate urgent operational requirements.

Trade Waste Collections

- Trade waste customer base has increased to a financial break even trading position.
- We are continuing to improve customer relationships and have won new customers from the larger trading organisations as a result.
- This year; outstanding customer debts of approximately £80k have be reduced to less than £1k.
- In September 2015, BDC have taken on all RBC internal trade waste contracts, which will raise income by approximately £21k per full operating year.
- The trade waste service has been rebranded and is now referred to as Business Waste Service, including new livery, leaflets and relevant documents.

- The promotional leaflet has been included in the 2017 business rate invoices and we have already acquired new contracts and stimulated interest for our services.
- New stylish waste containers are now in circulation, promoting our services at a much higher and professional level than ever before.
- Route Optimisation software is being used to assess new route rounds to drive in further collection efficiencies.
- Officers are now investigating trials for the introduction of Business Waste Recycling. This will be a limited trial to identify operational requirements and charges.
- Birmingham CC have requested BDC to take on 9 new contracts that fall within the BCC boundary, all of which are additional contract and income for BDC.

Garden Waste Collections

As per the review of Garden Waste Fees and Charges report in November 2015:

Report Recommendations were:

- 2.1 *That Members note the steps being suggested by officers to run the garden waste collection service more efficiently as set out in this report and agree the following steps:-*
- a) That officers work to establish Direct Debit as the primary method of payment for the Garden Waste Service from 2017.*
 - b) That officers work with new customers to support payments being taken by Direct Debit subscriptions for the 2016 service.*
 - c) That existing garden waste customers are encouraged to sign up to payments by Direct Debit for the 2016 service.*
 - d) That the garden waste service is promoted at minimal cost through a variety of online, social media and press advertisements.*
- 2.2 *That Cabinet recommend to Council that the charges for the garden waste collection service be increased to £40 with effect from 1st February 2016.*
- 10,000 customers are now registered with the new DD payment system.
 - Route Optimisation software has been used to reschedule garden waste collections resulting in one vehicle and a crew of three being saved and redeployed within the waste collection services.
 - The garden waste service has been promoted to potential customers through bin stickers and flyers to increase the customer base.

- 18,463 customers have signed up to the 2016/17 service, with 9,667 having signed up to a DD method of payment – an increase of over 6,500 (to date 21/3/16).

Cesspool Collections

- Route Optimisation software has been used to reschedule cesspool collections into operational regions, which is starting to show a reduction in operational costs, such as fuel usage.
- Officers are working on a marketing strategy, similar to the Trade Waste Collections, to improve our customer base and income levels.

HGV Sweeper

- Route Optimisation software is being used to reschedule sweeping routes to maximise the efficiency of these HGV vehicles. Early signs are encouraging.
- We have been working closely with WCC to maximise the operational efficiency of joint projects undertaken within the district including trying to coordinate seeping and gully emptying in areas that are prone to highway flooding.

BDC Place Teams

- Implementation of Place Working and significant changes to how we work has improved relations with Parish Councils across the district as teams have far more ownership of the district under the new structure.
- Increased support for community initiatives to improve the amenity of the district, with 10 groups supported across the district under the Clean for the Queen campaign in March 2016, and additional events throughout 2015 to support local initiatives in Alvechurch, Rubery, Bentley, Clent and Catshill as well as a staff initiative for corporate responsibility with Phoenix Group in Wythall.
- Closer working with BDHT and the refuse team to resolve issues in bin stores and fly tipping – generated £3,000 income during 2015/16.
- Supporting the Town Team to benefit Bromsgrove town centre.
- Taken on Lengthsman scheme for Barnt Green with an income of £2k
- Closer working with WCC and Wythall Parish Council as part of Project Optimise
 - Sharing costs with WCC for collection of fly tips that cause a hazard on the highway.
- Carrying out more paid work on behalf of Parish Councils (bin emptying and litter picking).
- Wildflower Meadow created in partnership with local residents and sharing costs.

- Supported “Willows Hedgehog Rescue” in a campaign to highlight the risk to hedgehogs from grass cutting equipment.
- Bulky collections have increased dramatically and the data being captured has identified a decrease in domestic fly-tipping reports throughout the urban areas.
- Joint working and negotiations this year with WCC regarding the maintenance of dual carriage ways throughout the district has resulted in BDC being given the opportunity to carrying out work on the A448. This work will be carried out in 2016, on a trial basis only; new work that will be brought in-house, work that would normally be given to outside contractors by WCC

BDC Enforcement Highlights

- June 2015 – Joint stop and search project with the police to tackle illegal transporting of waste and fly tipping. Resulted in a successful prosecution for transporting waste without a Waste Carriers License £600 penalty, plus £60 victim surcharge and £785 costs.
- September 2015 – Joint prosecution with the Police for illegal transport of waste without a Waste Transfer Note. Resulted in a £300 penalty plus £30 victim surcharge and £400 contribution towards costs.
- March 2016 - £300 FPN being issued for breach of duty of care for disposal of waste after local resident caught fly tipping in Fish House Lane.
- Another stop and search initiative with the Police planned for April 2016 in the Wythall area.
- FPN Training for 11 BDC staff to issue tickets for littering.
- Joint working with Co-ordinators to gather evidence on fly tips and issue warning letters where prosecution not appropriate.
- Routine patrols in Bromsgrove Town Centre to address issues arising from local businesses and work with them to resolve them:
 - Fast food outlets in Bromsgrove now starting to carry out additional litter picking as part of their closing routine after being spoken to by our enforcement officer.
 - Pubs have been spoken to about smoking related litter.
 - New Market organisers working with us to address market waste being disposed of in our litter bins.
- Fortnightly patrols across the district to monitor and follow up on known issues.
- Closer working with Parish Councils regarding littering, fly tipping and dog fouling – letter dropped warning letters regarding known issues.
- Vehicles not secure – litter.
- Flyposting – 40+ instances dealt with and removed across the district.
- Approximately 180 abandoned vehicles investigated and dealt with.

- Enforcement partnership set up with Wychavon, Wyre Forest and Worcester City at an operational level to share best practice in tackling environmental crime.
- Ongoing joint working with Police regarding a number of environmental enforcement issues such as Japanese Knotweed, graffiti and fly tipping.

Bereavement Services

There are planned forthcoming Infrastructure Extension works to the North Bromsgrove Cemetery, Catshill, to be undertaken by Bromsgrove DC, commencing within the late Spring/Summer period of this year. These extension works are necessary due to the current lack of available burial space within the District Council's area.

The works briefly comprise of the construction of the necessary infrastructure, including the main access road, footpaths, fencing, surface water drainage with off-site infiltration soak away system and ancillary works. Unfortunately the new site has to be accessed by the Contractor's vehicles, plant and equipment, via the existing main access road off Barley Mow Lane. Obviously the Contractor will be required to undertake such works in a manner that will both allow burials to continue to take place and that the existing cemetery area will be kept in a clean, tidy and acceptable condition.

These works were initially intended to commence late last year, but due to the sensitivity of the site, it was delayed to avoid the winter weather and the possibility that the existing cemetery would be contaminated with material from Contractor's vehicles. In hindsight, with all the wet weather, the decision was appropriate.

Bromsgrove District Council Burials between 01/01/15 to 31/12/15

Total = 171

Old Cemetery - 101 made up of 71 cremated remains & 30 full;

New Cemetery - 8 made up of 2 cremated remains & 6 full;

North Cemetery - 62 made up of 22 cremated remain & 40 full;

New Cemetery - wildlife monitoring program to review badger population with a view to managing an active sett in combination with local residents who border the cemetery perimeter.

Old Cemetery - upgrade to metal fixings within grave surrounds.

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES

Licensing

Licensing Officers continue to monitor and respond to changes in national guidance and licensing legislation and these changes have recently resulted in work being undertaken across all districts in a number of key areas such as Taxi licensing (changes to driver/operator licence durations) with the new provisions of the Deregulation Act 2015 and in the area of Gambling (the review of each Council's Statements of Licensing Principles). Licensing Officers have also continued to support partner Councils Licensing Committee's and there has also been further review work in some of the districts relevant policy areas, for example in Bromsgrove introduction of a Site Management Agreement to help control face to face fund raising ("chugging") in the High Street and aspects of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Handbook (driver and vehicle licensing policies/procedures).

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Joint Committee has recently endorsed our support of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Action Plan and our undertakings within it - as taxi drivers are the eyes and ears of our community they are well placed to play an important role in our community. Licensing Officers are actively undertaking a CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) awareness raising campaign with the trade both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensed operators/vehicle owners and drivers and also with premises licensed under the Licensing Act. This awareness campaign is also being highlighted through district licensing forums and in other liaison meetings with the trade. Information leaflets about CSE have been written by Licensing Officers and sent out to all licence holders, giving details on how to report any concerns licence holders (especially drivers) may have and who to report it to. Licensing Officers are also keeping District Councillors aware of our involvement in the awareness campaign through feedback at Licensing Committee meetings.

Environmental Health

Pioneering work by WRS to boost Worcestershire's economy by supporting an entire sector of food businesses to improve their practices and regulatory compliance has won a national award. The way WRS is helping curry houses and takeaways improve in areas like food composition, food safety and health and safety scooped the top "Innovation" award at the Better Business for All Awards in London. The award highlighted WRS's special Asian Seminar Programme, which has brought over 60 Worcestershire restaurant businesses together in a series of specialised seminars held in each of the Bromsgrove District, Malvern Hills District, Redditch Borough, Worcester City, Wychavon District, and Wyre Forest District council areas. WRS beat competition from locations across England to be recognised for its innovative collaboration with the Asian restaurant sector, after being nominated to the awards by the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP).

Through the seminars, which are arranged by WRS and the Bangladeshi Catering Association UK, with the help of a local partnership with the Worcester Islamic Association, Environmental Health and Trading Standards officers support restaurant owners and managers to gain confidence and understanding in self-compliance with regulations, as well as to understand the positive business support that local regulators provide for small businesses. The Right Hon Sajid Javid, Minister for Business Innovation and Skills and MP for Bromsgrove, dropped in to the Bromsgrove seminar to offer his support to the programme and local businesses.

As a result of the success of the programme the Bangladesh Caterers Association UK and the Guild of Bangladeshi Restaurateurs have made WRS their 'Primary Authority' nationwide. This establishes the county's provider of regulatory services as the "go-to" authority for some 30,000 business members nationwide, although initially the priority focus is on restaurants and takeaways in the West Midlands.

The Better Business for All Awards are run by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' Better Regulation Delivery Office and are designed to recognise local regulators that are working to understand businesses better, and tailoring their services to meet business needs.

The food hygiene intervention programme is on schedule and work continues with the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) looking at a possible Earned Recognition scheme designed to enable small producers and manufacturers to access new markets.

Environmental Health Officers have also continued to work with Network Rail and its contractors to keep noise and disturbance to residents to a minimum during the development of the new railway station and associated infrastructure project in Aston Fields.