

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Bernie Mooney
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CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Smith, Head of Environment & Regulation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to Members of the Council on matters relevant to her portfolio.

1. TRADING STANDARDS ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

To tackle rogue traders operating in Wirral, Trading Standards Officers carry out a number of multi-agency operations with the Police and share intelligence with a number of other agencies such as the Department of Work and Pensions. This approach to tackling rogue traders has been effective in bringing to justice a number of rogue traders who often target the most vulnerable in our society. Working with our partner agencies, Trading Standards have recently been successful in prosecuting two rogue traders. In the first case a trader was sentenced to undertake 80 hours of unpaid work and ordered to pay costs of £1,212.22 after cold calling on an 89 year man and undertaking unnecessary works. In a second case a joint prosecution by the Department of Work and Pensions and Wirral Trading Standards Officers a trader was jailed for 27 months for overcharging an 88 year woman and for benefit offences. Trading Standards have another significant case which is currently proceeding through the courts and further operations and joint working with our partner agencies are being planned for the year ahead to ensure that our resources are targeted against these rogue traders.

2. NUISANCE CALL BLOCKERS PROJECT

In 2014 Trading Standards Officers secured funding to purchase and supply over 600 nuisance call blockers to some of Wirral's most vulnerable residents. Using One Stop Shops for distribution and through partnership working with Age UK and local registered social landlords vulnerable residents were identified who had reported repeated targeting by cold callers. The final report on the success of this project has confirmed that the project was successful in removing a high percentage of nuisance calls from the vulnerable users who participated in the scheme, with a 79% reduction reported in annoyance, fear and anger felt by the users who responded.

3. FOOD SAFETY UPDATE

The service remains on target to deliver a 100% inspection of the highest risk Food Premises. However, through our food safety performance analysis systems an emerging issue relating to Chinese Takeaways was identified which highlighted a number of businesses in this sector

whose food safety standards had remained below a National Food Hygiene Rating of three which represents a satisfactory standard. To help drive up the food hygiene standards in this business sector a community based project with the Chinese Community has been implemented with Environmental Health Officers currently delivering bespoke Food Safety training to all of Wirral's 0,1,2 National Food Hygiene rated Chinese Takeaways. The results will be assessed and reported back later in 2015.

4. REDUCE THE STRENGTH

A joint partnership project lead by Environmental Health and Trading Standards is currently being delivered with Licensing, Public Health and the Police with ex user volunteers to launch a reduce the strength campaign in the "7 beats" area of Birkenhead, an area identified as suffering high levels of anti-social behaviour related to drinking high strength alcohol. The project Reducing the Strength (RtS) is an effective, evidence based approach to reducing alcohol related harm in our communities. It involves persuading alcohol retailers to voluntarily agree not to sell high strength, very cheap alcohol and has been shown to lead to reductions in anti-social behaviour and street-drinking. The success of the project in this area will be assessed and reported back later 2015.

5. REDUCING LITTER

From 2015/16, the Council will produce an annual Litter Reduction Delivery Plan, setting out how we intend to discourage littering, encourage even more community involvement and how we intend to work with Biffa, our street cleansing contractor to optimise cleansing operations. The draft plan will be circulated to constituency managers in March so that each of the 4 constituency panels can comment on the plan and select a priority project for inclusion within the plan specifically targeting a local area or issue.

In response to the support shown through the budget consultation process, the Council is currently tendering for a contractor to carry out litter patrols across the borough. The contract is due to start in June and will see around 4800 fixed penalty notices being issued to people who wilfully discard litter. Officers are optimistic that Wirral will see significant environmental improvements as a direct result of the initiative. They are working closely with officers from Sefton, Knowsley and Halton Council to ensure the delivery model is not only effective but also fair and financially viable.

6. WASTE MANAGEMENT

Four waste prevention apprentices began an 18 month training programme with the Council in January. The posts are funded jointly through the Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority and the Council's own waste prevention fund (set up using revenue from the garden waste subscription service). The staff will focus on promotion of home composting and the Love Food Hate Waste Programme and will support the excellent work the Waste team already deliver across the borough's schools.

The Council continues to investigate alleyway dumping and fly tipping offences. The latest prosecutions (Tuesday 17th February) saw magistrates fine 3 people £600 each for dumping household waste in alleyways. The total number of FPN's issued now exceeds 400. Around

20,000 terraced houses have recently received an update via a door dropped leaflet, informing them of the Council's success in tackling this emotive issue.

Recycling performance is projected to fall to below 36% this year. This is due to a number of factors but predominantly the change the Government has introduced with regards to the recycling performance calculation. Street sweeping and street litter tonnages are no longer part of the calculation. In addition, the colder winter has seen a reduction in green waste collected, despite an increase in subscriber numbers. The amount of recycling collected in our grey bins has fallen for the second year running. This is due partially to the fact that manufacturers are "light weighting" their products (for example glass and plastic bottles are often thinner) and less newspapers are being produced. In response to this, the Council has set aside £300K in order to help residents recycle as much as possible using their grey bins. In addition free wheeled bins are currently being distributed to terraced housing areas and from April, residents can request a replacement or larger grey bin free of charge.