

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Bernadette Mooney
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Environment & Sustainability
CO-ORDINATING CHIEF OFFICER	Kevin Adderley, Strategic Director- Regeneration and Environment

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

As part of a long and intensive investigation by Trading Standards officers following complaints received from six consumers, four of whom are Wirral residents, on Tuesday 2 June 2015, a serial fraudster was sentenced to four years and six months imprisonment at Liverpool Crown Court having pleaded guilty on the day of trial to fifteen charges of Fraud and other Consumer Protection offences.

2. LOW SCORING CHINESE TAKEAWAYS, RATED 0-1-2 FOR FOOD HYGIENE

In September 2014 30 Chinese speaking businesses identified as remaining below and struggling to meet a satisfactory National Food Hygiene Food Rating score of at least 3 were engaged with as part of a community based project to improve their food hygiene.

From the 30 premises originally engaged with, 16 businesses who have remained in the same ownership have now been inspected as part of the national inspection regime and 12 of those businesses have improved their food hygiene rating score to at least 3. To date this equates to a 75% success rate of premises achieving at least "satisfactory". From these 12 premises 4 businesses have also achieved the higher score of 4 or 5. Three premises have changed ownership and one business has closed. Appropriate enforcement action will be taken for the remaining premises who continue to fail to meet a satisfactory food hygiene score rating of at least 3. Given the success of this engagement exercise this project will be extended in 2015 to tackle other takeaways that are struggling to meet a minimum score of 3.

3. UPDATE REDUCING THE STRENGTH CAMPAIGN (RtS)

Of the 23 independently trading off sales premises in the "7 beats" area of Birkenhead 20 have been visited. 6 have mandatory conditions now placed on their licence preventing them from selling super strength beer/lager and cider with an abv. above 6.5%, 1 has agreed a voluntary undertaking and two more have agreed a voluntary inclusion by the end of June. Delays in recruitment has prevented the full time allocation of resources to this project but every effort is being made to maintain the progress being made.

The RtS campaign has also identified intelligence concerning other legislative breaches and wider criminal activity within this area. This has enabled multi-agency working to develop to deal with the illegal activities that have been identified. To date one premise has surrendered their licence due to significant licensing breaches, 3 food premises have been closed for significant pest infestations and ongoing investigations are taking place to deal with a number of other breaches.

4. OUT OF HOURS ON CALL SERVICE TO DEAL WITH ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR LINKED TO NOISE FROM MUSIC AND PARTIES

On 4 May 2015 the Environmental Health Service began an out of hours on call service to help tackle anti-social behaviour linked to noise from music and parties. The launch has been initially low key as Officers needed to trial the service support required from Community Patrol and as required the Police. The current system will utilise a rota of Environmental Health Officers to be on call from 5pm to 8am Monday to Friday and 24 hours a day on Saturday and Sunday. To date Officers, with support from Community Patrol, have attended a number of calls relating to loud music in Birkenhead, Wallasey and Woodchurch. Where possible and when safe to do so Officers will attempt to speak with offenders and persuade them to turn down and lower the level of noise related activities that are having a detrimental effect on our communities. Officers will also have access and be able to serve legal notices and will be able gather evidence to prosecute while on call. In certain circumstances effective action to deal with noise related anti-social behaviour will require on-site support from Community Patrol and or the Police. This service will be progressively promoted as the service is tested and analysed to determine work stream demands and Officer capacity.

5. LITTER ENFORCEMENT CONTRACT

The Council has recently awarded the contract for the new Litter Enforcement Service, which is due to commence in early July 2015. This month, in the build-up to the start of the new service, the Cabinet Member will launch an anti-littering awareness campaign. The campaign will make clear the Council's position that littering will not be tolerated and set out the costs incurred by the Council to clean litter up. The campaign will set out how the Litter Enforcement Service will work; explaining the role of the litter enforcement officers and the fines to be issued to those caught littering. Waste and Environment officers will work with councillors, stakeholders and service providers to plan the deployment of enforcement operations to key locations where littering occurs.

6. IMPROVING THE COUNCIL'S RECYCLING PERFORMANCE

The policy changes agreed by Cabinet earlier this year were all implemented from April, residents can now obtain new grey recycling bins free of charge, reduced cost for a replacement green residual waste bins and free additional brown garden waste (with a delivery charge). Residents now also receive a free bin repair service upon request. The Council has also appointed 5 Neighbourhood Recycling Officers, whose role is to work with residents to help them recycle more and to identify locations where recycling activity can be increased.

All of these initiatives have been established as part of the Council's drive to improve recycling performance and forms part of a new waste management strategy that will also include a major recycling awareness campaign that will be targeted towards locations where participation can be improved.

The Cabinet Member is also working with officers and colleagues at Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) to consider future waste collection streams that will enable the Council to achieve the joint recycling and waste management target for the City Region of 50% recycling by 2020.

7. BENEFITS PLAN COMING FROM BIFFA CONTRACT EXTENSION

Following the securing of the contract extension with Biffa, officers are implementing the significant contract price reductions and service enhancements agreed as part of the extension. These include reductions to the contract value of £500k in 2014/15 and £200k for 2015/16, waived costs for the enhanced weekend cleansing requirements at New Brighton, the absorption of property uplift costs (for new housing development) and the recruiting of a jointly funded contract monitoring officer post. Officers are also now working with Biffa's management to explore opportunities for further efficiencies from the contract as part of the secured extension.

8. SUCCESSFUL CLEANSING PLAN FOR THREE QUEENS EVENT

Part of the preparations for the Three Queens event included a comprehensive cleansing plan which was developed in partnership between Waste & Environment officers and Biffa's supervision and accepted by the event's leadership team.

The subsequent visiting of the Three Queens was a hugely successful event with very large crowds attending the riverside to observe the ships. The cleansing plan worked well during the event despite the larger than expected crowds and effectively clearance post event.

The Council received a number of compliments from people attending the event about the clean and tidy conditions to watch the event. The Council has again demonstrated how well it can manage the highest profile events for which cleansing plays such an important part.

9. "WE'RE WATCHING YOU" CAMPAIGN

The "We're Watching You" campaign has now been running for 6 months and has led to an average 43% reduction in dog fouling in the areas targeted (a 56% reduction in the Birkenhead Constituency, 46% reduction in the Wallasey Constituency, 33% in Wirral West Constituency and 36% in Wirral South Constituency).

The campaign is now moving to Constituency areas rather than Borough-wide, so each campaign will be focussed in one Constituency area at a time. This has been done to increase visibility in each area, concentrate resources and improve efficiency by reducing the officer time taken to install posters, leaflet properties, audit dog fouling and remove posters at the end of each campaign.

The first of these Constituency-based campaigns is due to be installed by the end of this week (by Friday 19 June) in Woodchurch. Woodchurch was chosen as it has been an area that has actually seen an increase in instances of dog fouling during a campaign. The team anticipates that greater visibility will help to reduce the levels of dog fouling. After Woodchurch, the campaign will move to Prenton in July/August, to coincide with an event run by Magenta to encourage responsible dog ownership.

10. “EAT WELL WIRRAL” CAMPAIGN

The Council recently won a prestigious Municipal Journal award on Thursday 18th June for its innovative and highly regarded projects to encourage healthier eating. The ‘Eat Well Wirral’ campaign has successfully helped to promote healthy eating among families living in some of the most disadvantaged areas in Wirral, and has provided support to local takeaway owners to enable them to change cooking practices to make their offer healthier. The success of the pilot project will act as a platform to roll this project out further, to enable us to deliver sustainable long-term health benefits for our most deprived communities. The award is a fantastic achievement and well deserved in recognition of the project teams work.