

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Tricia Hardy	Communities and Environment	March - April

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Environment

2012/13 Environment Service End of Year Performance

The Environment Service, (Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Energy and Environmental Management) is responsible for discharging around 300 (one quarter) of the council's statutory regulatory duties that collectively "Protect the Public and the Environment from Harm". These are essential services that address many of the wider determinants of public health and have a fundamental impact on the health and wellbeing of residents and the quality of the built environment. The service also maintains a fair trading environment essential for a thriving and healthy local economy and works proactively moving our communities forward towards a more sustainable future for energy use, household waste management and adapting to the challenges of a changing climate. One in six Sefton households directly requests the Environment service to assist them in resolving their individual environmental or consumer problems each year.

In 2012/ 13 Environment Service officers:

- Inspected 2,827 premises and 1,602 vehicles,
- Took 326 food samples,
- Investigated 417 infectious disease notifications,
- Responded to 22,238 public requests for service,
- Issued 1,270 statutory notices,
- Took 69 offence prosecutions, including one for a fatality.
- Produced a Home Energy Conservation Act plan, that sets out potential £41M of investment into Sefton using Green Deal criteria.
- Continued to deliver the Carbon Management Plan, that has realised a 7% Corporate energy use reduction since 2010/11.
- Secured Corporate Energy Supply contract with an overall corporate saving £122k on previous costs

Environment services are accessed via the Sefton Council contact centre
0845 140 0845

Food Business Prohibition

In April, a food business operator of a restaurant in Southport was convicted of three food hygiene offences and prohibited from managing a food business for a minimum period of six months by Sefton Magistrates Court. The convictions related to food hygiene offences committed in January 2011 for failing to keep the premises and equipment clean and failing to protect ingredients from harmful contamination. The food business operator had failed to attend court in 2011 when summonsed for the offences, having left the Country, but the prosecution eventually proceeded in April 2013 after he was stopped for another minor offence and was arrested by the Police for failing to

attend court in 2011. He was held in custody in Sefton Magistrates Court overnight before being released on bail. The Court issued a fine and prohibited him from managing any food business as he had been prosecuted for similar offences in 2008 and had demonstrated a lack of commitment to operating a food business in a hygienic manner. The defendant was also registered for food businesses in another authority to which the prohibition also applied.

Waste Disposal Procurement

Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) has announced that it has selected Sita as its Preferred Bidder for its 30-year £1billion Waste Resource and Recovery Contract on behalf of the Merseyside and Halton Waste Partnership. The contract will bring £145M worth of savings to the Authority and its partner councils over current landfill costs. The winning bid from Sita includes a high efficiency Energy from Waste facility with Combined Heat and Power at the Wilton International site in Teeside creating around 50 new permanent jobs, and a new rail hub for the transportation of waste at the existing Potter Group Rail Freight Terminal at Kirkby on Merseyside creating around 25 new permanent jobs. The announcement is part of the final stages of a resource management project which will provide a sustainable and cost effective solution for 430,000 tonnes of municipal waste per year which has not been recycled. MWRA Members resolved that the procurement exercise continue despite the withdrawal of £90m Waste Infrastructure Credits by DEFRA in February 2013. MWRA which currently landfills most of the waste that hasn't been recycled, is under a duty to procure a more sustainable and affordable alternative to landfill for the Partnership that represents long-term value for money. Financial Close is likely to be in late 2013/early 2014. The Wilton Energy from Waste plant is expected to take two years to build and the contract is expected to start handling waste in 2016.

Energy Switching Scheme

Residents in Sefton have up to 3rd June 2013 to join a regional switching scheme which should help them save on their energy bills. The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Collective Switch gives householders from across the region the chance to join together to get a better deal on their gas and electricity supply, and potentially save hundreds of pounds on their energy bills each year. The scheme has been organised by Wirral-based charity, Energy Projects Plus, together with the Liverpool City Region local authorities including Sefton. Anyone can join the LCR Collective Switch. Those who have never switched their energy supplier or who haven't switched in the last 12 months are likely to benefit most from the collective switch. Working together makes it safe and easy to switch supplier and householders could typically save £189 per year on their energy bills. More than one in five households across the City Region are currently living in fuel poverty. This scheme aims to help those people to reduce their fuel bills whilst enabling them to keep warm in their homes. The LCR Collective Switch is backed by Sefton Council along with Halton, Knowsley, Wirral and Liverpool City Council. It's free to join and householders are able to see how much they would save before they decide if they want to switch suppliers. Householders can register online at www.LCRenergyswitch.co.uk or by phone on freephone 0800 043 0151. Residents can also get free and impartial help and advice about saving energy at home

Climate Local

The Council has agreed to sign up to Climate Local, the LGA replacement to the outdated Nottingham Declaration, publicly committing the Council to act on Climate Change. Climate local provides a framework that enables councils to reflect local priorities and opportunities for action. It will focus on councils' efforts both to reduce carbon emissions and to improve their resilience to the anticipated changes in the climate. The Government expects Local authorities to take an active role with this issue.

Dog Kennelling Contract

Joint procurement with other Merseyside Councils for the statutory provision of dog kennelling of captured strays has been completed despite some significant procurement compliance hurdles. This follows the RSPCA notification that they would no longer provide support for this activity. A new provider has been appointed for the next 12 months. The increased revenue budget demands are within the expected limit and this will be found from the Environment Service budget. Procurement for a longer term solution will begin shortly. Stray dogs collected will be taken to a secure location and will be returned directly to the owner on the payment of a release fee to the operator which is £65 within 48 hrs and £100 up to 7 days after collection. After 7 days, efforts will be made by the contractor to re-home the animals.

FSA Inspection

The Food Standards Agency has re-inspected the Council's discharge of the statutory Animal Feed duties. Sefton is part of a collaborative partnership with Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Port Health and Wirral Council for the joint discharge of this Trading Standards function. The activity ensures the wholesomeness of bulk animal feed being imported into the UK through the Port of Liverpool (mainly in Sefton) to prevent possible National food chain quality issues arising from the use of contaminated animal feed. UK compliance is regulated by the European Union. The inspection took place in March 2013 and found the service to be satisfactory although some outstanding issues that demonstrate the robustness of the new approach will require a further follow up visit.

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) – March and April 2013

Regulatory and Legislative Advice Performance

Planning applications - MEAS continues to provide regulatory and statutory planning advice to the 6 LCR Districts. During the period MEAS advised Sefton Council on 17 minor and major planning applications and 4 Environmental Impact Assessment applications including the proposed solar park and continued support to Liverpool 2.

Strategic Planning

Local Plan – During the period MEAS has continued to work very closely with Planning colleagues on the development of the Sefton Local Plan policies through assisting with review and re-drafting as well as managing the Habitats Regulations Assessment process on their behalf.

Waste Local Plan – Following the Plan meeting the soundness and legal compliance tests by the Planning Inspectorate a report to Full Council on Plan adoption has been prepared. This will go through the necessary approvals stages within Sefton Council and the other 5 Districts between now and July (Sefton's Full Council on 27 June).

Liverpool City Region Deal

MEAS continues to lead three elements of the City Region Deal – the low carbon regulatory pilot, the baseline environment and the River Mersey Ask and good progress continues to be made.

Local Nature Partnership

The LNP met in March and since then a new Chair, Gideon Ben-Tovim has been appointed. The LNP is meeting in early May to agree revised work plan priorities.

EU Funding Strategy

The MEAS Director is co-ordinating the identification of EU funding (2014-2020 programme) funding priorities from the LNP and environmental sector to influence the emerging LCR EU Funding Strategy. This is being done via the LEP EU Partnership Group and the LEPs Low Carbon Economy Committee.

Savings

The agreed Business Plan is being implemented in line with a 30% budget saving. Staff consultations have been completed with one staff member being made redundant during the period (31/3/13) and a final redundancy this year planned in September.

Priorities Moving Forward:

- Continue to assist Sefton with the merging Local Plan;
- Continue development management advice;
- Establishment of Historic Environment / Archaeology Service;
- Advance LCR Low Carbon Deal – Regulatory Pilot including private sector engagement and River Mersey Task Force;
- Facilitate adoption of the Waste Local Plan as part of Sefton's statutory development framework;
- Maintain watching brief on Shale Gas developments.

STREET SCENE

Cleansing

Larger capacity litter bins have been introduced in a number of locations across the Borough. These have been well received by all concerned and are operating excellently. The 'night operation' within Cleansing Services has been extended to operate seven days a week which has resulted in taking a great deal of pressure from the daily litter bin operation, as well as allowing additional time and resource to undertake arterial route cleansing, fly tipping and graffiti removal.

The change in policy and operation of the 'Bulky Item' has been introduced successfully. There has been a reduction in both staff and vehicles used to operate the service. Initial indications are that there is far less demand for the service, but as yet there has not been a commensurate rise in fly tipping. Specific information is currently being collated which will be presented in a future report.

Every driver within Cleansing Services is currently being progressed through Year 3 of the 'compulsory' CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence). This qualification is now required via legislation and provides quite a logistical exercise in ensuring that the relevant training is provided whilst keeping services operating at no additional cost.

Apprenticeships in 'Waste Services' have been introduced within the service. We currently have four young people who are undertaking twelve months employment whilst also studying for an NVQ Level 2 in Waste Management. The new 'Wage Subsidy' deal for under 24's has also been introduced within the service. An additional four young people have been employed on six month contracts whilst again studying for an NVQ Level 2. They will all obviously get valuable experience of both a working environment and specific knowledge of waste operations.

The review of Street Cleansing Services recently undertaken has produced additional savings of £300k over the next two years. Every road, route, and area have now been evaluated and cleansing plans produced accordingly. These plans now utilize a fleet of 8 electric vehicles, the use of which has and will produce significant savings. There has also been a review of functions across a number of existing service delivery areas, with a number of these functions being 'merged'. An individual report detailing all of the above proposals, and outlining the new methods and styles of service delivery, is currently being compiled and will be available following the first quarter operation of 2013/14.

The new 'Green' depot on the Formby Bypass is now operating as intended and provides an extremely efficient 'transfer station' for all green waste from the north of the Borough. The Environment Agency has been involved at all stages and are fully supportive of the changes made and the operational practices undertaken on site. We have now moved some 15,000 tonnes of green waste through the site and have 'bulk delivered' all of this to the onward processing site in Kirkby. Overall this operation has so far resulted in a saving of over £150k.

Some new 32 tonne refuse vehicles have been introduced into the fleet to allow for greater flexibility of the waste operation. These vehicles, when used in 'high yield' areas, are able to hold more capacity, thereby reducing the number of tip trips per day or shift. This then increases productivity. These larger vehicles can obviously only be used in certain areas, but have allowed for greater flexibility across all existing zones.