

Environment Portfolio Holder Report

1. Environment Portfolio Briefings

Four Environment Portfolio Briefings have taken place since the previous report to Council. We have received briefings and/or carried out investigations on a range of topics including

- how environmental issues are being addressed in the emerging Local Plan (Jennifer Candler and Clare Dawson)
- whether there are any significant environment risks that are or should be on the Council's corporate risk register (John Snell)
- the inclusion of environmental implications in officer reports, when relevant (a task-and-finish panel has been set up to explore this)
- the scope of the environment portfolio and its inter-relationships with the other portfolios and operational delivery teams
- the development of an Environment Strategy
- environmental management transformation bids (Ian Farquharson)
- continuation of work on a draft Heritage Management Action Plan (James Buckingham, Simon Bailey)
- standardisation of waste collection policies across both councils and pricing proposals for 2017/18 (Olly Faiers)
- Suffolk Waste Partnership's investigation into the strategic procurement options (Chris Fry)

2. Consumer Environment

The **Food and Safety** team is presently preparing the annual review of its Service Plan, which is a document required by statute. It includes such details as the intentions of the service, its focus and the number of inspections it carries out. This year one of the key components of the Plan will be the newly presented opportunity to charge for re-inspection – for example, if a food outlet requests an inspection in an attempt to increase the score on its food hygiene rating certificate. The report on the Service Plan review will be presented to Executive in April.

The **Waste Collection** service goes from strength to strength, with year-on-year increases in all areas last year, except in the annual weight of *residual waste* per household, which is down to 0.422 tonnes per annum, one of the lowest figures in the Eastern region. The Great Blakenham Energy from Waste plant is running at the high efficiency rate of 90.8% and it has consumed 300,000 tonnes of residual waste since 2015. Our *kerbside recycling* increased last year by 100 tonnes to 14,031 tonnes and our overall recycling rate has increased by 0.9% to 45.67%; in the last quarter it reached 48.18%. The *garden waste* rounds have been rejigged to accommodate the urban growth that has occurred in some areas (the household waste rounds will be similarly rebalanced later this year). The number of Mid Suffolk subscribers has risen by 971 to 12,955. Income from *trade waste* has increased from £290,000 in 2015/16 to £360,000 in 2016/17.

The challenge this year is to increase it by a further 2%. The new trade glass collection service is developing well; we are now picking up 20 tonnes/month.

A notable achievement from the **Sustainable Environment** enforcement team was the successful prosecution of a serial fly-tipper, who was ordered to pay £2,140 in fine, clearance, investigation and legal costs. For more detail, see the March (no.34) edition of the *Town & Parish Council Newsletter*, which is available on the website.

3. **Modern Built Environment**

The challenges presented by the Councils' relocation plans are currently preoccupying the **Building Control** team. Connected with this is the move towards paperless working; the team is heavily involved with the JOSIE Project in setting up the new method of data storage and management. Maintaining competitiveness within the building control marketplace will be a key consideration in working out how the service responds to our impending move.

4. **Public Realm Environment**

This service is in the middle of a major review exercise which is looking at all aspects of its work in order to identify efficiency measures and cost savings. A workshop with the consultants who have been commissioned to undertake the necessary research was attended by key portfolio holders earlier this month. An issues and options appraisal will be considered in due course. There is a more comprehensive explanation of Public Realm's range of responsibilities and the review in the March (no.34) edition of the *Town & Parish Council Newsletter*, which is available on the website.

5. **Historical Environment**

In the **Heritage Conservation** team, the Buildings At Risk officer has now been re-appointed on a 12-month contract extension from Transformation Funding. The Portfolio Holders recommended this, with a view to the post being incorporated into the permanent staffing structure. Presently, 16 buildings in Mid Suffolk and 13 buildings in Babergh are considered to be At Risk (compared to 19 and 16 respectively at the time of the previous Transformation Funding bid). However, it is likely that at least 2 more buildings will be added in the near future. The Fisons building in Bramford is of particular concern. It is always likely that we will need for a staffing resource to deal with Buildings at Risk, as buildings assets not currently on the register fail to be maintained by their owners; for these reasons, the Corporate Manager's view is that the part-time post needs to be made permanent.

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