

## **Environmental Services Contract**

The Covid-19 Pandemic was truly unprecedented and I am really grateful for all of the hard work of all the refuse collection teams, drivers, street cleansing staff, grounds maintenance teams and administrative staff for their work in keeping the service running, pretty much as normal throughout the course of the lockdown. I was delighted to be able to participate in a clap and whoop organized to recognize their contribution as key workers on Radio Northampton.

As staff were forced to self-isolate team numbers came under particular pressure, particularly driver numbers, due to the qualifications needed to drive a refuse vehicle. Veolia switched staff from their commercial contracts, as the need for commercial collections reduced. We also made a decision that if waste collection services had to be removed, we would remove food waste collection services first due to it having the lowest level of take up of collection services. At the time of writing and after 10 weeks of lockdown, only 5x individual food rounds were removed due to staffing issues, which represents an only significant service disruption to date. A significantly better performance than some Councils who had whole sale service collection for multiple weeks during the lockdown.

As well as the pressure on staff numbers, staff themselves were collecting more waste than ever before due to the lockdown. A quick comparison of recycling tonnages shows a 20% increase in recycling rates tonnages collected, compared to the same period last year. This increase is on top of the roughly 6% year-on year increase we were already achieving since the change of contractor.

	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>Period Total</b>
2019	2,065	3,369	9,930
2020	2,865	3,619	11,438

## **Cemeteries Team**

The pandemic has meant that the team have been dealing with unprecedented circumstances for organizing burials in very challenging circumstances. There is also the potential of an increased need for local authority funerals as a result of the pandemic.

## **Chargeable Green Waste Subscriptions**

At the time of writing there were 30,522 subscriptions well in excess of our initial target, representing an income of over £1,250,000 to the Council.

## **Project and Programmes**

A great deal of current projects and programmes have had to be halted due to Covid19, however work has continued on many existing projects and the staff have also supported the Council response in a number of ways.

## **Parks & Open Spaces**

The Park Rangers have been continuing with their normal maintenance checks and patrols around the parks. They have also been carrying out the standard repairs in the parks such as, replacing broken bollards, changing broken padlocks, repairing gates and replacing missing signs, etc.

The installation of play equipment from Section 106 and General Fund Capital continued until the Coronavirus hit Mid-March, then all the installations stopped.

The only project that could safely continue was the Delapre Park, Eagle Drive end footpath, as it wasn't safe to leave it partially constructed. The completed footpath fits in well with the surrounding area. The footpath has been installed to allow easy access to the lake from the Eagle Drive Car Park, by disabled or infirm people. Working with the fishing club, the footpath runs alongside fishing platforms that will be specifically redesigned for the disabled fisherpersons. This will be the only one in Northamptonshire to cater for the disabled driver / fisherperson.

Due to the lockdown, there were seven projects that were put on hold, which were:

- Lings play equipment
- Lings Trim Trail
- Kingsthorpe play equipment
- Hardingstone safety surface
- Dallington cemetery extension
- Abington Park lake repairs

However, since the easing of the lockdown, some of the installations are due to recommence from week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.

Whilst the COVID 19 Government Restrictions are in place, the Park Rangers have been putting up signs around all the Parks and large Open Spaces to remind people about the Social Distancing rules. Currently, the play equipment remains closed, and the Park Rangers have had to disable as many moving parts on the play equipment as possible to try and discourage children from playing on them.

## **Neighbourhood Wardens**

In Mid-March, due to COVID-19, the Neighbourhood Wardens helped the newly formed Local Resilience Cell to deliver food parcels and prescriptions to the vulnerable people that could not leave their homes due to the Coronavirus.

Some of the Neighbourhood Wardens also assisted the Environmental Health Department with COVID-19 enforcement / education to businesses within the town.

## **Air Quality Monitoring**

Officers met with County Council colleagues to try to progress the issue with traffic modelling data for air quality modelling, these discussions are ongoing.

Air quality monitoring has been carried out for the majority of the lock down period. Results from March show an average reduction of 12.17% reduction in NOx levels monitored across the town and is particularly significant in normally busy streets like St Michaels Road. Results for April have been sent to the Lab and we would expect them to show an ever higher reduction given the lockdown was interested in late March.

## **Electric Charging Points**

Work commenced in early March to start the installation of electric vehicle charging points in our car parks, unfortunately was suspended when the government lockdown was introduced, but we hope to be able to resume shortly.

## **Environmental Health**

Covid-19 has caused an increased workload with the team becoming involved in a significant amount of work on business advice and enforcement, infection control and social distancing. Staff have dealt with over 120 enquiries and complaints about possible breaches of legislation. An education and engagement approach has been adopted. Levels of compliance have generally been very good but it has been necessary to take enforcement action in a small number of cases where there have been reported breaches. A total of four fixed penalty notices have been served. There have been three changes in the legislation in two months and further changes are expected in the near future. Local authorities across Northamptonshire have worked together to provide guidance to businesses on social distancing and risk assessment.

Team members are involved in the development of local infection management plans and it is likely that this work will increase in the coming months.

## **Thanks**

In summary, I have been overwhelmed by the ability of both our officers and our contractors to go over and above the call of duty in these past few weeks. I have had many messages of thanks from local residents all of which have passed onto the relevant person or a team. You are a credit to Northampton and we are all grateful for your efforts. Please remember that when we are applauding our thanks each week– we are applauding you too!

**Councillor Mike Hallam**  
**Cabinet Member for Environment**