



Cabinet Member Report for the Environment

Northampton Borough Council

2nd June 2014

Environmental Services

Residents, community groups, businesses and schools are being encouraged to enter the town's 2014 Northampton in Bloom competition which was officially launched on 9th May at Abington Park. With 2014 marking the 100th anniversary of the beginning of WWI and the 825th anniversary of the granting of Northampton's Charter by Richard I in 1189, the theme chosen for Northampton in Bloom is 'remembrance and celebration'.

In keeping with this, members of the Northampton Bloom Planning Committee have arranged to plant a special remembrance rose in Abington Park's rose garden to launch this year's competition. The Friends of Abington Park, Choices gardening group, local businesses and volunteer gardener from St Peter and St Paul's Church all attended the launch, along with BBC Radio Northampton's gardening expert Johnnie Amos and the mayor of Northampton. Everyone involved is keen for more local people, community groups and businesses to enter Northampton in Bloom in 2014. Categories for the competition are school gardens, residential gardens, commercial/retail premises and allotments.

Environmental Health

The Borough Council supported Noise Action Week 2014 which began on 19th May to highlight the impact that noise has on people's health and well-being. Research shows that noise levels are important to people's happiness and physical and mental health well-being, and according to figures quoted by Environmental Protection UK, which co-ordinates Noise Action Week, most neighbourhood complaints to local authorities are about noise. Noise makers don't always realise that the noise they are making is irritating or annoying others. Usually asking them to keep the noise down is enough, but if that doesn't work and the problem becomes more extreme then we can step in to help.

Last year we issued 625 official warnings and 12 Noise Abatement Notices. Education and awareness raising are also important ways to tackle the issue. Summer is one of our busiest times for noise complaints and so Noise Action Week gives us a good opportunity to raise awareness of the issue of noise and the impact it can have on people's health. Throughout Noise Action Week the Borough Council's environmental health team and neighbourhood wardens were out in the town to raise awareness of noise issues for both noise makers and noise sufferers. As well as raising general awareness of the issue across the town, a group of officers and wardens spent time in Castle Ward talking to residents and giving advice.

Two new Park Rangers have been recruited and they will be joining the team in the next few weeks. The team are also awaiting the delivery of another four wheel drive vehicle which will allow them to carry out more patrols around the town's parks. Neighbourhood Wardens and Park Rangers have worked together with local communities to assist with clean ups and planting days, and over the summer months, they will also be running a campaign of education and enforcement to address the problem of dog fouling across the town.

Park Management Committees

The first meetings of the Park Management Committees for Delapre and Abington Parks have now taken place and the first meeting of The Racecourse and Abington are planned. These groups are bringing together park users, local residents and other partners to work together to shape future plans for our parks

Licensing

During April two multi-agency checks were undertaken on school contract vehicles. Generally compliance was good with some minor issues, for which advice was given.

The team undertook a test purchase operation with the Gambling Commission on five major chain bookmakers in the Town Centre. Three of the Bookmakers failed, one a tentative pass and one good pass. A report on this operation is being prepared for the Licencing Committee.

Work has also been undertaken with Brackmills BID to improve facilities for the Street Trader pitches in that area.

The team have also continued to advise process and determine applications in relation to Licensing Act Applications, and continue to visit and suspend licences for non-payment of fees. Since the introduction of the power to suspend licences for non-payment we have reduced arrears from £23,000 to £2,000, most of the remainder are attributed to premises being closed down.

Councillor Mike Hallam

Cabinet Member for the Environment