



## Cabinet Member Report for Environment

### Northampton Borough Council

17 June 2019

#### Environmental Services

June 2019 marks the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the commencement of the council's new Environmental Services contract with Veolia. I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the past year successes and service improvements.

Over 200 staff transferred over to Veolia and idverde. On day one of the Contract around 80 employees received a salary increase due to the Living Wage requirement of the tender.

Some 325 new vehicles and items of equipment rolled out of the depot on day one and within days an improved level of service was experienced over that provided by the previous contractors, refuse and recycling, parks and green areas were immediately improved and street litter cleared in a seamless fashion.

In September, 70,000 wheeled bins were delivered to relevant households and a new 'all in one' recycling service was implemented.

As part of the new contract, the unpopular Saturday collections were also discontinued which necessitated some collection day changes, these were implemented smoothly and customer feedback was and continues to be exceptionally positive.

In addition, the street cleansing teams have undertaken a 'transformation' of the Boroughs streets and some 250 tonnes of litter and detritus were removed as part of the programme.

In October, the Grounds teams switched from grass cutting to winter maintenance – borough wide shrub, bush and tree maintenance, the improvements have been significant with areas which had been neglected now looking pristine and the parks and public spaces being enjoyed by more residents than ever before.

Christmas refuse and recycling Collections, although subject to a slight day change (no collections on Christmas Day) went seamlessly.

In April, after months of planning, a trial to replace recycling boxes with single use recycling sacks commenced for 1,000 properties in Far Cotton – the basis of this trial was to reduce qualitative issues such as box return, street cleansing and to improve the recycling rate in the area – feedback received so far has been very positive and the objectives have been met. Plans are in place to roll the trial out to other areas.

In 2019, spring bedding plants have been removed from the town flower beds in order to be replaced by the summer plants. This year we launched a new initiative whereby the 'old' bedding plants have been given away to community groups for reuse. This initiative has been very well received.

We have been promoting the Envirogrant Scheme which NBC are delivering in partnership with Veolia. A great deal of interest has been generated and 15 applications were received, six of whom were successful in receiving a share of the £5,000 funding. This will further improve the environment in Northampton whilst supporting local community groups.

A Borough wide food waste reduction campaign has been launched, stickers have been applied to residual bins advising that food should be recycled and also promoting the NWP 'in to win' scheme.

In addition, work has begun on regularising all service streams by producing policy documents to assist stakeholders to understand the services procedures and to date, the team have produced a graffiti and fly posting policy which has been adopted by the council.

The cost of the bulky waste collection service was reduced from £25 to £15 for a trial period from 1<sup>st</sup> April along with a near a 50% increase in the availability of booking slots. This reduction in charge will continue for the rest of the financial year whilst the success of the initiative is evaluated. The additional cost associated with the reduction in charge is being funded through the income from successful enforcement. In addition, our partners Veolia have also re-introduced the "Kangaroo Runs" specifically to target areas persistently affected by fly-tipping.

We have established a cemeteries working group who are working closely with representatives from all faith groups to implement improvements to the cemetery provision within the Borough.

## **Neighbourhood Wardens**

It has been a very busy year for our team of Park Rangers and the Neighbourhood Wardens. They have performed exceptionally well this year focusing both on community projects and their continued enforcement work.

The Neighbourhood Wardens and Park Rangers have continued their professional development issuing a record number of notices as a team this year:-

- 1194 Section 46 notices issued (initial stages of an investigation giving people the opportunity to correct their wrong doing before any action is instigated)
- 13 Section 34 Notices issued (Duty of Care – Failing to dispose of their rubbish properly)
- 200 Fixed Penalty Notice's (FPN) issued to persons who have littered or fly tipped
- 10 Court prosecutions (failing to provide us with information under Section 108 or for fly-tipping)
- 180 Community Protection Warnings issued (The community protection notice is intended to deal with unreasonable, ongoing problems or nuisances which negatively affect the community's quality of life by targeting the person responsible)
  - They have also removed 100's of abandoned and non-taxed cars of the streets working with ELVIS (End of Life Vehicle Impoundment Scheme) in association with the Police.

## **Enforcement Services**

During the year from 1 April 2018, the environmental enforcement officers issued a total of 5,618 fixed penalty notices for littering. Over 58% of these were issued to people aged between 20 and 40 and 66.8% were issued to males.

During 2018/19 the food and safety team carried out over 800 inspections, audit and advisory visits to food premises. During the year over 94% of the premises in the Borough were found to be broadly compliant with legal requirements. Where premises were did not meet the legal

requirements appropriate advisory and enforcement action was taken with 17 improvement notices being served to require action when serious problems were highlighted.

Following a tendering process, new stray dog kennelling and collection contracts have been put in place which will enable the Council to continue to meet the statutory duty to deal with stray dogs.

## **Parks & Open Spaces**

We have over 170 parks and open spaces throughout Northampton and continue to be seen by local residents as some of our best assets.

Over the past year we have invested over £440,000 on play equipment, footpaths, walls, fencing, signs and trees in the parks, cemeteries and allotments. Below are a few of those projects:

- Installation of hundreds of bollards in numerous parks to stop access by unauthorised motor vehicles to ensure the health & safety of all park users
- Towcester Road Cemetery – Removal of trees to make way for more burial space
- Rectory Farm - Additional play equipment
- Racecourse – Construction of two concession pitches for use by ice cream or food vans
- Ryehill – Construction of two MUGA (Multi use Games Areas) goal walls
- St Crispin’s play area – New play surface area around the base of the play equipment
- Notre Dame Grave Yard – Refurbishment of crosses and wall
- Dallington Car Park – Removal of old planters and resurface car park to create more parking spaces
- Mushroomfield Road Green Space – New play equipment
- Rectory Farm – Resurfacing of footpaths and replace steep ramp with steps
- Oathill Drive Green Space – New tarmac area and new goal
- Aberdare Road Green Space – Creation of a new play area and new safe entrances
- Harlestone Road Allotment – New security fence at the front of the allotment to stop vandals breaking in
- Delapre Park – Resurface entrance and add yellow lines
- Foot Meadow – Fence off arches to stop ASB issues
- Thornton Park – New trim trail and additional play equipment
- Errington Park – Construction of a new play area
- Bradlaugh Fields – New footpaths in the Sensory Garden

## **Park Management Committees**

Love Parks Week 2018 - 3 clean up events took place at Ladybridge, Mereway and Eastfield Park where in excess of 10 bags of rubbish were collected. Community events were held at the Racecourse, Bradlaugh Fields, Becket’s Park, Abington Park, and Eastfield Park.

Walk this Way- A Pilot project with Keep Britain Tidy and Dogs Trust took place at Bradlaugh Fields. Volunteers and wardens/rangers supported this very successful event.

Becket’s master plan was consulted on, completed and submitted to the Council, it is currently awaiting approval for implementation. The recommendations are expected to be picked up by the Park Management Committee.

A new park management Committee has now been established for Thornton Park

Love Parks Week events are being coordinated by several parks in the town for 13-21 July 2019 and being supported by the community safety and engagement team.

Bradlaugh fields are currently being supported to explore an application for charitable status.

Positive feedback has been received for both Veolia and Idverde at all the Park Management Committees and the Committees have welcomed attendance and input from both of them.

## **Climate Change**

At 3<sup>rd</sup> June Council meeting, I was pleased to report that the Council had appointed Cllr. Sam Kilby-Shaw as it's new Climate Change Champion and passed 2 important resolutions regarding climate change. The first meeting of a cross-party group takes place on 18<sup>th</sup> June.

A range of initiatives to support addressing climate change have already been implemented:

- All relevant Veolia vehicles now meet the highest standard of emissions and they have also, where possible switched to electric, which has since been recognised by the Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics as best practice. The refuse/recycling vehicles have electric bin-lifts which have replaced the diesel powered lifts.
- Veolia Supervisor's vans are now electric and a number of street cleansing vehicles are now electric rather than diesel.
- A replacement programme has started to replace all the lights in the Council carparks with energy efficient LED lights.
- All the lights in the Guildhall stairwells have been updated to energy efficient LEDs and have automatic switch on/off.
- The Guildhall boilers are being replaced this year.
- Glass doors are being installed between the Spencer Percival area and the Guildhall Office to improve the energy use of the building.
- The Guildhall roof has been replaced and as a result is significantly more energy efficient due to increased insulation.
- The messenger van has been taken off the road and documents are now transferred electronically.
- The Council is actively encouraging employees to cycle to work and there has been an excellent take up from staff with regard to the introduction of a salary sacrifice scheme for the purchase of bicycles.

We have also successfully applied for and were awarded an OLEV (Office of Low Emission Vehicles) grant to install two rapid charging electric taxi charging points in the Council's carparks. We are consulting with the taxi providers in relation to the location and will help increase the number of points available in the Borough.

For over a year now we have been actively monitoring for Nitrogen Dioxide levels near Schools in addition to the active monitoring we do across the Borough. This information is feeding into the current review of the Town Centre Air Quality Management Area. The consultation we undertook in relation to the development of a single air quality town centre management area has now closed and the outcome will feed into the development of a specified area. Once we have received the transport modelling data, I will develop a cabinet report to outline the consultation outcome and a detailed air quality modelling report including options for the way forward.

Climate change will clearly be an area that the Borough focuses on, across all areas, as we transition to Unitary and I will bring a formal report to Council in early-2020 to review work undertaken in 2019 and that planned for the future.

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