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Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Spatial Planning and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Q4 Environmental and Community Protection Update
Date:	14 th June 2022
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Julie Banks , Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Community
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	
Background papers:	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

Report Author / Responsible Officer

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Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring economic growth and prosperity Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All

Purpose of the report:	1. To provide Members with the performance report for quarter 4 in relation to Environmental and Community Protection
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	1. For information only.
Period for post policy/project review:	

1 Introduction/Background:

1.1 For the purpose of this report, 'Environmental and Community Protection' includes the following services:

- Environmental Health Team (Covid 19 Outbreak Control, Food Safety, Health and Safety Enforcement, Statutory Nuisances, Contaminated Land, Drainage, Private Water Supplies, Infectious Diseases, Air Quality Management, High Hedges)
- Operations Team (Public Health, Pest Control, Dog Warden Services, Environmental Enforcement, Covid Advisors)
- Corporate Health, Safety and Resilience Team (Internal Health and Safety Advice, Technical Support, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity).

2 Environmental and Community Protection – Q4 Performance Indicators

- 2.1 41% (63/153) of noise cases were closed within 60 days. This is a reduction on last quarter. There have been 2 significant staff changes in both the Lead Officer and Team Leader for this team in Q1. This has led to a temporary dip in performance and is expected to improve.
- 2.2 74% (Total 1912 Food Premises) of food premises have a rating of 4 or 5. This has declined in the pandemic due to a backlog of food premises that have not been inspected. The higher risk premises have been prioritised for inspection, along with premises we have received complaints about, resulting in a lower percentage of premises achieving the higher rating. In line with the Food Service Recovery Plan, the highest A rated premises have all been inspected ahead of the March deadline. 29% of food inspections due in the quarter were visited within the quarter, with an overall achievement of 49% inspections due in the year being achieved. This is now being addressed by the Food Recovery Plan. The service are on Track to meet the deadline of all B rated premises inspected by the end of June.
- 2.3 91% (1019/1120) of requests into the department are responded to within three working days. The department has been working hard to improve this statistic and with recent appointments to the department's vacancies we are optimistic that this will improve further.
- 2.4 89% (710/797) of fly-tips are assessed within 3 working days and 100% of planning application consultations were responded to within 20 days.
- 2.5 92 Accidents/Incidents were reported to Corporate Health and Safety Team in Q4. 3 of those were reported to the HSE. 79 Were related to staff including 33 vehicle collisions, 32 Natural Caused Illness (Covid 19), 3 Slips, Trips or Falls, 3 Manual Handling, 3 Acts of Violence or Abuse against staff, 2 struck by object, 1 strike against an object, 1 exposure to harmful substance, 1 near miss, struck by a moving vehicle. 13 Accidents/Incidents involving members of the public, 9 Slips, Trips or Falls, 1 Loss of Control of Machinery, 1 struck by Object and 2 Resilience Issues.

3 Environmental Health Team

- 3.1 Sarah Stefano was appointed as Team Leader for Environmental Health and has commenced her role on the 31st January.
- 3.2 320 Self Isolation Checks were completed to offer support to those suffering from Covid 19. 16 Follow ups with individual cases occurred. Workplace visits continued throughout January. Team Continue to support to the Local Resilience Forum but attending Covid -19 Working Groups to aid the transition to 'living with Covid'. Test and Trace Officers transferred to the Partnerships team to assist with Vaccination Planning and Support.
- 3.3 Following the cessation of the Test and Trace Service in December 2021 to Environmental Health Team concentrated on completing CPD training required of their professional organisation (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health) and various codes of practice. This has included, Practical Sampling Training, Shelf life and Durability of Foods, Health and Safety in Leisure, Approve Premises and Seafood Training.
- 3.4 Work was undertaken to meet the targets of the Food Service Recovery Plan. Additional Contractors were brought in to help the service deal with the backlog of new food premises that has started within the pandemic, leaving the permanent staff to focus on the high rated food premises, complaints and compliance visits. A steady flow of new Food Business Registrations are received by the team. The team worked with a Food Business struggling to control pests and support was given to the business whilst it voluntarily closed to deal with the issue.
- 3.5 Annual Statistical Return has been submitted to DEFRA for Environmental Permitting Activities. Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS) Return for Food Safety was completed and submitted to the Food Standards Agency.
- 3.6 Rebecca Connolly, Lead Officer (Food, Health and Safety) won the Performance award last year. This was based on her outstanding contribution to setting up and running the Covid-19 Test and Trace Service, which was ranked 16/315 locally run services. The service faced a huge demand in capacity over 400% of expected usage. Rebecca has also been instrumental in designing and carrying out the Food Safety Recovery Plan is her efforts are the reason that Dacorum has maintained reasonable level of Food Service throughout the Pandemic.
- 3.7 Becky Prescott, Trainee Environmental Health Officer was a finalist for the Health and Safety Champion Award. Stepping up to take on an additional qualification to take a leading role in Event Safety to allow Colleagues to work on the Covid 19 Response. Becky on behalf of the department worked with Colleagues in Corporate Health and Safety to ensure that Events across the borough were run in a safe, secure and successful manner.

4 Corporate Health and Safety Team

- 4.1 The team have continued to support the Council Services with the constant changes brought about by the Covid Legislation and supporting guidance documents. The team have reviewed risk assessments and provided support to service managers on the changing requirements throughout the pandemic to ensure consistent application of the most current guidance.
- 4.2 Health and Safety Champion award was awarded to Chris Conley of Clean, Safe and Green (Environmental Services), Chris consistently puts the Health, Safety and Welfare of his staff front and centre, Chris provided constant feedback to the Corporate Team on improving policy and frequently asks for advice and guidance. Chris has been the driving force on implementing Reactec, a system for monitoring vibration levels staff are exposed too. Chris has been instrumental on maintaining constant safety improvements to his service area and frequently shares his learning and supports other teams.
- 4.3 The Team provided Health and Safety Training to Herts Valley Clinical and Commissioning Group.
- 4.4 The team reviewed, Health, Safety and Resilience Committee recommended approval for the following policies
- Electricity at Work
 - Portable Appliance Testing
 - Corporate Emergency Plan

These were approved at Senior Leadership Team.

Policy Review was carried out for

- Legionella Policy
- CDM Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Non-Conformity Procedure
- PPE Policy
- COSHH Policy
- Accident and Incident Policy

These policy documents were approved by the Health, Safety and Resilience Policy and await final sign off by the Senior Leadership Team.

- 4.5 The team provide advice and training to Herts Valley Clinical Commissioning Group, this quarter Risk Assessment Review was carried out alongside policy review.
- 4.6 Fire Policy was presented to SPAE OSC in Q3 This will now be subject to Portfolio Holder Decision, the policy had now been approved and no call in was received. The team will liaise with service managers to ensure this is implemented in the service areas. Mandatory fire training was also approved by SLT. Human Resources will be making this an addition to other mandatory training.
- 4.7 Assistance has been given to services as business as usual on an array of subjects, from the Splash Park, Defibrillators, Cemetery Safety Systems, Hand Arm Vibration, Display Screen Equipment, Infection Control, abseiling events, use of machinery, extreme weather, fire safety and much more.
- 4.8 Russell Ham, Team Leader (Health, Safety and Resilience) was a finalist for performance award for his work on safety systems throughout the pandemic.

5 Operation Team

- 5.1 14 Stray Dogs were dealt with in Q4, 10 were rehomed by the authority the remainder were reunited with their owners. 3 Microchipping Notices were served, 3 Community Protection Warning were served in relation to dog behaviour. Most action taken by the team is informal advice without the need for enforcement action.
- 5.2 The team have served a community protection warning and community protection notice in relation to bird mess and smoking related litter around Hamilton House. The team continue to monitor compliance with this.
- 5.3 The team have continued to work in Filthy and verminous cases in the majority evading the need for legal action and have pulled a multi-disciplinary team in to support individuals. Main partners being Mental Health and Social care teams, Housing providers, Fire Service and others. Two Public Health Act Notices and Enforced clearances were carried out in Hemel Hempstead for the safety of the residents and surrounding properties.
- 5.4 S20 Animal Welfare Act 2006 Application was made to the Court seeking transfer of 3 cats and 3 fish to the Council from a resident in Grovehill. The application was granted and the Cats and Fish have been rehomed. The resident was unable to care for the animals, despite animal welfare officer's support the animals remained at risk so the application was sought.
- 5.5 Gagan Mohindra MP visited the Forum and was provided with a presentation by Lead Animal Welfare Officer Rachel Smith to provide further information on DBCs Animal Welfare Service following the presentation of the Service with another Golden Paw Print Award to the Stray Dog Service. The service were commended for their proactive and Innovative approach to Animal Welfare Matters.
- 5.5 9 Fixed Penalty Notices were served for Fly-Tipping in Q4 and 4 abandoned vehicles removed. Three outstanding warrants in place for defendants not appearing in court. These are being pursued regularly with relevant Police forces
- 5.6 The Littering and Public Space Protection Order Enforcement Pilot was launched on the 1st November following a week of public awareness and engagement activities. During this time period the District Enforcement Officers have issued FPN's in 16 different wards. The overall payment rate is currently 69%.
- 5.7 On Monday 21st March nine people were ordered to pay fines (£880 and costs of £800 with victim surcharge of £294 total) for offences relating to littering and breach of Public Space Protection Orders, after failing to pay Fixed Penalty Notices issued by District enforcement.
- 5.8 Covid advisors continued to provide support to the Community, through isolation support visits and providing updates to businesses on changes in Covid guidance.
- 5.9 Ben Stevens, Lead Officer (Environmental Enforcement) was a finalist for the Innovation award for his innovative approach towards a solution to littering and PSPO enforcement which led to the implementation of a pilot for a third party enforcement company. Environmental and Community Protection are keen to look into new ideas and approaches with service delivery.

6. Team of the Year Nomination- Neighbourhood Delivery

- 6.1 Environmental and Community Protection were awarded Team of the Year alongside Environmental Services.
- 6.2 The Submission for the award has been included in this update for members information.

The Environmental and Community Protection Team is a fundamental part of the Council's frontline, ensuring that Dacorum is a safe place for people to live and for businesses to operate. The team provides our residents with the assurance they need to feel confident in their local environment as a safe place to

live and raise their families. It's easy to take for granted just how critical this team's role is in maintaining the relationship of trust between the Council and the people who live here.

In broad terms, the ECP team ensures that restaurants and takeaways meet food hygiene standards; that businesses take care of their employees and the customers who visit their premises; that water supplies across the borough are clean; that events are safe for the public to attend; that animals are well cared for and not subject to harmful treatment; that those who damage our environment are pursued; that infectious diseases outbreaks are monitored and contained; and, that public health is protected through control of disease spreading pests.

This is an extremely challenging workload under normal circumstances, but the last 18 months have been anything but normal. It is district council Environmental Health teams that have been at the forefront of entire public sector response to controlling the spread of Covid.

Overnight the team saw its workload increase dramatically. To give some perspective, ordinarily the team's has less than 20% of one person's role to manage infectious disease outbreaks – since Covid came along this has risen to 15 full time posts. In addition, the team's service requests have more than doubled over the last year – neighbour disputes and animal welfare requests have shot up as more people work from home and the initial demand for pets has inevitably been followed by an increase in cases of neglect.

How the team has worked together in a positive and effective way

To understand the incredible extent to which the team has supported one another over the last 18 months, it's important to understand the extreme pressure they have been under professionally and how the sheer relentlessness and intensity of the Covid response has inevitably led to strain on an emotional level.

The profile of district council Environmental Health teams has sky rocketed across the country as they have been at the coal face delivering the entire public sector response to Covid. Within Dacorum this has required EH Officers to attend numerous weekly meetings with politicians, Chief Executives and very senior officers from public sector organisations across all of Hertfordshire. The work of EH officers has been under extreme scrutiny at the highest level as organisations sought to provide assurance to contain the outbreak as well as reassure worried residents.

Over the course of the year, several members of the team have been required to attend these meetings and every single one of them has delivered. The credibility with which they presented Dacorum as a district leader within the county can be seen by the fact that HCC has on more than one occasion selected Dacorum as a district representative to trial their thinking around the social care response.

The team has also shown real bravery and selflessness. In the early stages of the pandemic when there was national uncertainty over the impact of Covid; when most of us were staying at home and sanitising our shopping; before vaccines were around and when the death toll was climbing, Dacorum's EH team was entering premises with known Covid outbreaks to identify causes and to help contain the spread. This showed faith in the professionalism of H&S colleagues, and the risk assessments and controls put in place to protect them.

What the team has achieved and how it has contributed to the Council's wider objectives

The work of the ECP team over the last 18 months has undoubtedly contributed significantly to the Council's wider objectives:

- containing the outbreak and provided advice to keep shops open and residents and animals as safe as possible within their environment
- enabling essential community focal points to continue operating when they have been most needed, e.g. the splash park

- providing advice that has enabled businesses to remain open, protecting the local economy and the livelihood of residents

Most impressive of all though is the way in which they have continued to provide their service under arguably the most testing conditions that any council service has seen at any time.

It's true that disease outbreak is what many of them have trained to manage, and it's true that the start of the pandemic was, professionally, an exciting time – an opportunity to rise to the challenge and to make a real difference to people's lives.

But underneath this team of committed professionals are real people, with their own families, their own concerns over Covid, and their own limitations. 18 months of battling the pandemic has tested everyone, but the strains this team has faced on the frontline have been particularly intense – and while for others it may feel as though the pandemic is becoming less of a pressure, for this team it remains as intense as it has ever been.

It's incredible to me that they have maintained services in the way that they have, and I cannot speak highly enough of the commitment every member of the team has shown to supporting each other to continue providing the very best service they can for our community. I couldn't be more proud to have been associated with them over this period – they have given absolutely everything they've got. The Council should be immensely proud.

7 Options and alternatives considered

No options to consider, for information only.

8 Consultation

N/A

9 Financial and value for money implications:

N/A

10 Legal Implications

N/A

11 Risk implications:

N/A

12 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

13 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

N/A

14 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

N/A

15 Conclusions:

Report to be noted by the Committee.