

## **Report of the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services**

Having assumed the Environmental Services Portfolio just over a month ago my priority has been to familiarise myself with the various issues within the different strands of work and the current issues, particularly the challenging savings which are contained within the Council's budget for the current year.

Amongst those issues are:

### **WASTE AND FLEET**

Waste services are currently preparing for one of the biggest refuse round reviews for many years. With a significant level of savings to be made, yet with increasing demand on these vital services, the service is going to undergo a radical review. This will include consideration of working patterns and shifts, as well as a move away from same day collections for refuse and recycling, to facilitate greater utilisation of the plant. This will lead to a greater degree of operational flexibility which will be vital if the savings are to be achieved.

Clearly any change of collection days will have to be communicated well to the residents and the Council's website has been upgraded to provide for an online postcode checker, which identifies the particular collection day for that area. See:

<https://www.york.gov.uk/DoltOnline/Pages/NeighbourhoodServices/RefusePostcodeLookup.aspx>

There will be a number of replacement vehicles coming into the service over the next 8 months and these will be of a greater capacity, but will be fewer in number. The new recycling vehicles are of a different type that will still allow us to collect from kerbside as we do now, so no change as far as residents are concerned, but will be quicker, more efficient and fewer in number. All the new vehicles are more environmentally friendly with the refuse vehicles operating electric bin lifts.

In fleet, and fleet management, the new pool car scheme 'WeCar' has been introduced at Hazel Court. This will eventually be rolled out council-wide, in tandem with the move to West Offices. This scheme will save cost and reduce harmful emissions in relation to our business travel. In addition, a new staff taxi contract has been awarded to further reduce staff travel costs. Work is also being undertaken to establish an integrated transport unit that will support all transport and fleet activity across the council

The proposed Allerton Waste Recovery Park (PFI) project is approaching a key stage. The planning application has been submitted and is due to be heard by North Yorkshire County Council in the week commencing 10<sup>th</sup> September.

## CIVIL ENGINEERING

Staff were heavily involved with crowd control and traffic management for the Olympic Torch relay and the York City FC celebrations.

Recent flooding issues also had to be dealt with in Stockton-on-Forest and Badger Hill; this involved close liaison with emergency services.

There was also the need for emergency repairs to Bishopthorpe Road following a road collapse.

50% of the R and R footway programme is now complete.

Work has also been undertaken with Housing on a programme of access ramps at sheltered and EPH facilities.

Work is progressing on the annual winter maintenance review and this will shortly be scheduled into the forward plan.

## HIGHWAYS

The programme of street lighting replacement is well under way. Virtually all steel columns have been replaced and work is now underway surveying the concrete columns. Based on initial surveys, it is hoped that most if not all those in need of replacing will be able to be done this year through the capital allocation.

The current contract for street light maintenance with Amey is due to expire in March – work is underway with Procurement to examine options for taking this forward.

Work is also underway to investigate and evaluate options for mobile working for inspections and repairs.

## STREET ENVIRONMENT

In terms of Street Environment the focus continues to be very much on enforcement and environmental improvements – in particular in the last month the team have been working very closely with the Universities and Colleges, Student Unions and Landlords in relation to refuse and litter, particularly in the run up to end of term with the involvement of colleagues in Waste Services and private sector housing. Part of this has been the big green clean project run by YUSU & CYC to help students get rid of unwanted stuff as they move out at end of term to stop it being dumped and to make sure that rubbish isn't left in alleys and streets.

In addition to this the team are working with the landlords, their association and the Universities, to improve the information they provide to their tenants about refuse and other environment issues. Representatives of the team attended the Landlords' Fair in the past month to spread the message and to build stronger links with the private rented sector.

A number of community clean ups have been organised by the SES around the city as part of the regular on-going work. The team have also been concentrating on some commercial businesses that are causing issues in their local neighbourhoods in relation to the storage and disposal of their waste.

Fixed penalties continue to be issued to those who drop litter – those who choose not to accept the penalty fine have been prosecuted in court. Recently, a case heard by York Magistrates saw the offender having to pay a total of £500 in fines and costs. As the Magistrates said – “a very expensive cigarette that was dropped”. A number of cases are due in court in the next few weeks including fly tipping, litter and waste. The team also continue to monitor the activities of the hairdresser who was prosecuted for fly posting in the Tang Hall area, to ensure that he does not repeat his illegal activities.

As part of the programme of working with schools the team were recently involved in an event at St George's Primary School, working with them on enviro-crime, including a mini fly tipping investigation which the children took part in.

The team will also be taking part in “Crucial Crew” when they will be working with all the year 6s in the city – about 1500 children – going through different environmental crime scenarios – including linking with Youth Offending Services – to show the different consequences of taking part in environmental crime such as graffiti. A key aim of Crucial Crew is to get the children to appreciate their local areas and to “Love Where You Live – York”.

In terms of parking services work is continuing to implement the restructure of work patterns within the Enforcement Team through the management of change process. Unfortunately despite a lengthy period of discussions and consultation, the Union representing the Enforcement Officers have recently conducted a ballot of their members, which resulted in a majority supporting industrial action. At the time of writing this report the Union have indicated that their members are being called upon to take strike action for a period of a week. At a meeting held at the Union's request further assurances were given but little progress was made; management made clear that if the strike action were to proceed this would be a matter of regret.

In parking processing – Penalty Charge Notices and Respark, work is continuing on making it easier for clients to access our services. Penalty Charge Notices can now be paid on line.

Authorities who enforce parking regulations are required to produce an annual report each year and we have just heard that our last annual report has been recognised as an example of national best practice.

## STREET CLEANING, PARKS AND OPEN SPACES, and NEIGHBOURHOOD PRIDE

### Mowing of Grass verges and Communal grass areas

The current wet and warm weather has led to increased grass growth. This, along with this year's additional Bank Holidays has made keeping to schedule challenging, but the staff concerned are doing their utmost to keep to the programme. The standard of cut, due to the volume of cuttings and rain, is not to the normal standard, but this should improve as (hopefully) the rain stops, but the warm weather continues.

The cutting of verges containing daffodils, which have so far been left uncut to allow the daffodils to die back, has now commenced; cutting too early would have resulted in reduced, or no flowers, in later years. Due to the increased grass growth these areas are looking worse than normal and are taking longer to cut. As is usual we have received a number of enquiries from members of the public asking why the bar walls embankments had not been cut. Staff are due to commence this work shortly; again these were left uncut to allow the daffodils to die back for the same reason.

### Floral Displays

The city's floral displays are now all in place, which include over 50,000 summer bedding plants, 70 barrier baskets, 50 tubs, 100 York in bloom baskets (for shops mainly within the city centre) and 50 lamp post baskets, which as always enhance our city for our residents and visitors, as well as impressing our Yorkshire in Bloom judges who will be visiting us on the 11<sup>th</sup> July.

For the first time in many years a carpet bed is to be planted on the grass bank on Lendal Bridge. This will depict our York 800 logo; this is being planted currently and will be in place until the first hard frost.

### Litter and Dog Waste Bins

Following approval at February's Budget Council to reduce the number of litter and dogs bins across the city, approximately 350 bins have been removed (this does not include the city centre – see below); the full year saving identified is £40k.

The bins to be removed were identified as being either:

- under utilised
- where alternative bins were available within a reasonable proximity.
- used predominately for unauthorised dumping of household or commercial waste.

It is intended to monitor any increase in littering which results from the removal of bins.

## City Centre Bins

Separate from the review of bins outside of the city centre (as referred to above), a review of city centre bins was carried out in the course of the last year, including consideration of a more standardised design of bin in conjunction with the “Reinvigorate York” group – see separate item below. A trial was also conducted of a solar powered compactor bin (unfortunately called a “Big Belly”), in Kings Square in which six standard bins were also removed from the area. There was no increase in litter levels and a reduction in the weekly empties of bins in the location from 105 to 14. A similar trial was conducted in Acomb

The outcome of the review came to my Decision Session in May, just after I took over the portfolio, with a recommendation to reduce the number of city centre bins to 53 by:

- Removing 60 old bins
- Replacing the remaining 40 bins with new smaller bins (of a more standard design)
- Installing 13 solar powered compactor bins

The cost of the new/replacement bins will be met from an allocated budget of £75k.

This should result in:

- reduced budget pressures in future years.
- improved cleanliness standards at peak times.
- reduced street clutter.
- have a minimum number of choices of bins for future years.
- we can use the bins removed from the city centre in our outer areas.
- we will be able to utilise mobile technology (which can alert operatives to when the solar powered bins are approaching capacity and require emptying).

There may also be the potential to link the bins to the wifi network and generate income through commercial adverts etc to defray the costs of maintenance of the bins.

## Public Toilets

The contract with the current contractor servicing the public toilets expires next March. We are now working to secure the future procurement, which may include a possible partnership with Bristol City Council and Bath & North East Somerset Council in a joint procurement exercise.

## REINVIGORATE YORK

Working with the Cabinet Members for Transport, Planning & Sustainability and for Leisure Culture & Tourism and a wide range of senior Officers I am involved in developing this ambitious project to improve the public realm, particularly in the city centre.

With funding allocated from the Council's Economic Infrastructure Fund (EIF) and from within existing budgets, a number of improvements have already been made or are progressing including, decluttering of unnecessary street furniture and signage, the removal of the Parliament Street toilets and improvements to Kings Square. Work is progressing on a Design Manual to establish a greater consistency of items such as lighting, paving, bollards, seating etc.

There will be a further progress report to be considered by the Cabinet in the next month.

Sandy Fraser  
Cabinet Member for Environmental Services