

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

8 April 2021

COUNCILLOR STUART DARK MBE - CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

For the period January to March 2021

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Covid-19

Since my last report to Council key Covid-19 indicators have continued to show sustained progress in the right direction, with the local infection rate down considerably from its 2nd peak in December/January and vaccinations continuing to rise in number (both 1st and 2nd doses) and drop down in to protecting lower age/priority groups. Delivery of the latter programme being enhanced by the recent opening of Downham Market Town Hall as a mass vaccination centre, joining the Corn Exchange, the QEH and several local surgeries. Our areas vaccination data compares favourably to other districts, our CCG area, East of England and national data.

Given this written report is necessarily produced several days before council, I will give the exact figures verbally at our meeting, so that they are the most up to date and helpful they can be.

Officers continue to deliver the Council's Covid responsibilities, support partners in their delivery and plan for supporting each stage of the easing of restrictions, so that our communities are safeguarded and reassured.

The Revenues and Benefits Team have now paid out just short of £60m via several thousand claims, supporting local businesses. With the closing date for grants relating to tier 2/4 in December, the national lockdown and extension having to be submitted by the 31ST March the Council recently issued a press release and supportive social media and informed Councillors, Town and Parish Councils re the impending deadline, continuing its effort throughout the pandemic to try and ensure everyone entitled to such grant help receives it.

A new round of grants supporting businesses as they reopen is now opening and this information and qualifying criteria is being shared.

Members, Town and Parish Council's continue to receive weekly updates on issues and progress, with links to key data and useful resources and I pledge

this will continue. Since my last report members received another briefing directly from Senior Staff at the QEH and were able to ask questions.

I believe it appropriate as I draw this section of my portfolio lead report to a close, the nearest to the recent ‘National Day of Reflection’, to humbly acknowledge the loss and impact of Covid 19 on so many over the last year and give my heartfelt thanks to all the staff across all the agencies (including our officers), teachers, key workers, charities, volunteers and compassionate neighbours – as we members know this is a huge list in West Norfolk- who have combined to mitigate this.

Recycling

Since my last report to council, a ‘recycle right’ leaflet has been produced on recycled and recyclable paper and delivered at very low cost directly to 63,000 West Norfolk households. The intention being to help people with what and how to recycle to encourage good habits and help towards the maintenance of high volumes we have seen during the last 12 months. This work will continue and be built upon throughout the coming year, as part of a Norfolk wide campaign with the ‘Norfolk Waste Partnership’.

Incoming Waste Contract

The new 3 District (KLWN,Breckland and North Norfolk), multi-year waste contract began for this council on the 29th March and I have been working with officers and the Steering Board towards this.

The key points of the contract are:

Financials

Sharing a major contract with two other districts and having this multi-year saves financially in terms of negotiating position and sharing of resources (such as spare vehicles, management etc)

Resources can be used efficiently (and need not be rigid to Borough boundaries)

Environment

The new fuel efficient collection trucks being introduced are quieter and greener producing less CO2 per mile and using less fuel. They use new technologies such as electronically powered, rather than engine powered, lifts which combine to mean each vehicle uses 18% less fuel.

Electric and hybrid trucks are being introduced for bin deliveries and bulky collections along with a fully electric supervisor vehicle.

New recycling options are being introduced for batteries and small electrical items and bulky items in good condition are to be put in the recycle/up cycle

chain avoiding waste and supporting charities.

The incoming contractor is committed to raising environmental awareness and supporting recycling and I have already instructed officers to explore how we can, with them, reinvigorate support to community 'street', 'beach' and 'open space' clean initiatives as a priority and will report this back to members for input and support via appropriate Council mechanisms.

Council remains committed to continuing food waste collections and this is a feature of the new contract. These will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

Service:

Council fully appreciates the importance of this particular service to residents and how people like to know the days/times of their 'collection' – to this end service users will see no significant rota changes.

Bin calendars for all our services are being produced and will be distributed over the coming weeks.

Workforce:

There is, I believe rightly, considerable local public goodwill for the waste collection crews who have been working so hard during the last turbulent year – I'm pleased to report that existing crews are transferring across to the new contract so residents are highly likely to see the same faces on their rounds.

Additional measures are being put in place over the initial changeover/embedding period to mitigate any unforeseen issues and members will have received contact details for flagging challenges, alongside those being communicated to the public in media releases.

The new contract has performance measuring on key areas and a steering board for shaping/supporting/challenging delivery over its duration. I will be representing Council on this and reporting this key information back to members.

Fly-tipping and illegal waste disposal

I have looked at the issue of fly-tipping and illegal waste disposal and listened to particular issues raised by members. I have engaged the Chief Executive and responsible officers and with their full support, tasked a prompt review of Council enforcement policy in this area to ensure it takes into account greater environmental awareness and the Council's and public appetite to protect it, current legislation and best practice, key areas of focus needed based on local data analysis and for officers to bring a paper with an amended policy and any structural requirements necessary to deliver it, to Cabinet, with the opportunity for relevant committees and members to comment on the paper as it progresses.

With cabinet colleagues support this is to be formally put on the forward work plan at cabinet's next meeting to schedule it for June's meeting.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Key portfolio activities at this time have to be supporting the Covid 19 response and overseeing the embedding of the new waste contract.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Regular and irregular meetings with the Chief Executive, Communications Officers, relevant responsible Council Officers and partners with regard to the Borough's Covid-19 response.

Separate Meetings with Collection Services and EHO managerial staff.

Tri-District responsible lead member 'joint Waste Contract Review and Development Board' and pan-Norfolk 'Waste Partnership'.

Scheduled meetings associated with Cabinet.