

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 27 MAY 2010
title: REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE 2009/10
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
principal author: JAMES RUSSELL – ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MANAGER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To look at the key local performance indicators within the environmental health plan for 2009/2010.

1.2 The Council's vision shared with the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership states that we aim to ensure Ribble Valley will be "an area with an exceptional environment and quality of life for all; sustained by vital and vibrant market towns and villages acting as thriving service centres meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors".

The Environmental Health Service makes an essential and important contribution to the Council delivering this vision.

1.3 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – This document reviews the performance of the Environmental Health Service and the contribution to two of the three stated ambitions, namely:
 - "to help make peoples lives safer and healthier"; and
 - "to protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area".
- Community Objectives – To promote and support healthy environmental, economic and social well-being of people who live, work and visit the Ribble Valley.
- Corporate Priorities - To promote a healthier environment and lifestyle.
- Other Considerations – This document provides an important performance review function and purpose with regard to service delivery and planning.

1.4 The content of this document will be a principal constituent of the Ribble Valley Borough Council Environmental Health Service Plan where resource demands will be assessed corporately alongside other service plans later in the year.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Environmental Health Section's performance was last reviewed by Health and Housing Committee in May 2009 when 'ongoing high performance was noted throughout the past 12 months in most areas and especially in relation to response times to service requests. However, it was again not possible to achieve the required health and safety premise inspection target due to reasons stated'.

- 2.2 The Environmental Health division has continued to receive significant numbers of service requests in this last year. There continues to be great effort and hard work by all staff to achieve set targets.
- 2.3 The work undertaken by the Environmental Health staff is summarised in the Appendix attached to this report.

3 KEY ISSUES

Food Hygiene

- 3.1 In September 1995, the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations became operative and introduced the concept of risk assessment. To mirror their requirements, local authorities are required to inspect food businesses according to an assessment of risk. Inspection frequency is determined by the Food Safety Act Code of Practice, which can vary from a minimum of 6 months for the highest risk category to a maximum of 3 years for the lowest risk. Last year the annual target was 334 premises. Following the Lanarkshire E.coli 0157 food poisoning incident and growing demands of EU regulation, the Food Standards Agency continues to produce additional service guidance requiring increasingly detailed and complex inspections, systems and records. The Food Standards Agency audited the food safety function in the autumn of 2001 and pleasingly concluded that “the Authority was providing an effective food law enforcement service”.
- 3.2 In the past year, the section has been particularly busy with a significantly higher number of gastro-enteric incidents in local institutions and investigating and preparing two prosecutions, which by their nature are all highly resource intensive.
- 3.3 I am pleased to report that last year, 313 inspections were achieved representing 94% of programmed inspections. The outstanding 6% were low risk (Cat D) and have been carried forward into this years programme. Food premise inspection continues to be “the priority” within the Environmental Health Section.

Health and Safety

- 3.4 Last year 102 premises were inspected under Health and Safety provisions, plus 65 outdoor events which were audited. In total, this represents 83% of the annual target of 200 for 2009/10. We continued to apply the previous year’s policy to focus available resources on the inspection of ‘higher risk’ non-food premises. Considerable involvement has also been required to investigate a number of complex health & safety related reported accidents. During the past year inspections have been undertaken in line with HSE/HELA guidance to be topic based concentrating on slips and trips, asbestos, falls from heights, workplace transport, stress and musculo-skeletal disorders and the national disease reduction programme.
- 3.5 Every effort will continue to be made to address the inspection performance of non-food premises, however, with the continuing elevated service demands in relation to reactive work and to meet the response times contained in the Environmental Health Plan, last year it was not possible to undertake more inspections.
- 3.6 In addition, Smokefree Workplace legislation was introduced on 1 July 2007. Last year a total of 202 inspections were undertaken representing 81% of the annual target of 250.

Local Authority Air Pollution Control (LAAPC) and Local Authority Pollution, Prevention & Control (PPC)

- 3.7 The current position within the borough is that 31 EPA authorisations or PPC processes hold authorisations. Last year 24 programmed inspections were made with further visits made in response to complaints. This represents 100% of the required target of inspections due. Last year a new 'low fee' system was introduced which requires the low risk processes to be inspected on a reduced frequency of every 3 years. Currently we have 8 processes which require annual/multi inspections and 23 processes which now require a once every 3 year audit.
- 3.8 With regard to Air Quality Management, we are now required to undertake a full review on a three yearly basis and complete and submit an annual update assessment. The 2009 Tri-annual review Air Quality 'Update Screening Assessment' was submitted to DEFRA in May 2009. DEFRA have responded and confirmed the need to declare an Air Quality Management Area with regard to elevated nitrogen dioxide levels around Whalley Road/James Street junction, Clitheroe. Additional monitoring is also identified as being necessary to be undertaken in Pimlico, Clitheroe on relation to possible elevated levels of particulates arising from changes in one of the quarries.

Pest Control and Dog Warden Service

- 3.9 Last year again saw a further busy year with a total of 651 service requests being received and actioned. I am pleased to report that Penny and John managed to respond to 99.9% of the service requests within the two working day target, which is exceptional and reflects the officer's dedication and hard work throughout this period.
- 3.10 With regard to tackling the issue of dog fouling. I can report that in 2009/10, a further eight Fixed Penalty Notices were issued in relation to dog fouling. This now means that a total of 52 Fixed Penalties have been issued since the introduction of the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act Provisions. The dog wardens are employed on a more flexible hour arrangement and where possible undertake a significant proportion of their patrols 'out of office hours' including weekends and bank holidays. This approach has been very successful and has resulted in the increased issue of Fixed Penalty Notices. Last April, the dog wardens hours have been increased to a full time post and are undertaken on a job share basis.
- 3.11 A significant issue has been the recent introduction of the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act provisions removing of responsibility for stray dogs from the Police, which became operative on 6th April 2008. As reported previously, suitable arrangements have been put in place as a partnership with other East Lancashire local authorities to provide a 'stray dog' out of hours 'acceptance' service in line with DEFRA guidance. To date the new arrangements seem to be working generally satisfactorily and in budget. A new contract is currently under review and is to be renewed for a further 3 years.

General Complaints

- 3.12 Current staffing levels in environmental health were based on the expectation of processing 25 service requests/complaints per month. However, in line with national trends, numbers received continue to substantially exceed the anticipated figure.

- 3.13 In 2009/10, 1309 requests for service were received representing in the order of 109 per month. Last year an average of 87% of service requests were actioned within 2 working days, which is exceptional but fall short of the stated target of 90%.

Licensing Enforcement

- 3.14 In 2009/10, 104 programmed licensing inspections were undertaken by the Enforcement Officer (Licensing and Environmental Health), of which 38 were undertaken 'out of hours'. In addition, the service dealt with 43 related complaints of which 77% were dealt with within the 2 working day response time. This figure does not include those relating to noise which are recorded separately.

Emergency Planning

- 3.15 The past year has been particularly busy in the aftermath of the Summer 2007 floods and the issue of the Pitt Report findings. Work continues with other agencies to preparing specific local plans to deal with flood warning area incidents and to better inform and engage the residents at risk, and the public in general, with regard to emergency preparedness. Local flood plans have been produced and delivered to all residents in the 4 Ribble Valley Flood Warning Areas.
- 3.16 The Emergency Planning function is also deeply involved with implementing the Council's Event Safety Policy and engaging with major event organisers to achieve compliance and to achieve safe, considerate and successful local events. Last year, 65 outdoor events took place over 95 days. Again, this work is very time consuming.
- 3.17 In the past year, several major documents have been reviewed resulting in the re-issue of the updated District Emergency Plan following the change of Chief Executive. The Council was also required to produce a Multi-agency Flood Response Plan for the Borough. This was completed and submitted in April. In addition, the business continuity software (Connie) was introduced to complement the Council's Risk Management system (Grace).

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Ongoing high performance has been achieved throughout the past 12 months in most areas and especially in relation to response times to service requests. However, it has again not been possible to achieve either the programmed food safety and health and safety premise inspection target last year due to reasons stated. However, it must be appreciated that the service continues to receive significant levels of complaints and every effort will continue to be made to achieve all service targets.

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Appendix – Commercial Environmental Health Performance Summary.

For further information please ask for James Russell, extension 4466.

**Commercial Environmental Health Performance
Summary APPENDIX 1**

| Function | Target | 2006/2007 | Target Achieved | 2007/2008 | Target Achieved | 2008/2009 | Target Achieved | 2009/2010 | Target Achieved |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Food Premise Initial | | 392 (376) | 100% | 431 (431) | 100% | 415 (373) | 100% | 334 | 313 |
| Health and Safety Initial Insp's | | 69 (284) | 24% | 182 (280) | 65% | 98 (215) | 46% + campaigns | 200 | 167 (83%) + |
| LAAPC Inspections | | 40 (40) | 100% | 38 (38) | 100% | 36 (38) | 95% | 20 | 24 |
| Licensing | | 104 (200) | 52% | 214 (200) | 100% | 98 (100) | 98% | 100 | 104 |
| Smokefree Premises | | | | 492 (250) | 100% | 248 (250) | 99.2% | 250 | 202 |
| | Working | | within | | within | | Within | | |
| Food Complaints | within 2 | 135 (127) | 94% | 110 (109) | 99% | 144 (136) | 94.5% | 157 (147) | 94% |
| Health and Safety | within 2 | 32 (29) | 91% | 70 (66) | 94% | 45 (39) | 87% | 28 (24) | 86% |
| Abandoned Vehicles (initial) | within 1 day | 36 (35) | 97% | 35 (35) 7 (7) | 100% 100% | 33 (33) 2 (20) | 100% 100% | 26 (26) 0 | 100% 100% |
| Air Pollution [dust, | within 2 | 129 (119) | 92% | 116 (103) | 89% | 80 (74) | 92.5% | 83 (70) | 84% |
| Environmental litter | within 2 | | | 436 (341) | 78% | 790 (658) | 83% | 666 (545) | 82% |
| Noise | within 2 | 188 (173) | 92% | 225 (176) | 78% | 222 (197) | 89% | 257 (226) | 88% |
| Licensing | within 2 | 58 (54) | 93% | 43 (32) | 74% | 10 (6) | 60% | 43 (33) | 77% |
| Smokefree Premises | within 2 | | | 28 (25) | 89% | 15 (14) | 93.3% | 10 (7) | 70% |
| Miscellaneous | within 2 | 27 (27) | 100% | 24 (23) | 96% | 30 (27) | 90% | 39 (38) | 97% |
| | Total | 605 (564) | 93% | 1087 (616) | 84% | 1371 | 86.5% | 1309 | 87% |
| Pest Control | within 2 | 752 (738) | 98% | 763 (752) | 90% | 559 (559) | 100% | 651 (648) | 99.9% |
| Dog Warden | within 2 | 197 (168) | 85% | 265 (218) | 82% | 361 (338) | 93% | 391 (372) | 95% |
| | Total | 945 (906) | 96% | 1028 (676) | 94% | 920 (897) | 97.5% | 1042 | 98% |
| Infectious Disease | within 1 | 88 | 100% | 102 | 100% | 87 (87) | 100% | 115 (115) | 100% |
| Food [milk] | | 35 | | 80 | | 64 | | 105 | |
| [other] | | 225 | | 212 | | 224 | | 148 | |
| Accident | within 1 | 31 (29) | 94% | 25 | 100% | 28 | N/A | 12 | |
| Animal [Riding] | | 4 | 100% | 4 | | 4 | | 3 | |
| [Animal] | | 10 | 100% | 10 | | 10 | | 8 | |
| [Dog] | | 5 | 100% | 5 | | 5 | | 2 | |
| [Pet] | | 5 | - | 5 | | 3 | | 3 | |
| [Zoo & Wild] | | 0 | 100% | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| Planning | | 39 | - | 32 | | 2 | | 56 | |