

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY 24 MARCH 2011
title: GENERAL REPORT
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: JAMES RUSSELL, HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform Committee of relevant issues which have arisen since the last meeting.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – The following reports generally relate to the Council's ambitions to make people's lives healthier and safer.

2 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY LIAISON MEETING

2.1 A liaison meeting was held on 10 January 2011, a copy of the minutes are attached for your information as Appendix A to this report.

3 FLOOD PROTECTION GRANT UPDATE

3.1 I am pleased to report the recent significant progress with the DEFRA flood property grant scheme.

3.2 Work commenced on the 26 eligible properties in Whalley and Ribchester in early February and is all but complete. Initial feedback from a couple of householders and the contractor is that work has gone very smoothly, to plan and in budget without any major issues arising. Final inspections are to be arranged in the near future.

3.3 In light of the above, the grant claim has been compiled and submitted to the Environment Agency to meet the 31 March deadline for settlement.

4 COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER FOR LAND ADJACENT TO CLITHEROE CEMETERY – UPDATE

4.1 Further to the decision report to this Council's Planning and Development Committee in December 2010, I am pleased to report that the above application for a CPO has recently been granted subject to the mandatory six week appeal period to the High Court.

4.2 It is envisaged that this matter will now proceed accordingly. No valuation is yet available as to the likely costs of the access strip in question. An application has also been submitted for planning permission to create the access and to extend the cemetery.

5 TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRIVATE SEWERS

5.1 An initial workshop has recently been organised by United Utilities to explore the implications of the above transfer.

- 5.2 Subject to regulations expected in July 2011, the expected transfer date continues to be expected as 1 October 2011.
- 5.3 However, whilst the foul private sewer network will be transferred to United Utilities, a significant amount of associated work will remain with the local authority. This will include private drainage issues, private surface water sewers, wrong connections and large multiple property septic tank systems not discharging direct to a watercourse.
- 5.4 Furthermore, associated local authority pumping stations to be transferred by 2016.
- 5.5 A fundamental matter to be resolved, is how enquiries will be handled by both United Utilities and local authorities to prevent residents being passed 'back and forth'. United Utilities recognise the need for an agreed 'protocol' for establishing key facts and responsibilities at the initial enquiry stage and maybe a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as to who will respond to an initial enquiry.
- 5.6 At the meeting, the declared wish of both parties was to work closely together and ensure a good service to customers.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

- 6.1 I am pleased to report that a third environmental health newsletter is to be sent out to all businesses within the Borough along with the business rate demand. A copy of the newsletter is currently being prepared by printing and copies will be circulated at the meeting.
- 6.2 The newsletter contains references to the proposed 'Food Premise Rating Scheme', flooding and changes to flood warnings, access in Building Control Services and event safety information.

7 FLUORIDATION - UPDATE

- 7.1 The latest information received from United Utilities is that there has been no change in the North West with the current situation in 2010, following the submission of the 'Regional Fluoridation Study' to the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) in May 2009.
- 7.2 Apparently, the Strategic Health Authorities are all waiting the outcome of the ongoing judicial review into the NHS South Central area (Southampton), the decision of which is expected soon.
- 7.3 Before any fluoridation schemes can be introduced, the SHA must undertake a public consultation exercise.

8 FREEZE THAW 2010/11 INFORMATION FROM UNITED UTILITIES

- 8.1 Apparently, the severity of the winter of 2009 has been classified as a 1:30 year winter and 2010 has recently been classified as a 1:60 year.
- 8.2 Over a 3-4 week period in December, the temperature rarely rose above 0°C during night-time which resulted in frost penetrations significantly more than in 2009.
- 8.3 As a result of ground movement associated with the freeze thaw, United Utilities experienced the highest water leakage level since 1997, with some 40,000 properties (of a possible 3.2 million) reporting problems.

8.4 Many of the company employees and contractors worked throughout the Christmas period in very difficult conditions to restore and maintain supplies throughout the North West. Similar problems were experienced by gas utilities.

9 'WHAT NOT TO FLUSH' MEDIA CAMPAIGN – UNITED UTILITIES

9.1 United Utilities are experiencing increasing problems with fats, oils and greases in sewers causing significant blockage problems and also blockages resulting from inappropriate products being disposed of by way of the sewer.

9.2 Recent evaluation has highlighted both the significant costs of the removal of the above and also the impact to householders who suffer as a result of blocked drainage.

9.3 As a result, United Utilities seek to work more closely with local authority Building Control and Environmental Health Officers to address and reduce the discharge of fats, oils and greases to sewers and thereby reduce avoidable blockages. United Utilities are also to undertake a high profile media campaign by way of the TV, Community Roadshows and in schools to inform and educate householders on what items can and should not be disposed of by 'flushing down the loo'.

9.4 Furthermore, advice leaflets will be made readily available and will be obtained for our Council offices receptions. The document can be viewed on www.unitedutilities.com/whatnottoflush.

10 SLAIDBURN PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY UPDATE

10.1 Further to my report to the last meeting of this Committee, the connection of the new supply is progressing with some 75 of the 100 properties having 'signed up' to connection. Some of the remaining 25 are vacant with the majority being owned by the estate and are expected to connect.

10.2 It is anticipated that the vast majority will sign up before the end of March, thereby avoiding the connection charge, and will be physically connected in the near future.

10.3 The above represents a very significant investment of £2 Million and an important improvement to public health for the residents of Slaidburn.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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