

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Play Areas

Following the introduction of the Play Pathfinder phase 2 sites, which includes for the major development at Witton Park for play, there have been a significant number of instances of vandalism at Council play areas.

Within the financial year to date, there have been 28 instances of vandalism to play areas with the costs of replacing damaged equipment in excess of £30,000 including over £18,000 of the damage taking place at the new Play Pathfinder sites. All instances of damage are reported to the Police who the Council are working with to reduce the levels of vandalism.

Recycling and Waste Tonnages

Kerbside commingled recycling tonnages are on a par with the previous financial year for the first 5 months of the year which bucks the trend of a number of councils who are seeing a reduction in kerbside recycling tonnage. A positive for Blackburn with Darwen is that for April to August inclusive, landfill tonnage is down by over 4% when compared to the same period for 2009.

Carbon reduction and climate change

The portfolio is responsible for reducing the Council's carbon emissions by 25% by 2013 (against an 06/07 baseline), providing strategic direction for carbon reduction across the borough in line with targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 and ensuring services adapt to the impacts of the changing climate such as flooding, drought and extremes of temperature. Addressing climate change provides an opportunity for the Council and its partners to stimulate the low carbon economy, generate energy, and finance, from renewable sources, combat fuel poverty and reduce costs through efficiency measures.

Parks

Maintenance of Parks continues to be an important aspect of the work of staff in the Regeneration and Environment Department with a welcome input from the various Friends Groups.

Later this year consultation will commence on the Witton Country Park Masterplan.

Street Cleansing

The neighbourhood approach to street cleansing whereby all resources are directed in rotation each day to a neighbourhood area is continuing with positive feedback from residents. Discussions are talking place with the Community Payback Team for some additional resource to assist Council staff in maintaining the Borough's environment as this is viewed as a major priority for the Portfolio.

Shisha Lounges

A growing problem in Blackburn with Darwen and nationally is the proliferation of premises opening specifically for the smoking of shisha pipes. Smoking shisha is more harmful to health than cigarettes and the tobacco product used in the pipes is illicit in that is non UK duty paid.

To date three premises have chosen to ignore the advice given in April and are facing prosecution. Over 40kg of illicit shisha tobacco has also been seized from the premises and children as young as 14 encouraged to take part in this illegal activity.

