

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
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ROGUE BUILDER SENTENCED TO 19 MONTHS IMPRISONMENT

A rogue builder who has previous convictions for similar crimes, operating from addresses in Cavendish Street, Darwen and Albert Street, Bolton has recently been prosecuted at Preston Crown Court.

The prosecution was brought by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Trading Standards for three counts of fraudulent trading under section 9 of the Fraud Act 2006 – one of which was committed whilst he was on bail awaiting trial for similar offences. The prosecution case in relation to the first two counts against the builder was that he took payments from two victims totaling £38,000 before he completed the works but then failed to complete them, leaving one premises in a dangerous condition and the other uninhabitable.

The court was informed that the first victim paid £20,000 to do extensive work to a shop premise in Darwen. The builder then demolished the extension at the back of the shop leaving all the debris and bricks in the footings, erected scaffolding to the front and did a small amount of work on the roof but then did nothing else, leaving the shop in a dangerous condition. The second victim borrowed £18,000 for extensive work to their ‘forever home’, which was never completed. The builder failed to deliver and install windows, doors, patio doors, flooring and a bathroom. The court was told the family was left “virtually homeless” as he left the house uninhabitable and that the family had been left devastated. The builder was sentenced to 19 months and 18 months for each count, to be served concurrently.

For the third count against him, the court was informed that the builder failed to pay a roofing contractor to whom he had subcontracted some roofing work. He had given the roofer three cheques in order to try to pay a debt of £1,500 to him on sequential dates, all of which were dishonoured. For this he was sentenced to an additional 12 months to be served concurrently.

GARDEN WASTE

The garden waste subscription service has seen just over 10,000 households benefit from the “early bird” discounted rate of £20 for the subscription. With a further 1,500 having signed up since at the £25 rate.

Householders can sign up to the subscription scheme online, or over the telephone via the councils contact centre, or with cash/cheque payments accepted at the libraries across the borough and also at Davyfield Road depot.

The first collection weekend for the service was impacted upon by the weather, with the snow meaning collections scheduled for Friday 2nd March being postponed, with residents having a collection added to the end of their collection schedule in November. The collections scheduled for Saturday 3rd March went ahead as planned.

LITTER AND DOG FOULING ENFORCEMENT

Kingdom Services Group continue to respond to those seen dropping litter and leaving dog fouling, with since the start of the initiative in October 2017, some 3104 fixed penalty notices issued, with a payment rate of 64%, which is considered in the early stages of a contract by Kingdom Services, to be a good rate. The first prosecutions are now with Legal Services and once convictions are publicised; the payment rate is expected to increase.

Since the launch 16 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for dog fouling, and the Team is now running a targeted dog-fouling patrol one day a week, with both uniformed and non-uniformed officers using intelligence received from the community, in order to target problem areas.

PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER

To help tackle the problem of dog fouling, the council has introduced a new Public Space Protection Order requiring owners to remove dog faeces; to keep dogs on leads in cemeteries and for dogs to be excluded from play areas.

If any of the conditions are breached, a Fixed Penalty Notice of £100 can be issued and failure to pay, may lead to prosecution and being liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding Level 3 (currently £1,000) on the standard scale.

YOUR CALL CLEAN UP VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

Although several clean up events were cancelled due to the bad weather in early March, and despite the recent downturn in event numbers, several things are giving cause for optimism :-

- *Lancashire Volunteer Portal (LVP)* – residents are signing up in increasing numbers to be volunteer litter pickers, recording their hours, locations and engaging with the Council. To date approximately 80-people have signed up (to add to the over 350 people already signed up to the Council prior to LVP coming on stream). This is a tremendous resource with a great deal of potential and Your Call has benefitted from being on board from its inception
- *Resident leads on social media* site – Keep Darwen Tidy, a new group on Facebook, has done some great work to mobilise and motivate local people to action, with Environment officers actively engaged to support the individuals involved

- *BT Corporate volunteer programme* – Officers have had useful conversations with the 100 strong local office at BT, to engage staff on volunteer initiatives, with only the bad weather preventing the first event in Corporation Park, which was shrub clearance, from going ahead. All BT staff can spend 3 working days per annum taking part in local volunteer initiatives, as part of their corporate social responsibility programme.
- *Costing Your Call volunteer hours* – using a widely accepted methodology of costing volunteer time, shows that from 1st April 2017 to the end of January 2018, Your Call clean up volunteers contributed approximately £45,000 of volunteer time, to the benefit of their neighbourhoods.