

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN**

DATE: 16 JULY 2020

WASTE AND RECYCLING

During the lockdown period, the Environment team have maintained refuse and recycling services across the borough, despite the general waste tonnage in the burgundy bin increasing by up to 16%. The recycling from households increased by 5% during this time. Despite the increases, the collection crews serviced all properties on schedule.

The household waste recycling centres (HWRCs), after receiving Government advice and discussion with the Lancashire Resilience Forum, were opened up on 18th May, along with the other sites across Lancashire. The service was opened with social distancing in mind, which saw a number of bays at the sites reduced, the temporary opening on closure days to receive permit users at the sites, plus also the introduction of a booking system for users, which has proven very popular with residents, given the high number of compliments received. With effect from 2 July, we have increased the number of booking opportunities at the HWRCs by 50%, by moving the slot times from 30 minutes to 20 minutes. When comparing the service reopening to other waste disposal authorities, we have also been able to accept all waste types, which others have not been able to do.

Despite the Covid restrictions, the blue bins for paper and cardboard have started to be delivered across the borough and it is anticipated that all the bins will all be delivered for the end of July, to enable collections to commence from August. A new calendar is due to be issued to residents, before collections commence.

With the Covid restrictions being reduced, we have encountered a significant increase from late May in littering and flytipping, despite the Council having provided continued emptying of litterbins plus waste and recycling services throughout Covid period.

PARKS ANDS OPEN SPACES

The sites have remained open to pedestrian access for the whole of the Covid period, with vehicle access becoming readily available from May. The sites have suffered from excessive littering, despite again the litterbins being emptied on a regular basis.

Play areas have remained closed since March but will re-open from 4th July in line with Government guidance.

CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA

Burials and cremations have been managed in accordance with Government legislation and also the Lancashire Resilience Forum advice. This has seen the Council review regularly the numbers able to attend the services and increase the numbers in accordance with guidance and legislation.

Additionally, the Council has introduced webcasting of cremations for those unable to attend the service, plus also allow the filming of burials for sharing with families and friends.

PARKING SERVICES

Enforcement during Covid

In terms of parking enforcement since the commencement of the Covid lockdown we have taken our advice on what we should and shouldn't be doing from the paper 'Local Authority Parking and Traffic Management Operational Advice during Covid 19'. We have therefore since the 23rd March, only issued Penalty Charge Notices to vehicles which are parked on double yellow lines, blips on kerbs, or what we consider in a dangerous manner to either other motorists or the public. All other parking restrictions have been lifted

Benefits of Parking Enforcement during the lockdown

Parking management is an important public service, which provides benefits to motorists and the wider community. Those benefits include maintaining road safety and ensuring access to goods and services. This is extremely important, particularly for certain key workers, as local authorities aim to keep providing essential services at this challenging time.

Old Bank Lane

In line with the East Lancashire Hospital Trust, we lifted the barriers on Old Bank Lane car park on the 24th March 2020 to allow free parking for any workers or anyone visiting the hospital during the lockdown.

Whilst the car park has been closed it has been used as a testing facility for key workers who may have symptoms of Covid, this was set up and opened on the 29th April and has capacity to do 200 swabs a day.

It is planned that this site will become a public testing centre from the 6th July, primarily for people who live and work in Blackburn and Darwen and will have the capacity to provide up to 1000 tests per day.

PUBLIC PROTECTION & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

PP&EH have been involved in some key areas of work connected with the Council's response to the Covid – 19 pandemic. This has included:

- Enforcement of the requirement for certain types of premises to close down. The vast majority of businesses that needed to close did so; but in line with Government guidance a graduated approach to enforcing these provisions has been taken with only a very small number of Prohibition Notices having to be issued to premises open when they ought not to be.
- Dealing with complaints and requests for advice and guidance about social distancing within businesses
- Food officers have been providing hygiene advice to volunteers providing food to the vulnerable during the lockdown
- Food safety checks have continued using novel methods of working
- There has been an increase in the number of investigations into greater numbers of complaints about illegal burning and noise complaints
- Trading Standards officers have disseminated scams leaflets to vulnerable people in the food support packages issued by the Food Hub. They have also been checking whether sanitiser and PPE sold to consumers in the Borough are legitimate.
- Preparations are being made for local contact tracing
- Working with the taxi trade to identify safer ways of working