

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

**COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN  
DATE: 01 OCTOBER 2020**

### **PUBLIC PROTECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

Public Protection has continued to devote much of its time to Covid-19 business support and enforcement. Whereas much of the covid-19 enforcement work done in the first months of the pandemic involved many officers visiting shops and advising and encouraging them to comply with covid-secure guidance (over 1700 covid-secure inspection visits were carried by PP staff in the period April to September 2020), the focus is changing as the Borough continues to experience high infection rates.

Officers are increasingly carrying out more intelligence-led enforcement operations where premises are ignoring advice. PPS has been taking a graduated approach to enforcement, with 19 written warnings issued throughout the pandemic period and 7 prohibition notices served on premises which should have been closed but weren't.

In August, officers used new coronavirus legislation powers to close down a banqueting venue and a bar which were continuing to flout social distancing guidelines. The legislation requires each closure decision to be reviewed every 7 days, and both premises provided adequate assurances at the 7 day review point to be able to open with strict conditions.

A barber's shop which was not heeding social distancing requirements was also closed down. Following the closure, adequate assurances were received and it was allowed to open with conditions at the 7 day review. On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020 a bar in Blackburn town centre became the fourth and latest premises to be closed down using these powers. All four premises continue to be monitored.

In addition to enforcing covid-secure rules, Environmental Health officers are supporting the successful local track and trace initiative by visiting persons who have not been contactable by telephone.

### **WASTE AND RECYCLING**

Since the last Council Forum update, the staff transferring into the Council from Biffa, to undertake the collection of recyclables, have been inducted and commenced operations with new vehicles.

On 3rd August, the Council commenced the separate collection of paper and cardboard in blue bins and glass/plastic bottles, tins/cans and tubs/trays

meeting recyclable codes 1,2 and 5, in the grey bin. This significant change was conducted under difficult circumstances, with the Covid pandemic affecting lead times for the delivery of bins and new blue sacks, however, the Environment team managed to ensure all deliveries were completed in advance of the start of the service. Prior to the start, all households received three separate notifications about the bin and the changes of recycling in the borough, with additional advertising on various Council social media platforms.

Throughout August, if the grey recycling bin contained paper and card, the households were provided with a bin hanger advising them that the paper and card could no longer be placed in the grey bin and must be placed in the blue bin. The bin hanger also advised that this was the last time the grey bin was to be emptied if contaminated by paper and card, as from September, the restrictions on materials was being employed.

This was necessary so that the Council could benefit from the savings from the blue and grey bin material processing, as the contract with Suez for the processing of the recyclates, is based on quality material, with no contamination in both the blue and the grey bin. The processing plants will not accept any contaminated loads of recycling, as the industry marketplace has moved significantly over the last 2 years. Any rejected loads will cost the Council additional money to dispose of.

In addition to the numerous messages already provided to households across the borough about what can/cannot be recycled, the Council is also producing a number of short videos to help provide valuable, visual information on recycling materials that can/cannot go in each bin. These videos will be available to send via WhatsApp and also stored on YouTube and should be available later in September.

The Environment team has also seen the Council's website for recycling updated with the latest information [www.recyclebwd.org](http://www.recyclebwd.org)

In an effort to tackle any confusion, the Environment team has introduced a separate email address for contaminated bins [contaminatedbins@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:contaminatedbins@blackburn.gov.uk) where residents can send their photos of any contaminated bins and staff will assist them with looking at the photos and providing feedback on materials that should not have been placed in the respective recycling bins.

### **Waste Enforcement**

The Environment team has been in a position to take forward a number of cases to the courts, with the assistance of the Council's Legal team, where, since the Courts have resumed sitting, successful prosecutions have taken place, with some 15 cases considered in the last 2 months.

Additionally, the Council's Environment team has seized and also crushed 2 vehicles that were identified as being used in illegal waste activities. This

action was undertaken in an effort to make flytipping have consequences for the perpetrators of this illegal activity.