

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

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

DATE: 27 JANUARY 2022

WASTE AND RECYCLING

The Council issued its festive guide to bin collections and recycling across the borough for early December. The guide included the collection dates for waste and recycling collections over the festive period, advice on what can and cannot be recycled, and for the 2nd year, the opportunity to win cash prizes amounting to £1,000, donated by the Council's waste contractor and partner, Suez Recycling and Recovery UK.

The Environment team are also working closely with schools within the borough, promoting the Recycling Hero Card Game to schoolchildren. The game includes some 32 waste and recycling questions, which pose not just questions about what goes in which bin, but also stimulates thoughts on reuse and repurposing. Further information can be found on the Council's recycling and waste website www.recyclebwd.org

ASH DIEBACK

The Council is beginning to identify and tackle the problem of ash dieback impacting on trees on Council land.

Ash dieback, which is sometimes known as 'Chalara' ash dieback, is a disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. It is thought that the fungus found its way to Europe on commercially imported ash from East Asia. The first dying ash trees were reported in Poland in the 1990s and ash dieback has since spread across Europe and is becoming a major issue in the UK, as Ash trees make up 12% of the UK's broadleaved woodland, and are often found in parks, gardens, hedgerows and roadside margins.

Ash dieback causes leaf loss, crown dieback and bark lesions in affected trees. It also weakens the trees, making it more susceptible to other pests and pathogens such as Armillaria, or honey fungus. This can then see the trees fail, making them brittle and susceptible to, as a worst-case scenario, falling.

Government guidance is for people who manage ash trees near roads, railways, buildings and other publicly accessible land, must consider the risks posed by infected ash. Trees or woodlands in these areas should be risk-assessed, monitored and managed to reduce the risk.

By law, the owner of land where a tree stands is responsible for the health and safety of those who could be affected by that tree. As such, the Council has commenced assessments of locations, which will continue for near future, aided by the planned addition of a surveyor and tree team to deal with the affected trees, although it should be noted that dead or dying ash also pose a risk to professionals working on or near them.

Parking Services – Old Bank Lane Car Park

A Covid 19 Regional Testing Centre (RTC) was established on a section of Old Bank Lane car park (c.200 car parking spaces) in July 2020. The lease between the Council and the Government for the section of the car park used by the RTC has been extended several times and the current lease was due to end on 31 December 2021.

Following a request of the Department of Health and Social Care, COVID-19 National Testing programme, the current lease for the Covid 19 RTC has been extended until 31 December 2022 with proposed break clauses in March, June and September 2022, which can be exercised by the Government or the Council.

Having an RTC located within the Borough is of great benefit for residents of Blackburn and Darwen and for people who work within the Borough who may wish to book a Covid-19 test.

The remainder of the car park (c.300 spaces) is available for permit users, many of whom work at the Hospital and for patients and visitors to the Hospital who would pay and display to park on site. Those people who are visiting the RTC do not have to pay a parking fee.