

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & OPERATIONS

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
CHIEF OFFICERS: Strategic Director  
of Environment & Operations  
Thursday, 23 March 2023

### **PEOPLE: Build happier, healthier and safer communities;**

#### **Waste and Recycling**

With the Government suggesting that they are looking to introduce regular, separate food waste collections in England from 2025, the Council is seeking clarification from DEFRA on the detail behind the proposed introduction. At present, no specific details are available e.g. on frequency of collection, or locations for treatment of the food waste once collected, although the recent planning application approval for Suez to develop an anaerobic decomposition plant within the borough would provide a local outlet. Such a treatment process for food waste collected by the Council would need to be tendered. Work though is continuing with the local message to reduce food waste within the borough, with the upcoming Food alliance seminar at Ewood Park helping to spread the message about Food Waste reduction.

The 2023 garden waste bin subscription scheme has promotion began in December and at the time of writing, we have 10750 subscribers.

Changes to kerbside collection in England via the Environment Act are expected during 2023, with clarity slowly emerging regarding Government proposals and when they will be implemented. For example, a deposit return scheme for drinks cans and plastic bottles is expected to be operational from 2025 in England, and the government intends that from 2027, all Councils in England will provide a kerbside collection of plastic film packaging. Both proposals will have far reaching impact for Council recycling collections, although England and Northern Ireland will not accept glass bottles as part of the deposit return scheme, whereas in Scotland and Wales, this will be included.

#### **Waste Education and Enforcement**

Working within communities, the 2 Environmental Education Officers have been trialling an initiative in Wensley Fold area, door knocking and speaking to a number of residents over bin contamination issues. They are also whilst on site, trying to solve bin issues and back street accumulations. A return visit has been booked to sign them up as Keep It Tidy Volunteers.

The team is working with a number of local Ward Councillors on providing them with use of dog fouling stencils and spray chalk, for use on pavements to highlight the problems some areas are facing. In January a further 21 Keep It Tidy Volunteers were recruited and were encouraged to contact their respective Keep Blackburn or Keep Darwen Tidy group too.

#### **Public Protection and Environment Health**

The Council is about to commence a consultation relating to its proposals to revoke three of the Borough's remaining four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's).

The Intack and Bastwell AQMAs were declared in 2005, and the Four Lane Ends AQMA was declared in 2012. They were all declared because levels of nitrogen dioxide

(NO<sub>2</sub>), mainly from road vehicle exhaust emissions, were exceeding national limits. NO<sub>2</sub> is harmful to human health and the environment.

However, air quality has improved at these locations. The NO<sub>2</sub> levels are meeting necessary standards, and levels are likely to remain low for the foreseeable future. As a consequence, the Council is considering revoking these AQMAs. As required by law, a consultation process is being launched to invite comments before deciding on the most appropriate way forward. More information on this consultation can be found on the Council's consultation web page.

## **Markets**

A new Markets staffing structure has been completed. The following roles will be recruited to as soon as possible:

Darwen Markets Manager (part-time); Finance Support Officer; Visitor Services & Markets Support Officer (part-time)

The Majority of traders in Blackburn Market have now signed up to new 7 year leases. Negotiations are progressing with two new traders progressing (Fried Chicken and Mexican) and one current trader is seeking to increase the size of their stall (Chilli Salt).

The Markets team are making some improvements to Blackburn Market. Two new seating areas will be created and new storage areas for traders will be designed into vacant space. This will create additional seating for further food retailers and will enhance the visual appearance of the market hall.