

Cabinet Lead Report – Full Council 21 February 2018

Councillor Michael Wilson: Cabinet Lead for Environment and Neighbourhood

Since before Christmas my focus has been upon the contribution towards the budget challenge of Environment and Neighbourhood Services, the challenge being not only to offer efficiencies for the final quarter of 2017/18 but also a contribution towards the balanced budget presented to the Council for 2018/19. Whilst the emphasis is always on service, there are specific areas which are revenue generating and those will be under review during the coming year. Inevitably, this includes a review of car parking charge across the Borough. Charges have been frozen for the last five years despite inflationary pressures which have inevitably increased the cost of maintaining the sites. In addition, the European legal ruling with regard to charging administration fees for use of credit and debit cards has meant that HBC must absorb those costs which are currently charged by the third party service provider. Any revisions to current pricing will be based on intelligent study of patterns of behaviour and usage rather than arbitrary rises.

Suggestions have been raised that civil enforcement officers are set financial targets to achieve; I can confirm this is untrue. The main objective of the civil enforcement team is to ensure traffic flow is maintained and there are no obstructions or dangers created by parked vehicles. Charges only arise if a contravention is identified and a penalty charge notice is therefore issued. I have recently approved a number of traffic regulation orders (TROs) relating to various areas of the Borough, all designed to improve traffic flows and safety and benefit residents who are blighted by inconsiderate and irresponsible parking.

In the area of Environmental Health, we will be exploring the opportunities to raise income by selling expertise and advice in areas such as food safety and closer alignments with the Team at East Hants.

Those who received e-mails of concern from residents regarding the removal of the dog litter bins at Beachlands will be pleased to know that this was merely a hiatus between the removal of the old bins and their replacement with new improved facilities.

The Community Trigger was the subject of a recent Scrutiny Panel discussion; the Community Trigger is in effect a civil remedy for antisocial behaviour, in part a replacement for the old system of ASBOs. There is a procedure in which Councillors can request the Trigger when the antisocial behaviour experienced by the resident is such that it meets the criteria. Details of the procedure can be made available in the event that Ward residents are unfortunate enough to suffer significant and persistent antisocial behaviour from their neighbours.

On 1st February 2018 the Multi Agency Partnership Action Group met to set priority areas for work over the next two months. One of the issues which arose which has become a priority is tackling drug related harm. The Police are particularly seeking community intelligence regarding drug users and particularly dealers in the Borough who continue to prey upon the most vulnerable, often taking possession of their homes to set up temporary drug markets; this is known as cuckooing. It is important to identify these drug markets at an early stage to prevent negative impacts upon the neighbours.

You will be re-assured to know that a new Priority Area Police Response Team has been established which is tasked daily depending on the issues which have arisen during the previous 24 hours. The new Team is designed to enable increased flexibility when dealing with emerging priorities.

12th February 2018