

**Cllr Margot McArthur
Cleaner & Greener Portfolio Holder**

**Report to Scrutiny Committee
13 July 2021**

I am pleased to present my report on recent activity within my portfolio. I am immensely proud of the tireless team efforts displayed by colleagues in delivering services to residents throughout the pandemic.

Direct Services:

- Kept delivering a weekly refuse collection service during the Covid-19 pandemic despite increased staff absences and significantly increased waste volumes.
- A restructure of Direct Services has taken place from 01/06/21 to create the following improvements
 - Increasing our capacity to generate more income.
 - Ensuring services are future-proofed for a changing district
 - Combining roles giving career development to combat an ageing workforce
- Our Waste & Recycling team were Finalists for the Association of Public Sector Excellence for Team of the Year.
- A new fly-tipping model has been adopted and has been noted by DEFRA as effective practice.
- Made three successful applications to the Court for judicial approval for covert direct surveillance for commercial fly-tipping, which has resulted in a number of criminal prosecutions (RIPA).
- Direct Services has introduced a new digital health and safety system for the depot called The Action Manager (TAM) this has massively improved our safety record and record keeping and has resulted in a number of insurance claims successfully defended.
- We have completed phase 1 of the Dunbrik depot refurbishment plan upgrading the office accommodation and meeting space to new modern facilities. This has created more working space for new staff.
- We successfully obtained DEFRA Binfrastructure funding for a smart sensor dual recycling street litter bin pilot across remote rural areas of the district.
- We are currently consulting on a new Tree Strategy that will be adopted by the Council detailing how we manage the substantial amount of land and trees owned by the Council.

Car Parking:

- Direct Services won the parking enforcement contract tender for Tandridge District Council until 2024.
- With Kent County Council we have tendered for an additional 15 Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) within our internal offices and off street car parks across the district.
- Parking staff distributed food parcels during the pandemic.

Emergency Planning:

- Emergency planning procedures and policies have been updated with new staff members being trained. Also, a new Activation Duty Officer scheme has been introduced to respond to out of hours civil emergencies.
- Direct Services fully instigated and tested its Business Continuity Plan throughout the entire Pandemic, while maintaining all statutory collection services. We also facilitated a new mobile testing unit for the NHS for covid-19 testing at Otford Road site.

Environmental Health:

- The Environmental Health Team is being decoupled from the partnership with Dartford Borough Council and will be brought back in house from the 1st July 2021. As a result, the team is currently experiencing significant change. Two experienced Environmental Health Officers have chosen to move to Dartford Borough Council, and this may impact upon the ability of the service to fully deliver its priorities in the short term until the vacant positions can be recruited.
- We continue to work upon the delivery of a new Air Quality Action Plan. A report is going to C&G and then Cabinet requesting the removal of 5 AQMA which are no longer exceeding national objectives and agreement to formulate officer/member working groups. It is intended that the Air Quality Action Plan will be completed for adoption at Council later in the year.
- Owing to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Environmental Health Commercial Team have a large number of ‘missed food inspections’. The Food Standards Agency has recently set out a prioritisation plan and we will be following this to get back on track. We are intending to re-start visits and inspections to food premises shortly concentrating on those which have been newly registered.
- Environmental Protection is receiving significant numbers of complaints and service requests. Unfortunately, customers are intolerant of delay or the difficulties in undertaking investigation caused by the decoupling and Covid-19.
- We have begun the process of licensing the Zoo at Coolings Nursery and are awaiting DEFRA to appoint a ministry vet.

Facilities Management:

- Provided ongoing additional cleaning to maintain a ‘Covid secure’ office - including regular touchpoint cleans.
- Installed and maintain supplies of hand sanitiser around the building and in communal areas.
- Cleaning materials provided in all meeting rooms and office spaces, to enable regular cleaning between use.
- Following a recent restructure, created and successfully appointed a new role of FM Team Leader to lead both the FM & Scanning team.
- Currently undergoing a review of cleaning provisions at both Argyle Road & Dunbrik sites and procurement process for a new contract currently underway.

Licensing:

- Have been able to operate and offer near full functionality throughout the pandemic whilst mostly working from home (the only function which could not be provided was conducting knowledge tests for potential new taxi/private hire drivers due to the restrictions on use of the building as they must be done in person - these resumed in May 2021)

- At the beginning of the pandemic, it was clear that the lockdowns would affect two main elements of our customers - the hospitality trade and the taxi trade. In order to help them we introduced a deferred payment scheme for renewal applications to ensure drivers could continue working where they were able, and we also took a more relaxed approach to collecting annual fees for premises licences and didn't suspend for non-payment immediately. This was very much appreciated by the trade.
- Performance across the Partnership has remained high with majority of targets being hit month on month
- We successfully introduced the Pavement Licensing Scheme in July 2020 at very short notice from KCC
- We have sent out regular email updates to the trade (taxi and hospitality) about changing regulations which would have any major impact on them
- We have successfully adopted the new national standards for taxi/private hire introduced by the Department for Transport in July 2020, and did such an outstanding job on this across the partnership that we were invited to speak at the national LGA licensing conference on the subject
- We were instrumental in assisting a pavement licence scheme to be set up in Bank Street, Sevenoaks Town Centre from May to assist the hospitality trade to operate initially during the period where they only were allowed serve outdoors, but the scheme will be kept in place all summer to end of September. It has been warmly received by trade and public alike and has created a nice buzz.

Net Zero:

- The Council have committed to working towards achieving Net Zero emissions by 2030 on Council assets and services.
- It has also been agreed that the Council will be a “community leader” and encourage low carbon measures across the District through education, best practice, incentives, policy and opportunities. This includes working collaboratively with Kent County Council, Parish and Town Councils, Local Interest Group and the Local Government Association.
- The Council agreed Net Zero Actions for 2021-22 as set out in the report to Cabinet in February 2021.
- Good progress has been made to achieve the Net Zero actions including developing a Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy, a communications plan and website, improved partnership working, initial work on a Movement Strategy and a forthcoming family Wildlife event.
- Work continues on the Council’s Carbon Reduction Plan which will set out in detail how the Council can achieve Net Zero by 2030. This will follow the completion of the Council’s Asset Review.

Cllr M V McArthur
Cabinet Member for Cleaner & Greener