

Cllr Margot McArthur
Cleaner & Greener Portfolio Holder
Report to Scrutiny Committee
19 January 2023

I am pleased to present my report on recent activity within my portfolio.

Direct Services:

- We maintained a weekly refuse collection service despite continued difficulties with vehicle breakdowns, staff absences and significantly increased waste volumes.
- Successfully implemented a major waste collection round change for all 55,000 households and 15,000 garden waste customers, the first change in over 10-years. It was vital to redesign the old waste collection rounds as they were inefficient, given they were over ten years old. Our new collection rounds take into account future needs regarding food and glass, reducing carbon emissions, future vehicle needs and protecting our weekly collection service. In the first 10 weeks of the new rounds we have already used around 3,000 litres less fuel.
- Although still in 'Testing Mode' we are developing a very innovative map that links our GIS mapping system with live GPS vehicle tracking data. Our interactive live tracking map is for Customer Solutions to use when talking to customers and once tested for residents to be able to view on our website.
- Commercial waste is rebuilding after the pandemic with customers growing and income improving with an increase of 15% for 2019/20 and by a further 34% for 2021/22. For 2022/23 we are still seeing growth as income is up by a further 20%.
- Successfully obtained £500,000 CIL funding for the Bradbourne Lakes Project and submitted a £1.5 million development application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Implemented a new Sunday market pilot in Swanley, which commenced in April 2022 and following a successful first 6 months has been extended to March 2023, following extensive community engagement and support for the pilot.
- The second phase of the Dunbrik development programmes converted an old stores warehouse into a supervisor's hub.
- Successful implementation of the Annual Review of Parking Management 2022/23 which is delivering support to the local economy, further advances the District Council's move to Net Zero 2030, and embraces the most up-to-date thinking on parking management. The review is expected to meet the increased income assumptions agreed by Council as part of the 10-year budget.

- Approval for a new 5-year Fleet Replacement Programme 2023- 2028, for statutory waste collections which is a new approach for replacing our oldest and most vulnerable vehicles quickly, while also taking into account delivery lead times, so that for 2023-2024 the Council will be leasing five 26 tonne refuse collection vehicles. This approach will see 10 new vehicles arriving in the first part of 2023.
- Approval for the delivery of parking terminal upgrades for the upgrade to 4/5G and the introduction of contactless payment facilities in all 93 car park payment machines.
- Successful outcome from Internal Audit to the processes and issuing of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs).
- We continue to successfully deliver the Heritage Lottery Funded Greensand Commons project with our partners Kent Wildlife Trust. The project aims to restore the landscape, social and natural heritage of the Commons, creating opportunities for people to engage with and use the sites in ways they would like. Through connecting with local schools, charities, community groups and council services, the project will help under-represented groups to access all of our Commons. The project also seeks to open up public access through 26km improved footpaths and bridleways. Clear signage has been introduced where possible, to help visitors to navigate and learn about the sites.

Emergency Planning:

- Successful implementation and delivery of Operation London Bridge following the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
- Participated in the county-wide loss of fuel emergency planning group, which helped improve SDC's stock of fuel during the fuel shortage which resulted in the continual delivery of frontline services.
- Full participation in the county-wide Covid-19 recovery planning group at a strategic and operational level.
- Successful delivery of the Council's coordinated response to Storm Eunice.
- Full participation in the county-wide Ukraine Conflict planning group at a strategic and operational level.
- Successful delivery of the Council's coordinated response to the severe weather emergency for water shortages, extreme heat and wild-fires.
- Successful substantial outcome from Internal Audit for Emergency Planning.

CCTV

- From 1st October 2021 to 30th September 2022 the CCTV Control Room at Sevenoaks District Council assisted the police with 113 arrests for this period.
- Anti-social behaviour and theft continues to be our highest crime recorded within the CCTV service way above all other crimes. The CCTV teams continues to work closely with the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership bringing together all of the agencies in the District who can have an impact on crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime.
- The CCTV Service is not all about the detection and prevention of crime, during this year the CCTV service assisted police with 183 separate incidents of missing and vulnerable persons.
- The Children's Act 2004, section 11, places a statutory duty on District Councils to make arrangements in discharging their functions they have regarding the need to safeguard children and promote the welfare of children. CCTV monitors many parks, open spaces, play areas, skate parks within our areas assisting with many incidents relating to children or young people. CCTV dealt with 193 child related incidents.
- In December 2022 the Sevenoaks DC CCTV System was awarded the National CCTV Accreditation Certificate for another year, demonstrating a high level of quality system managements and procedures within the service.

Environmental Health:

- Following their return to Sevenoaks, the Environmental Health Team has made excellent progress and is now fully operational and compliant with all statutory duties.
- Our Food & Safety Team has undertaken 686 inspections of food businesses and substantially reduced the backlog of missed inspections which occurred during the Covid-19 lockdowns. We are fully compliant with the requirements of the Food Standards Agency and have effectively returned to 'business as usual ahead of schedule'.
- We have delivered a new Air Quality Action Plan for Sevenoaks District and have made good progress on a number of actions to improve air quality. We have appointed an Air Quality Promotions Officer, carried out a detailed assessment of the Swanley Air Quality Management Areas, commenced an idling awareness campaign and are working on a project to identify future electric vehicle charging need. Our Air Quality Status Report was completed in June, and we are working on a Supplementary Planning Document for Air Quality which will help ensure air quality is a key consideration for development within the urban areas.

- We have developed and Council has agreed a new Environmental Health Enforcement Policy and Food Safety Plan. We will also be bringing forward a new Environmental Protection Service Plan in spring 2023.

- The Environmental Protection Team has seen a 5% increase in service requests over the past year (total 1099). Noise continues to be the area of greatest concern and we have seen an 13% increase in such complaints from the previous year (total 643). Many of these relate to barking dogs possibly as a result of their owners returning to office working. We have also seen a substantial (56%) increase in complaints relating to animal welfare and vicious dogs (total 186). This is believed to have been driven by the hot weather in the summer, the influence of social media and new owners that are unaware of their responsibilities regarding pet ownership.

- We recruited 3 new officers to the Environmental Protection Team. These officers have made a positive impact to the service and have begun specialised training to ensure that they can assist with the delivery of the specialist functions within the team.

- In July we successfully prosecuted three individuals for breaches of an abatement notice issued under s79/80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to dog barking at Oakview Stud Farm. Unfortunately, despite fines being issued the noise continues and a further prosecution is underway.

Facilities Management:

The Facilities Management team continue to provide business as usual services to the organisation. These include (but are not limited to):

- Full FM support to Argyle Road, including evening meetings.
- Management of the cleaning contract for Argyle Road & Dunbrik.
- Full postal service for the Council.
- Courier service for Democratic Services.
- Corporate scanning to our document management systems and digitising historical files.
- Close working with the Asset Maintenance team to maintain all building services.

Licensing:

- Following the lingering after effects of the pandemic, Licensing is fully functioning and high performing in terms of target achievement.

- Officers from SDC Licensing Team have become authorised to assess premises for the Best Bar None Scheme and have already assessed a number of premises in Sevenoaks town centre.
- Once again we assisted with the on-going pavement licence for Bank Street in Sevenoaks town centre (allowing businesses to put out tables and chairs during the day and closing it off to through traffic). We are working with other services to make this a permanent scheme.
- Officers have taken a pro-active approach in dealing with any problem premises and for the first time, brought a Licensing Authority led review of a premises licence following repeated breaches of licence conditions and problems with unlicensed activity, which led to the licence being suspended for 2 weeks and stronger conditions being added to the licence.

Net Zero:

- The Council has 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 groups and the Local Government Association.
- The Council agrees Net Zero Actions annually and publicises progress on them.
- Good progress has been made to achieve the Net Zero actions including an Air Quality Action Plan, a Movement Strategy, promotion of active travel, developing a Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy, an electric vehicle charging study, a communications plan and website, and improved partnership working.
- Work continues on the Council’s Carbon Reduction Plan which will set out in detail how the Council can achieve Net Zero for its assets by 2030.

Cllr M V McArthur
Cabinet Member for Cleaner & Greener

5 January 2023