

Statement by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health, Waste and Recycling

23 February 2021

May I take this opportunity to thank all staff members within my portfolio for going above and beyond during these extremely challenging times. Just as we hoped to see a little light at the end of the tunnel after Christmas, we had the challenges of flooding and once again staff rose to the challenge.

Environmental Health have excelled given the scale and challenge on resources of Covid19 and the various restrictions.

From all the Council Members a huge thank you as well as on behalf of Hambleton residents.

Waste and Street Scene

- Covid restrictions have been very effective both within the depot and the out on the rounds, however, one member of the operational crew has confirmed Covid and one is isolating due to being in contact with him.
- Lockdown restrictions have meant reducing office presence to a minimum at the depot. Staff are now required to wear face coverings while in the communal areas of the enclosed buildings.
- There have been service disruptions due to the severe weather, firstly extremely cold weather with snow and ice meant poor conditions on roads and footpaths meaning some delays were inevitable and rounds had to be postponed in some areas. Heavy rains and flooding have also had an impact on service delivery.
- Recycling tonnages remain high during the lockdown.
- A Members' seminar regarding fly tipping will be held following the Council meeting.
- Garden waste licences are on sale now for the coming season and sales are already good.

Environmental Health

- Issues regarding food and drink businesses flouting guidelines regarding wet sales, serving people from different tiers etc were investigated where possible, before the lockdown, putting an increased burden on the staff. Environmental Health staff were at work between Christmas and New Year and investigations were carried out, enforcement action was carried where appropriate and within the powers allowed by the legislation.
- These breaches are not a concern now that a lockdown is in place. However, all North Yorkshire authorities have reported similar issues, with City of York presenting particular problems. The Local Resilience Forum is lobbying for tougher enforcement powers and firmer regulations (rather than guidelines) should a tiering system come into force following this lockdown.

- Outreach and communication work continue with businesses and communities to provide help and support. Extra effort was put into communication with hotspots such as Hutton Rudby and Stokesley.
- Work continues on joint working for outbreak control in food and other business and high-risk locations. This detailed, valuable work helps to stop the spread of the virus and enables businesses who have been affected to get back to working as normal.

Emergency Planning

- Covid cases rose rapidly following Christmas across all of North Yorkshire but are now reducing. Though the situation is still critical; the message of Hands Face Space still stands and people should continue to work from home wherever possible.
- Symptomatic testing is now embedded across the District with a permanent site at the Forum and mobile testing units regularly visiting Thirsk, Easingwold and Stokesley. A vaccination centre is also running at the Forum.
- It is hoped to rollout Lateral Flow Device testing to Hambleton staff in February. At this stage testing will be only for people who cannot work from home and will be centred on the 80 Waste and Street Scene staff and a smaller number at the Civic Centre. Following this work, it is hoped that testing will be rolled out to critical infrastructure businesses and then to larger employers. We are awaiting further guidance from DHSC.
- The recent heavy rains triggered flood warnings across the District and more widely across the County. Hambleton deployed 15 staff overnight during the period 20th and 21st January with 2000 sandbags being distributed to homes and organisations across the District. Due to improved procedures all affected parishes were able to be contacted and early warnings issued where possible.
- Avian flu special restrictions were lifted in Hambleton as of 07/01.
- Work is underway to ensure that staff who are affected by mental health issues during lockdown are looked after and have access to any support they require.

Councillor Stephen Watson
Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health, Waste and Recycling