

Mid Kent Environmental Health Annual Report 2018-19

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| Final Decision-Maker | Communities Housing & Environment |
| Lead Head of Service | John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services |
| Lead Officer and Report Author | Tracey Beattie, Mid Kent Environmental Health Service |
| Classification | Public |
| Wards affected | All |

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report is to update the members of the Communities, Housing and Environment on the work of the Mid Kent Environmental Health Service for Maidstone during 2018-19.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee note the content of the report.

Timetable

| Meeting | Date |
|--|------------------|
| Communities, Housing and Environment Committee | 16 December 2019 |

Mid Kent Environmental Health Annual Report 2018-19

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue | Implications | Sign-off |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Impact on Corporate Priorities | The report is for information only. The Service contributes towards 'keeping Maidstone an attractive place for all' and 'securing a successful economy for Maidstone'. | Tracey Beattie Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager |
| Risk Management | No risk management implications have been identified. | Tracey Beattie Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager |
| Financial | The information set out in the report are all already within approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation. | Head of Housing & Community Services |
| Staffing | We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing. | Head of Housing & Community Services |
| Legal | This report is for information only. Regular reports on the Service's work and performance in relation to the Council's statutory functions as mentioned in the report assist in demonstrating best value and compliance with the statutory duty. | Keith Trowell, Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS |
| Privacy and Data Protection | There is no specific privacy or data protection issue to address. | Keith Trowell, Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS |

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|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Equalities | The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment | Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer |
| Public Health | We recognise that the recommendations have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals. . | Tracey Beattie Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager |
| Crime and Disorder | No implications have been identified | Tracey Beattie Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager |
| Procurement | None identified | Head of Housing & Community |
| Cross Cutting Objectives | The two of the four cross-cutting objectives are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected | Tracey Beattie Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager |

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Mid Kent Environmental Health (MKEH) are responsible for delivering the following functions for Maidstone Borough Council; Food Safety, Health & Safety, Infectious Disease control, Contaminated Land, Pollution Prevention Control, Private Water Supplies and Air Quality. Other reactive environmental work for example, noise and other nuisance complaints are delivered by the Community Protection Team.

2.2 The purpose of establishing a shared service for delivering these environmental health functions was to provide professional resilience to meet the demands of the highly regulated areas of work and protect public health in its widest context.

2.3 This report provides an update to committee on the work achieved by the service since 1 April 2018.

2.4 Officer Training and Professional Development

MKEH places a strong emphasis on developing all individuals within its teams. This year we have seen a food officer pass the rigorous Environmental Health Officers Board (EHORB) with a Distinction in her professional interview and for her log book. We gave her the time to complete her portfolio of experience. She trained with other colleagues across all the environmental health disciplines and the public health team in Tunbridge Wells, but the hard work of writing the reports was down to her.

In 2018-19 we provided student placements for 3 Student EHOs; one left for a position in Bath and North Somerset, another obtained a position with Swale B C Housing Service and the third is currently completing his portfolio and exams for completion in early summer 2019.

We provide 'in house' learning opportunities for all officers through joint team meetings; this allows us to provide low cost training for the Continuing Professional Development requirements of 20 hours (30 hours for Chartered status) each professional officer is required to retain their membership of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

There is a programme of mentoring and coaching by senior officers who have specialised in aspects of environmental health to allow less experienced officers opportunities to develop expert knowledge. For example, officers working with Air Quality specialists to gain expertise, as well as undertaking external training and professional development courses. We have committed to development programmes for two officers over 2019-20 to provide continuity and transition within Air Quality specialist roles that have been extremely difficult to recruit in the wider recruitment market during 2017-18.

We have promoted internally from EHO to senior EHO roles and the Team Leader role in the Sittingbourne Food & Safety Team. We have also been fortunate to recruit a number of highly experienced officers to MKEH over the year.

Looking forward we intend to recruit to a Regulatory Compliance Officer Apprentice who will undertake the newly approved training programme in the summer of 2019. This is a long term programme intended to help develop our own talent from the communities we work within and we will also continue with our student placements for graduate EHOs to complete the new qualification route into the profession.

2.5 Food Safety

The annual local authority enforcement (LAEMS) return to the Food Standards Agency for the year ending March 2019 has been completed. It shows that Maidstone have completed 1018 out of 1033 interventions due in the year, 98.5%.

With public awareness of food safety increasing with the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) we have seen a steady number of businesses wishing to improve their already satisfactory scores from 3. 13 requests

for rescoring were made to the team within the first year of the charging fee being applied. Overall 98.5% of food businesses eligible for the scheme in Maidstone achieve a 3 or more score.

There have been 2 appeals against the Food officer's scores following inspection and we have adopted a rigorous process of assessment for such appeals by both Food & Safety Team Leaders who review the inspection reports and take into account the evidence provided by the food business operator. This is to confirm that the Food Standards Agency Brand Standard for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme has been followed and scoring has been fairly applied by the inspecting officer.

We understand that food businesses need to access good quality food hygiene training for their staff; however we have noticed a decline in numbers of attendees which reflects the growing trend in online training.

We have joined with Kent Trading Standards to develop a new course for businesses which seeks to inform them of the importance and need for allergen information for menus, labelling etc (trading standards). The environmental health element will focus on how to gain and maintain a '5' rating in the FHRS. This is being piloted and administered through Maidstone BID and should be operational in early summer.

Further data from the Local Authority Enforcement Management System (LAEMS) for Maidstone during 2018-19 is included in Appendix 1

2.6 Health & Safety

Health and safety enforcement is divided between the HSE and local authorities, with our enforcement primarily in the leisure and service industries. Our work is delivered through targeted projects identified at a national level by the HSE, based on risk analysis of national accident data and other factors to determine areas considered to present higher risk for local authorities' enforcement. Using local knowledge officers then identify the project they consider most suited to our needs in Mid Kent.

This year the team have undertaken a project on safety in care homes. Again officers were provided with an initial training event and a carefully organised programme of joint inspections using information from the database and geographical knowledge to ensure best use of resources.

As well as project work the team have a duty to investigate complaints and accident notifications through the HSE RIDDOR website. RIDDOR is the official method for businesses to notify authorities of accidents, incidents and dangerous occurrences. Not all RIDDOR reported accidents or complaints require investigation but all notifications are assessed by professional officers, for example, an incident where no work activity has occurred does not warrant investigation.

Table 1: Reactive Health & Safety (Maidstone B C)

| | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| H&S prosecutions | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Improvement Notices | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| Prohibition Notices | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Non Reportable Accidents | 44 | 24 | 4 |
| Reportable Accidents | 92 | 53 | 51 |
| H&S Advice Requests | 2 | 8 | 6 |
| Complaints of H&S | 15 | 22 | 32 |
| LOLER notifications* | 3 | 6 | 8 |
| Asbestos Notifications | 0 | 1 | 11 |
| Total Number | 84 | 61 | 61 |

*Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998

The reduction in non reportable accidents between 2016 -17 (44) 2017-18 (24) and 2018-19 (4) has been due to better 'triaging' and recording of reported accidents at the initial stage of contact. We have achieved this by training and advising contact centre staff and environmental health administration officers during the course of the year.

The significant reduction in Reportable Accidents between 2016/17 (92) and the subsequent years is due to reduced reporting through the HSE RIDDOR system.

2.7 **Special Treatments – tattoo, cosmetic piercing, semi-permanent beauty treatments, acupuncture, electrolysis**

The purpose of registering businesses for tattooing and other treatments is to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and protect public health.

Maidstone Tattoo Extravaganza at Easter attracts tattoo artists from around the world who give demonstrations of their skills and offer tattoos to the public. The popularity of this event has expanded since 2017 although there has been a slight reduction in the total number of tattooists attending this year, this may be due to the exceptionally good weather we had this Easter. Our role is to work with the organiser to ensure all stalls meet the Bye-Laws adopted by Maidstone.

Table 2: Special Treatment Registrations

| Special Treatment | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Tattooing | 5 | 9 | 16 |
| Acupuncture | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Semi Permanent Make-Up | 2 | 8 | 8 |
| Cosmetic Piercing | 0 | 10 | 5 |
| Extravaganza Event | 59 | 137 | 105 |

Once registered, there is no requirement within the legislation to undertake routine inspections of businesses and yet we know that practitioners would appreciate more contact from us. With this in mind

the health and safety project for 2019-20 will be focused on health and safety practices in the tattoo studios with a significant element of advice and guidance for the control of infection provided to businesses.

2.8 Infectious Disease Control

The purpose of infectious disease notification is to control the spread of infection and prevent further cases of food poisoning.

The Food & Safety team investigate individual cases of notifiable disease, such as Campylobacter, E.coli or Legionella. Cases are referred from a person's GP for laboratory confirmation via Public Health England to the local authority where we screen individual cases by questionnaire or investigation. Should we have a food poisoning outbreak we work closely with the PHE to control the outbreak and identify the source of the problem, this may be bacterial or viral, food borne or person to person contact.

Table 3: Infectious Disease Reports

| Causative Organism | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Campylobacter | 208 | 174 | 231 | 230 |
| Vibrio Cholera | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Cryptosporidium | 27 | 16 | 20 | 15 |
| Cyclospora | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Dysentery (Shigella) | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| E.coli | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| Unconfirmed Food Poisoning Outbreak (no organism identified) | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Giardia | 6 | 11 | 13 | 2 |
| Hepatitis E | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Infectious Hepatitis | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Legionella | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Leptospirosis | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Listeria | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Paratyphoid | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Salmonella sp. | 13 | 16 | 15 | 22 |

2.9 Environmental Protection

One of the main functions of the Mid Kent Service the Environmental Protection Team is to prevent future environmental problems arising from new developments. We work closely with the Planning Service and with the Community Protection Team to ensure that consultation responses to planning applications include appropriate mitigation to potential noise, air quality or contaminated land issues. The team also implement the pollution prevention regime through by inspecting and issuing permits, contaminated land enquiries and the private water supply legislation.

2.10 **Pollution Prevention Control**

The pollution prevention regime is operated by DEFRA for the control of industrial/commercial processes which have the potential to pollute our environment. As a local authority we issue permits with conditions, to ensure the businesses achieve the required environmental standards. We inspect these processes under a risk based scheme with an annual inspection programme.

Maidstone have 42 premises with permits under this scheme, which range from complex processes associated with Vinters Park Crematorium to more straight forward controls at petrol stations and dry cleaners.

2.11 **Air Quality**

Work on implementing the Low Emissions Strategy 2017 remains a priority for the team, with the outcome of the feasibility study undertaken in the winter of 2018 being reported to committee in July 2019. The work on the Clean Air for Schools project also continues with a total of 11 schools in the scheme and in February Archbishop Courtenay School, Tovil won the Kent Messenger 'Green Schools' Award 2019 for their work on air quality.

The team have completed the DEFRA funded project to improve air quality jointly made in 2013 to Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone Borough Councils. The £206,000 grant fund was transferred from TMBC to Maidstone to deliver in November 2016. May 2019 saw the last of the seventeen retro fitted buses, fitted with Selective, Catalytic Reduction and particulate traps, for NuVenture and an additional four Arriva buses become operational. The grant was to improved emissions for bus routes between Maidstone High Street and Kings Hill.

The number of buses falling into the category requiring Retro fitting to meet Euro VI standards is reducing significantly due the bus companies' business model to replace older and less efficient buses. The precise number of buses currently below Euro IV emissions standards and operating in Maidstone is not known at the time of writing this report.

For the last two years we have prepared and submitted the Annual Status Reports to DEFRA and the return for 2018 data (submission completed by end of June). Information on much of the air quality work in the borough can be accessed at www.kentair.org.uk.

2.12 **Planning Consultations, Contaminated Land and Private Water Supplies**

A large part of the work the team provide is the Development Management Service with consultation responses on air quality, noise, potentially contaminated land and lighting. This work is important to resolve current and future environmental issues through design or mitigation controls. Table 4 demonstrates a significant increase in planning consultations during the year.

New Private Water (Amendment) Regulations 2018 have been introduced and officers are reviewing the impact that the new risk rating will have on the six private water supplies in the Maidstone district for the coming year. Maidstone has three private residences, two commercial sites and one combined commercial and residential system on private water supplies. There appears to be some scope to reduce sampling based on a new risk assessment process, for example, certain parameters can be eliminated where a minimum of three years results is available. However we are committed to ensuring that each system is safe and water quality satisfactory.

Table 4: Consultation and Reactive Work undertaken by Environmental Protection in Maidstone.

| | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Planning Consultations | 649 | 646 | 740 |
| Planning Appeals | 64 | 68 | 47 |
| Contaminated Land Enquiries | 40 | 28 | 19 |
| Private Water Enquiries | 2 | 5 | 2 |

The team have struggled to absorb the increased workload during the past year and we will be monitoring whether the demand is a trend a peak in planning consultations.

2.13 In October 2018 the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee requested a member briefing on the work of Environmental Health. This has been arranged for 12 September 2019.

2.14 The Next Steps

2019-20 will bring new opportunities to identify potential for income across the service and we work with legal services to ensure that any proposals are within the Council's constitutional standards. The Food & Safety Team will inevitably deal with the implications of Brexit on food import and exporting food to the EU to ensure that we support businesses within Maidstone. They will also deliver the new business training course with Trading Standards in the Maidstone BID area.

The service are also working closely with Mid Kent ICT on a mobile working platform.

3. RISK

3.1 This report has been presented for information only and has no risk management implications.

4. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

4.1 No consultation is required.

5. REPORT APPENDICES

[The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- **Appendix 1:** Summary Data from Maidstone Borough Council Local Authority Enforcement Management Scheme Return 2018-19
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