



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Finance and Performance Scrutiny 16 December 2024

Wards affected: All wards

Frontline Service Review- Environmental Services

Report of Director (Community Services)

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To update Members on the performance of the Environmental Services Team during the previous financial year.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That Members note the report and positive service performance.

3. Background to the report

3.1 The Environmental Services areas comprise the frontline services of Environmental Protection, Commercial and Licensing teams, supported by the Business Support team. The Service is committed to the provision of quality and cost-effective services which reflect both the Council's statutory obligations and the aspiration of its customers. Excellent customer care is a high priority for the service. Appendix A provides a summary of current staffing arrangements by team.

3.2 The report updates on performance by the Environmental Services team during the previous financial year and further outlines forthcoming challenges.

3.3 Environmental Protection

3.4 The Environmental Protection Team at Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council focuses on a range of key service areas, addressing issues from animal welfare and stray dog management to handling nuisance complaints, pest control, monitoring air quality and environmental enforcement. The team is

committed to protecting public health, ensuring environmental standards, and providing a high quality of service across these areas.

3.5 Animal Welfare Licensing

Certain animal-related businesses require a license to operate. The Environmental Protection Team inspects these businesses to ensure compliance with statutory general and specific conditions, known as Minimum Standards. Licenses are issued based on inspection outcomes, which also determine a business's star rating and license duration (1, 2, or 3 years).

3.6 The following licenses were regulated in 2023/24:

- selling animals as pets x 3
- providing homeboarding for dogs x 41
- providing daycare for dogs x 4
- providing boarding for dogs and cats x 4
- providing boarding for cats x 5
- providing boarding for dogs x 7
- arranging for the provision of boarding for dogs x 2
- hiring out horses x 2
- breeding dogs x 22
- keeping or training animals for exhibition x 2

3.7 Stray Dogs

The council has a statutory duty to manage stray dogs. Seized dogs are placed in contracted kennels and must be held for seven days if unclaimed, after which they may be rehomed. In practice, unclaimed dogs are often retained beyond this period, with most being passed to rehoming charities. In 2023/24, 75 stray dogs were seized, with 74 rehomed and only 1 euthanised due to health or behavioural issues. Owners may reclaim their dogs by paying a statutory fee of £25, daily kennelling charges, and any veterinary fees.

3.8 Nuisance and Public Health Complaints

Nuisance and public health complaints represent a major area of work, covering issues such as blocked drains, commercial smoke, and domestic waste accumulations. Most complaints are investigated under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which requires a period of monitoring to confirm nuisance before formal action. Examples include noise, smoke, and odours. In 2023/24, the council received 1,223 nuisance-related service requests.

3.9 Noise Complaints

Noise complaints have increased over recent years, with most being minor annoyances that persist over time. In these cases, action includes investigation, record-keeping by complainants, and use of noise monitoring

equipment. In 2023/24, the council received 739 noise service requests, with barking dogs being the most common complaint, followed by loud music and noise from people. Table A provides further breakdown by type.

Table A- Number of incidents per noise category

Type of noise	Number or incidents reported
Noise - Alarms	21
Noise - Animals	7
Noise - DIY	12
Noise - Dogs	219
Noise – Low Frequency	10
Noise - Machinery	33
Noise - Music	138
Noise - Other	112
Noise - Party	29

3.10 Pest Control

The pest control service covers pests such as rats, mice, wasps, and various insects. Offered as a charged service, the council also provides sewer baiting as an agent for Severn-Trent Water. In 2023/24, service requests included:

- Rats: 509 requests
- Mice: 46 requests
- Wasps: 285 requests
- Other Insects: Lower requests across bed bugs, fleas, cockroaches, flies, and moths

3.11 Enforcement

Most complaints are resolved informally however, formal notices are issued when necessary. In 2023/24, notices included:

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act – Noise Nuisance
 2 x Environmental Protection Act – Noise Nuisance
 3 x Community Protection Notice – Noise Nuisance
 Public Health Act – Filthy Premises
 Clean Air Act – Dark Smoke

Appendix B provides a case study which resulted in enforcement action.

3.12 Commercial Team

The Commercial Team at Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council manages food hygiene, health and safety enforcement, food complaints, and workplace accident investigations, contributing significantly to public health and safety in the borough.

3.13 Food Hygiene and Health and Safety Enforcement

The council is responsible for enforcing food hygiene standards in approximately 1,050 premises and health and safety regulations in approximately 1,500 premises. Enforcement is largely proactive, focusing on risk-rated inspections to ensure compliance. The frequency of inspections varies by risk category, with higher-risk premises inspected more frequently. When breaches are detected, enforcement actions range from advice to notices, closure, or prosecution, and in severe cases, seizure of dangerous equipment or unfit food.

Table B 2023/24 Food Hygiene Interventions by Risk Category

Category	Minimum frequency of intervention	Interventions Carried out 2023/24
A	at least every six months	1
B	at least every year	13
C	at least every 18 months	130
D	at least every two years	229
E	at least every three years	147
Unrated		108
		569

3.14 Food Complaints

The council handles complaints about defective food and unsatisfactory practices, including foreign bodies, foul odours, and expired food products. Investigations often involve liaising with suppliers or manufacturers, particularly when food is produced outside the area. Prosecutions may occur in severe or recurrent cases.

2023/24 Food Complaint Statistics:

- Defective Food Complaints: 20
- Other Complaints and Requests for Advice: 57 (including 7 enquiries from prospective businesses)

3.15 Accidents at Work

Employers must report specific accidents and dangerous occurrences, such as major fractures or explosions. The council enforces safety in shops and warehouses, while factories and construction sites fall under the Health and Safety Executive's jurisdiction. In 2023/24 the council received 35 reports of accidents in the borough. Appendix C provides a recent case study of an accident attended and managed by the Commercial team.

3.16 Licensing

The Council's Licensing team oversees essential licensing services, enabling businesses to operate legally and ensuring community welfare across various domains such as transportation, entertainment, gambling, and safety. These efforts support public safety, prevent nuisance, and help to protect children from harm. During 2023/24, the team issued 713 licenses across these categories, with temporary event notices accounting for a 278.

3.17 Compliance Visits and Inspections

The council also conducts compliance checks to uphold standards and prevent unlawful practices activity. Over the last financial year this included:

- Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles: Conducted inspections and badge checks.
- Alcohol and Entertainment Venues: Inspected 132 pubs, clubs, and other venues to verify adherence to licensing terms.
- Gambling Sites: Inspections included betting offices and gaming machines within licensed venues.
- Scrap Metal Sites: Compliance check performed on one licensed site.

In total, 180 compliance visits were completed in 2023/24, alongside handling 22 service complaints related to licensing issues.

3.18 Key Areas of Licensing Oversight

3.19 Taxi Licensing

Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, the council ensures public safety in the local taxi and private hire sector. Responsibilities include setting standards (e.g., vehicle condition, driver competence), processing applications, and enforcing rules. The council also collaborates with the trade association, law enforcement, and other bodies to address complaints and maintain standards.

3.20 Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing

The council administers the Licensing Act 2003, aiming to prevent crime, ensure public safety, prevent public nuisance, and protect children. Applications go through public consultation and must meet criteria set by ten responsible authorities, including the police and fire service. Non-contentious applications are processed under delegated authority, while contested applications go before a licensing sub-committee, which has the power to revoke licenses when necessary. The council's adopted Statement of Licensing Policy is reviewed every five years, ensuring up-to-date practices that align with legal and community standards.

3.21 Services challenges

The Environmental Services department faces the following challenges across the service.

- Noise and Nuisance Management: Increased noise complaints due to housing developments near industrial areas are driving service demand.
- Climate Impact on Public Health: Climate change is contributing to persistent rat populations and possibly higher insect activity, adding to the workload.
- Staffing pressures: A pandemic-induced backlog and a national shortage of qualified food hygiene officers has created some staffing challenges, additional workload, such as requirements in relation to the inspection of funeral homes will also add to staffing pressures. Experienced officers, across the service, are also looking to retire within the next 12 months. A national shortage of skilled Environmental Health Officers is a pressure faced across the sector.
- Taxi Licensing Oversight: Potential changes under the UK Government's Levelling Up White Paper could shift taxi licensing to higher authorities, affecting local control.

4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

4.1 Open

5. Financial implications [DW]

5.1 Budgets for the Environmental Service areas covered by this report are monitored on a monthly basis and are presented to this committee as part of the overall budget monitoring quarterly update reporting. Any changes to budgets required to meet any challenges have to be approved in line with the relevant financial procedure rules

6. Legal implications [ST]

6.1 None.

7. Corporate Plan implications

7.1 Service delivery and priorities align with the following objectives of the Corporate Plan: *Help people to stay healthy, happy and active and continue to provide initiatives that support children and young people, older people and our vulnerable residents*

8. Consultation

8.1 None

9. Risk implications

9.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

- 9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.
- 9.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Recruitment and retention of skilled/experience staff	Effective and attractive recruitment and training	Head of Service/Service Manager
New burdens-legislative reform	Training for staff Consideration of diversification to meet new responsibilities and improve resilience	Head of Service/Service Manager

10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 10.1 The work undertaken by the service seeks to promote and ensure public safety, across the whole borough including rural areas.

11. Climate implications

- 11.1 The service seeks to work in a way to ensure that the council's commitment to climate change objectives are best met.

12. Corporate implications

- 12.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data protection implications
- Voluntary sector

Background papers: None

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