

Report to: **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **19th February 2008**
Report of: **Environmental Services Operations Manager and Environmental Health and Licensing Manager**
Subject: **Service Unit Performance Reporting - Environmental Services**
Ward: **All**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide information on the performance of the Environmental Operations Unit and the Environmental Health and Licensing Unit of the Community Services Directorate for the period from April through to 31/12/07.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 This report is based on factual information and therefore no consultation has been necessary.

3. Background

- 3.1 This Committee will receive regular reports relating to the performance of a range of District Council environmental services, including horticulture, street cleansing, refuse collection, enforcement teams and Strategy Unit including Envirocall. The report gives a position statement regarding the performance of each team.
- 3.2 This report outlines the performance of the unit in relation to the Corporate Plan and the Service Plans of these units.

4. Performance Position Statement

4.1 Best Value Performance Indicators

Appendix 1 outlines Best Value Performance Indicator and Local Performance Indicator outcomes from the first 3 quarters of 2007/08. The colour system signifies performance against targets where green indicates success, yellow a borderline situation and red shows where targets were not met.

A number of local performance indicators have been adopted in addition to the statutory indicators to give a broader view of performance and comments are welcome as to whether other indicators should be adopted.

Appendix 2 details complaints received in relation to Environmental Operations Services

4.2 Refuse collection and recycling

The improvements in service delivery described below are designed to increase performance against the range of indicators relating to refuse and recycling some of which are key indicators and are incorporated into the corporate plan.

4.2.1 Refuse Collection Service

The refuse collection service has operated satisfactory to date. The Christmas/New year collections went very well with most residents presenting their bin for collection as programmed in the Councils Christmas card. The high Sickness levels have improved in this service however agency workers are still currently needed to cover accumulated annual holiday leave due to sickness not allowing holidays to be taken.

4.2.2 Introduction of New Refuse Collection Policy.

The Community Services Scrutiny Committee was significantly involved in the development of new policies relating to refuse collection and these were implemented on the 1st October 2007.

This involved

- prohibiting side waste and
- limiting double bins to large families, and
- restricting the hours that bins can be left out in the street.

The aim of the policy was to encourage people to recycle more and this has been achieved. In January, recycling rates within the district were at record levels.

Side Waste has been minimal since the introduction of the no side waste policy on 1st October 2007 all the publicity regarding these new measures has been effective. Up to December there has been 455 yellow stickers (1st Warning) and 32 red stickers (final warning) put onto bins with no fines being issued. During this period we have seen an increase in residents requesting kerb-it recycling boxes and the kerb-it tonnage has significantly increased helping to improve recycling tonnages. The total waste arisings in the District dropped by 270 tonnes in the 3rd quarter compared to last year improving BVPI 84 performance.

We believe that a large number of residents that currently have a second bin and do not meet the criteria needed with this in mind we are going to have an amnesty to allow residents to contact the council to make arrangements to have any bins they should not have collected. Following this amnesty period we will review our position and if required implement an enforced collection programme. Extra recycling boxes will be offered to any resident who feels they have a need during this implementation period of this policy.

4.2.3 Park-it pilot recycling scheme.

This scheme was introduced at 5,000 homes in the west of the District on Friday 1st June 2007 for a 15 month period. This new recycling scheme introduced the collection of cardboard and plastic every week on a Friday. Early indications from Premier Waste were that it could deliver diversion rates of 90% from landfill.

It was estimated that this may increase the council's recycling performance by up to 10%.

There are some serious operational problems which have been reported in the press and this may mean that the contribution towards recycling rates may have to be discounted. The scheme will now be terminated early, from the 1/4/08 as plastics and cardboard will be collected from the kerbside from that date.

4.2.4 Kerbside Collection and Recycling

A presentation was made to members at the Glebe Centre on the 29th January giving details about the new recycling contract and giving the opportunity to ask questions.

From the 1st April 2008 the kerbside collection and recycling service will be delivered by Greencycle PLC. using the existing boxes for glass and cans and a green bag for plastics, cardboard and paper.

It is considered that this will significantly improve performance against a range of key performance indicators including,

- Recycling and composting rates,
- Customer satisfaction with recycling services, many requests are received for the introduction of plastic and cardboard recycling,
- Reduced waste going to land fill, this will bring savings in the long term in saving landfill tax payments and avoiding penalties for exceeding landfill allowances.

The Community Services Scrutiny Committee has received complaints in the past relating to service delivery by Premier Waste Management including missed collections and boxes being thrown about by crews. The contract has default procedures for dealing with these occurrences and these will be used directly by the Council rather than through Durham County Council, as is the case at present. Whilst there is likely to be some disruption during the transitional period, steps have been taken to minimise this and the aim will be to restore an effective efficient service to residents as soon as possible.

4.2.5 Garden Waste Recycling

The green waste service has continued to run very successfully and has been operating to maximum capacity. Approval has now been given to extend the scheme to the remaining houses with gardens within the District. Work is currently ongoing to extend this popular service involving the ordering and delivery of bins, acquiring additional vehicle and crew and arranging publicity. The aim is to start collections for the 2008 season during April however we are reliant upon manufacturers to deliver bins on time.

Due to the need to realign the green waste collection rounds collections from the existing scheme areas will re-commence at the same time as the extended scheme areas.

Green waste collections ceased for the winter on 7th December 2007. 2007 was again very successful and we have seen an increase of 160 tonnes from 2006 figures.

Christmas tree collections operated as programmed throughout the district all trees collected were shredded with 4 Tonnes going towards our green waste recycling composting rate and 6 tonnes being used on a walkway in Wingate nature reserve. A Christmas card collection was also undertaken from collection points around the district this enabled 2.23 tonnes of Christmas cards to be recycled.

4.2.6 Furniture and white goods reuse scheme

Discussions are ongoing with Crate (furniture re-use charity) to develop a partnership for the white goods (fridges, washers, cookers etc) collection service, as they would like to restore and sell any in good condition. A pilot scheme has operated involving the delivery of all our white good collections to their premises in Horden from September to enable them to

increase their trainees and offer re-use items as soon as possible.

4.2.7 Bring Sites/Recycling Banks

A programme of work has been implemented to improve the councils bringsites/recycling banks. This involves the refurbishment of the recycling containers and improvement of signage at some sites and also the upgrading of the site at the council office complex This has involved a total investment of over £30,000 from the Waste Performance Efficiency Grant. It had been planned to upgrade sites at Lowhills Road in Peterlee and at Church Street Car Park in Seaham but delays in getting planning permission meant that these projects could not be completed within the timescales.

4.2.8 Overall Recycling Performance

Recycling performance has improved dramatically the last year as a result of a number of initiatives. This improvement has continued into this financial year, this is largely due to increased apportionment from the aerobic digester. The apportionment of waste going to the aerobic digester is beyond our control and can lead to variances in performance.

Tonnage of material collected via the kerb-it scheme has increased by 14% on the same period last year and we have attained some of highest rates of kerb-it recycling this summer. Our participation rate has increased to around 40 to 45% however we are not closing the gap on the other Durham Districts who are part of the kerb-it scheme as their participation rates have increased by a greater degree. The County Durham partnership recycling promotion team were back in the District during November carrying out post campaign participation monitoring of the kerb-it scheme. Resource Futures were also in the district during October carrying out a waste composition study at approximately one hundred households. Further studies are to be undertaken throughout the year by which time the data may be used to identify further recycling streams.

4.3 Envirocall

During the first nine months of 2007/08 25525 special collection requests were administered income from special collections for the same period was £12,700.

882 trade refuse contracts have been administered by the Envirocall team.

Envirocall	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	01 April 07 – 31 Dec 07
Telephone Calls handled	61,136	103,896	125,957	117,854	111943	99418
Special Collection Requests processed	35,199	40,625	45,775	33102	29818	25525
Environmental Cleanup requests processed	3125	3044	2909	3641	3124	2419
Other Service Requests processed	12,041	14,104	20,519	26637	29,890	22,953

4.4 Clean & Green Teams

4.4.1 The clean and green teams continue to operate successfully and are working hard to

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achieve the BVPI 199 target of 13%. A Pride in Easington New Year Clean up has been carried out from the 14th January through till 8th February.

This involved the Enforcement, Education, and Operations working together with Residents Groups, Parish councils and members of the public cleaning the district and addressing environmental problems. The details of what has been achieved from this work will be included in the next service report.

- 4.4.2 Following a specification agreement with the drivers of compact sweepers 2 new replacement vehicles have been ordered and will be delivered ready to be introduced into the service in mid April 2008.
- 4.4.3 During the weeks leading up to bonfire night a rapid response team made up from clean and green teams and enforcement unit worked in partnership with the police and fire brigade responding to remove illegal bonfires from the district during the day and out of hours. This arrangement was successful and contributed in removing 72 bonfires from throughout the district helping to reduce secondary fires during this period.
- 4.4.4 The value for money review currently being undertaken for horticultural services is near to completion and the findings will be reported to resources scrutiny in April. The soft Market testing carried out by EDH for horticultural works currently provided was deemed to be competitive and providing Value for Money. This work will not be subjected to formal tender and will undertaken as part of a service level agreement.
- 4.4.5 Grass cutting operations ceased in October 2007 with cutting cycles having been maintained consistently throughout the cutting season keeping the grass very presentable in the district. It is anticipated that the new cutting programme will commence on Monday 17th March 2008 subject to no adverse weather conditions being experienced.
- 4.4.6 The Councils partnership working arrangements with the probation “Mayor’s Project ” introduced in August 2007 has been very successful in completing 15 pre-selected environmental projects throughout the district. A typical example of this work is fly-tipping and litter removal, pruning semi mature trees, strimming of overgrown grass areas in and around tree belts, and the cutting of open spaced areas using pedestrian flail mower.
- 4.4.7 The graffiti removal operation is still operating very successfully in the District in partnership with the North Peterlee Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder. The new member of staff recently recruited has settled into this post and is now working using his own initiative to keep the high standards previously achieved in this service.
Total of graffiti removed from 01.06.05 – 31.01.08
Pathfinder areas – 1548. Outlining areas in the district – 2631.

North Peterlee Pathfinder Area			Rest of District		
September	2007	25	September	2007	31
October	2007	43	October	2007	25
November	2007	29	November	2007	47

December	2007	27	December	2007	14
January	2008	20	January	2008	30

4.4.8 Environmental Enforcement Team

The street wardens operate from Peterlee, Seaham and Easington Police Offices which is proving to have great benefits in promoting joint working with Police Beat Officers and Community Support Officers

4.5.1 Secondary deliberate fires (arson) and incidents of criminal damage

The Audit commission expressed concern about the level of secondary deliberate fires with the numbers being higher than elsewhere in the county. In response a cross agency working group with fire service, police and community services directorate identifying the causes and developing action plans.

The run up to bonfire night is traditionally a time when materials are gathered for illegal bonfires many of which are unsupervised and can get out of control diverting services away from potential life saving work. An action plan was developed and included:

- Clean and Green teams working on evenings and weekend removing flammable materials to prevent bonfires
- Leaflets to hotspots detailing what to do and where to go to see an organised event.
- Bus advertising and other publicity about the dangers and how to report illegal bonfires
- Street Wardens, Police, Fire Brigade proactively spotting flammable materials

This collaborative approach was very successful with the following results:

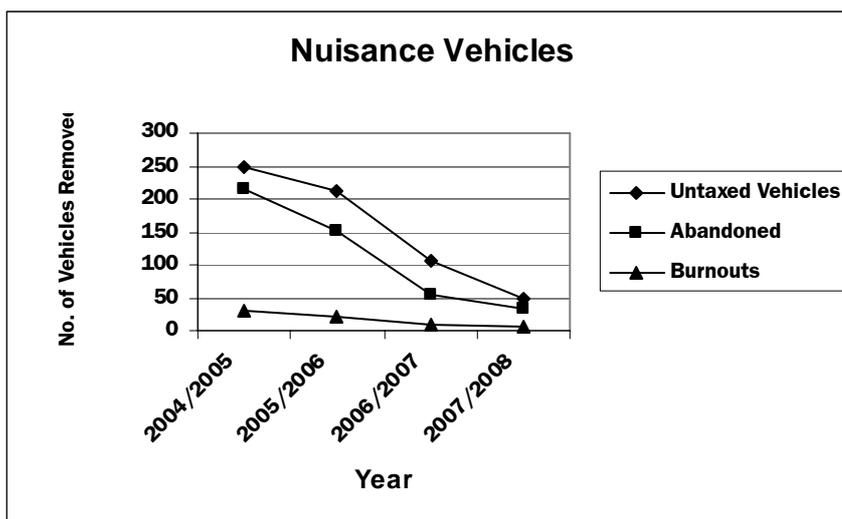
- 66 bonfires prevented through proactive removal leading up to bonfire night and 22 afterwards
- Fire service reduction of 51% on bonfires and 27% for secondary deliberate fires for the period 16th October to 7th November 2007 v's 2006.
- Largest reduction in the county for this period
- Good press coverage at the launch and afterwards through papers and radio stations

The group has also been working on ways of reducing secondary deliberate fires and working through other area based groups (e.g. Eden Hill Action Plan) to positively reduce incidents with good results when focused on hot spot areas.

4.5.2 Nuisance Vehicles

Untaxed and Abandoned vehicles are an area that continues to positively reduce and reflects the investment to a proactive approach.

The graph below shows how the number of abandoned and untaxed vehicles and their reducing numbers. ERA (Easington's Response to Arson) launched at a time when abandoned vehicles were being set alight across the district and along with other areas gave powers to Street Wardens and Police to immediately remove abandoned vehicles to prevent arson.



In January 07 the Government made producers of vehicles responsible for the disposal of them through a network of authorised treatment facilities (ATF's) which is **free** to the public. The Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005 has also provided local authorities with the ability to issue fixed penalty notices for 'abandoning a vehicle', the enforcement team is currently tracing some of the owners to issue or prosecute some of these owners.

Working with the DVLA on an ongoing basis, Street Wardens, PCSO's and other agencies identify untaxed vehicles and a target list for an operation for the DVLA to pick up untaxed vehicles.

A scheme has also been initiated in partnership with the Police to remove uninsured vehicles from the roads. There have been 70 vehicles removed under this scheme from April to December 2007.

These schemes collectively have positively impacted on nuisance vehicles and will continue.

Indicator	Total 2002/03	Total 2003/04	Total 2004/05	Total 2005/06	Total 2006/07	01 April – 31 December 2007
Total reports received including all untaxed and uninsured vehicles	691	587	774	778	462	252
No removed immediately	0	117	122	101	37	18
No. served with 24 hour notice.	0	132	163	108	71	43

This reduction in reports reflects the work that continues to tackle nuisance along with other factors. In January 07 the Government made producers of vehicles responsible for the disposal of them through a network of authorised treatment facilities (ATF's) which is **free** to the public. The Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005 has also provided local authorities with the ability to issue fixed penalty notices for 'abandoning a vehicle', the enforcement team is currently tracing some of the owners to issue or prosecute some of these owners.

4.5.3 Dog Fouling and Strays

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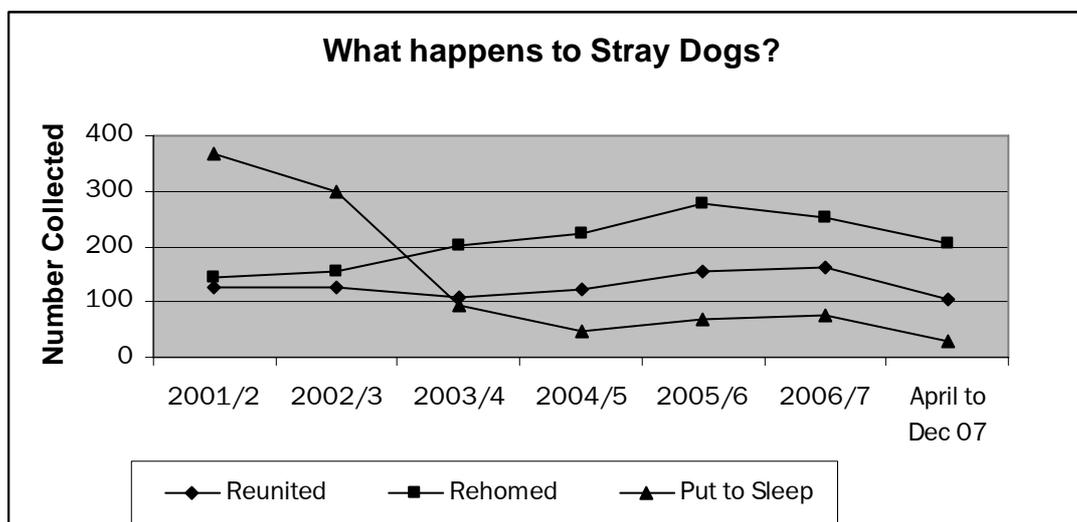
Dog fouling and stray dogs remains an area that has a high level of service requests in the District. The figures in the table below show how the numbers of service requests have grown and 2007/8 is projected to have an increase on previous years.

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	01 April 07 – 31 Dec 07
Dog Fouling Fines Issued	50	25	25	110	117	96	74	59
Complaints of stray dogs and fouling	845	892	896	797	930	1235	1325	1136

A closer look at the service requests shows that the nearly all of this increase is down to stray dogs and April to December 2007 compared with 2006 they have increased by 27%. Dog fouling service requests remain at a similar level to previous years.

Four Environmental Wardens are responsible for the collection of stray dogs throughout the district. They also have responsibility for issuing fines and dealing with other environmental crime such as flytipping, abandoned vehicles and waste. To the end of January Wardens have issues 71 fines for dog fouling and are on track to exceed those issued in the past two years.

The table below details what happens to the stray dogs that are seized and demonstrates the reduction in dogs put to sleep since 2001/2 from 58% to 8% currently this year. At the same time dogs being rehomed have also increased to compensate.



The promotion of responsible dog ownership has come about through a number of initiatives. In working with Dogs Trust the Council has provided free chipping, neutering over recent years along with running campaigns to improve the health and ownership. Poops a Scoop bags are distributed through many parish and town councils to residents. In January 2008 a '1 million poop a scoop' bag give away campaign has been running funded through income from dog fouling fines.

A new kennelling contract started in January 2008 with Coxhoe Dogs Home. In 2006/7 there were 74 dogs put to sleep as they were not able to be reunited or rehomed, this new

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contract will allow the council to move towards a non destruct policy as dogs will be transferred to the Charity 'Stray Aid' after the statutory 7 days at Coxhoe Dogs Home.

The change in ethos allows the council to align itself with an animal caring charity who are dedicated to providing health checks, vaccination, flea and worm treatment, neutering and shelter for stray dogs and until such time as they can be re-homed. Working with the new contractor there are planned monthly dog chipping events around the district to promote traceability of stray dogs found. A 'responsible dog owner' pack is also being designed for distribution to residents and promotes positive ownership.

Stray dogs can cause a multitude of problems and include:

- Unsupervised dog fouling,
- Hazards in the road and to vehicles,
- Have the potential to act dangerously,
- Generally cause a nuisance.

New legislation has been enacted which details that from as early as 6th April 2008 local authorities will be solely responsible for all stray dog functions and take over from the Police for out of hour's provisions. Discussions are ongoing both with the Police and the other Districts regarding the impact that this may have and investigating a collective solution to the change.

An action plan is being drawn up in conjunction with Pride in Easington, Clean and Green Teams along with the kennel contractor to devise an action plan for the coming year to tackle stray dogs and dog fouling and reverse the trend improving the environment for the community of Easington.

4.5.4 Litter

Litter enforcement through the district is carried out by Environmental Wardens and Street Wardens and is programmed and reviewed based on hot spot information. Often these include young people and in line with the councils policy we have issued 27 fines to young people under the age of 17 to date. Overall the payment rate for fines for both dog fouling and litter remains over 90% and very high compared to other authorities locally and nationally.

The table below shows how the number of litter fines have increased and are set to at a higher level than 2006/7 this current year.

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	01 April 07 – 31 Jan 08
Litter fines issued	45	69	82	130	89

In September 07 working with the Pride in Easington Team a 'Food on the go' campaign was run with various strands:

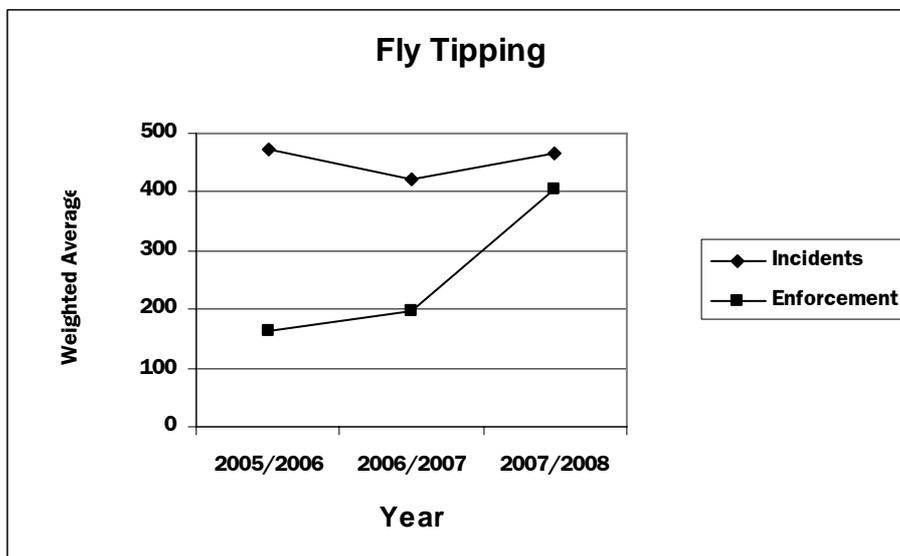
- Education through the secondary schools looking at environmental quality on the streets around the schools, surveying and reporting actions.
- Increased enforcement patrols with each school having patrols before and after school along with lunch times during each week from September to November.

- Working with local shops to promote the 'Tidy Business Award'
- Food on the go bags distributed through car dealerships
- Primary and Secondary School art competitions with the focus on litter.

4.5.5 Flytipping

During the 2006/7 we achieve a grade 1 BVPI 199 rating for our efforts to tackle fly tipping. This is the highest score and an improvement from a score of 4 from 2005/6. To achieve this there must be a reduction in fly tipping incidents and an increase in enforcement activities.

The graph below demonstrates the performance over the last two years and a projection for 2007/8



The incidents that have contributed to the majority of this increase mainly come from vans and small wagons tipping in the district.

Enforcement activities are through areas such as prosecutions, fixed penalty notices, formal cautions, and warning letters along with other means. There are two new areas of enforcement that have improved the level and variety of enforcement, 'stop and search' operations and duty of care inspections. Stop and searches taken place during Police organised multi agency operations to date and involve the inspection of licenses of vehicles who are carrying waste, the result of the operation carried out to date has been 5 warnings and 2 prosecutions for not having a 'waste carriers license'. 'Duty of care' inspections are happening, through working with our commercial enforcement colleagues. During food hygiene visits officers are checking where waste from the premises is being disposed.

In addition to the council staff dealing on a day to day basis with fly tipping criminals this year we are part of a partnership with other councils across Durham and the Environment Agency to employ a specialist to assist with expert advice, interviews of suspects, prosecution and training for staff. The officer has recently provided training to all clean and green teams on how to gather evidence when they come across flytipping.

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This support has helped the ongoing operations against flytipping which include such things as:

- Investigation into each and every report
- Warning signage at hotspots
- Covert cameras at hotspots have captured evidence of some flytipping perpetrators
- Joint stop and search operations with the Environment Agency
- Extensive media coverage, including highlighting house holders responsibilities and our actions to prevent flytipping.

Work is ongoing and an action plan currently being drawn up that focuses on the main cause for the increase so far this year and includes such actions as:

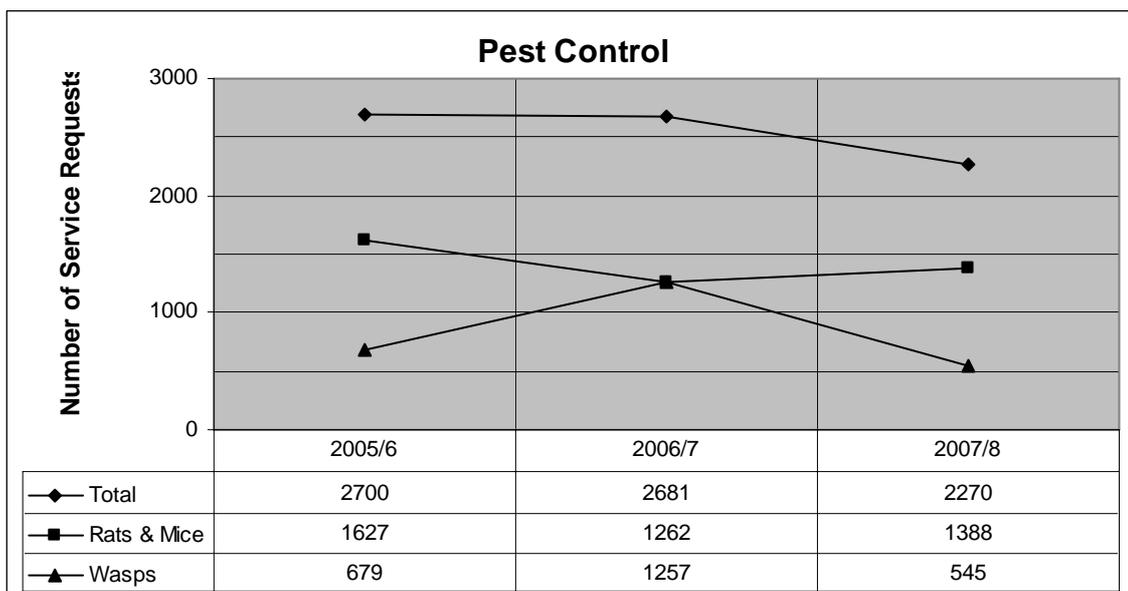
- Stop and search exercises
- Working with partners such as Police to raise their awareness
- Publicity regarding rogue traders.
- Targeting advertising traders

4.5.6 Pest Control

The district has two pest control officers that work across the district and they provide:

- a free service to residents
- a free service to allotment holders to break breeding cycles and reduce the number of rodents that may seek out households causing further calls.
- A contract service to businesses.
- On call service for pests that cause public health issues such as rats in the home.

The graph below shows how the number of service requests for pest control over the April to December period for 2005, 2006 and 2007. There has been a decline in the number of requests that have been made, this reflects the poor summer weather and the impact on the number of wasps nests that are dealt with.



The staff delivering the service currently are also Environmental Wardens meaning if they complete their work they transfer onto alternative duties. The opposite is also true with assistance available particularly in the summer months to deal with the large volume of service requests for wasps.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no policy implications.

5.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

5.3 Policy Implications

There are no policy implications

5.4 Risk Implications

There are no risk implications

5.5 Communications Implications

Regular press releases and Info Point articles are issued relating to enforcement performance e.g. relating to dog fouling and litter fines and anti-social behaviour to act as a deterrent.

5.6 Corporate Implications

The Unit is performing well with respect to performance indicators incorporated in the Best Value Performance Plan and objectives set in the corporate Plan to help deliver the Council's priorities.

5.7 LGR Implications

There are no LGR Implications

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members views are welcomed on the contents of the report.

Paul Penman; Operations Manager

Keith Parkinson; Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

Background documents referred to:

- i) Best Value Performance Plan 2007
- ii) Unit Service Plans