

Subject: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH **Status:** For Publication
SERVICE – PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Report to: Performance Overview and **Date:** 22nd January 2009
Scrutiny Committee

Report of: Environmental Health Manager

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods
Holder:

Key Decision: Yes / No

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the recent and current performance of the Environmental Health Service and outline some of the issues that may affect future performance.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.
- Delivering Quality Services to Customers (Customers, Improvement)
 - Delivering Regeneration across the Borough (Economy, Housing)
 - Keeping Our Borough Clean and Green (Environment)
 - Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit (Economy)
 - Improving health and well being across the Borough (Health, Housing)
 - Well Managed Council (Improvement, Community Network)

The Environmental Health Service has an impact to a lesser or greater extent on all the Council's priorities and objectives.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 Background

The Environmental Health Service (EHS) is responsible for the enforcement of legislation concerned with the protection and improvement of the people's health and the environment in Rossendale. As health and environment are factors that are influenced by a very wide range of organizations and individuals both within and outside Rossendale Borough Council, the work of the EHS frequently involves working with others in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

4.2 Over the past three years, the EHS has changed direction and, as well as concentrating on developing its own performance, considerably more effort has been made to work within the wider context. This has extended the impact of the service and enabled it to achieve more than it has previously.

4.3 Performance in 2007/8

The EHS has produced an annual report for the past two years. The purpose was to illustrate what were the ambitions of the service and how much has been achieved. It sets out the strategic framework under which its operations have been designed and how the various services contribute towards delivery of those strategies. As the strategic framework has been designed at the same time as services have been delivered, there is still work to be done before the whole framework is complete. This should be largely completed by the end of March 2009. The Annual Report for 2007/8 is attached to this report.

4.4 Customer Satisfaction

Surveys have been undertaken of customers of our services in relation to the investigation of requests for service and the inspection of businesses under food and health and safety legislation for several years. The format of the questionnaires changed during 2006 and figures are not comparable before that time.

4.5 Forms are posted to the person requesting following completion of each service delivered. The majority of these requests were in relation to pollution, especially noise nuisance, and housing defects. A relatively small number of food complaints or complaints about working conditions are included. Where issues are raised concerning poor performance, these are discussed by EHS managers and appropriate action taken to learn from the comments and to prevent a repetition. Where praise is included in the comments, these are brought to the attention of the staff concerned. All points are included in quarterly reports. Questions are asked as shown in the following table and responders asked to rate the service with a score of 1-5 with 5 representing very good performance. The scores are then averaged for all responses to each question and the table shows the results obtained expressed as a percentage score.

Q	Question	Jan-Mar 2007	April-Jun 2007	Jan-Mar 2008	April-Jun 2008	Jul-Sep 2008
1	How would you rate the overall level of service you received?	94	85	94	98	86
2	How easy was it to contact the Environmental Health Service?	93	87	93	98	88
3	How would you rate the length of time it took to respond to your request?	94	86	94	99	88
4	How would you rate the explanation of how your request would be dealt with?	93	83	91	97	88
5	How would you rate the professionalism of our staff?	94	90	94	98	92
6	How would you rate us for the quality of our work?	94	85	91	99	88
7	How would you rate us for keeping you informed about progress of your request?	91	85	93	97	90
8	How would you rate what we did, compared with what we said we'd do?	92	86	89	97	74

4.6 Forms are provided to the owners or managers of businesses following completion of a food hygiene or health and safety inspection. Businesses are asked to rate the inspections as described above. They are also asked to answer 4 yes/no questions to confirm some basic details of the way the inspection was performed and whether they needed to do anything differently in the future. This survey has now been replaced with surveys undertaken to collect information in respect of National Indicator 182 – satisfaction rate of businesses with regulatory services. The scores are then averaged for all responses to each question and the table shows the results obtained expressed as a percentage score.

Q	Question	Jan-Mar 2007	April-Jun 2007	Jan-Mar 2008	April-Jun 2008
1	How do you rate the Officer's punctuality?	89	92	93	97
2	How do you rate the way the Officer introduced themselves?	93	98	91	96
3	How do you rate the way the Officer explained the reason for the visit?	94	98	98	92
4	How would you rate the information/advice given to your business?	93	96	93	97
5	How would you rate the applicability of the information given to your business?	91	95	96	97
6	How well did the Officer explain which were legal requirements and which were recommendations?	94	96	95	96
		% yes	%yes	%yes	%yes
7	Was the information in a form that you could understand?	100	100	100	100

8	Did the Officer show you identification?	94	94	100	100
9	Did the Officer clearly explain what would happen next, if anything?	89	100	100	100
10	Did you do anything different as a result of the visit?	65	82	75	77

In future information is being collected from a wider range of regulatory services in relation of NI 182. The above questions have also been included in the new survey but will only be collated on an annual basis.

4.7 Progress during 2008/9

Activity of the EHS is detailed in an Action Plan for 2008/9 and performance is monitored on a monthly basis. The service has, in addition to its previous responsibilities connected with “traditional” environmental health, taken on a lead role in preparing strategies relating to health and wellbeing, enforcement and environmental management on behalf of the Council partly as a consequence of its broader involvement in these issues and in local and regional partnerships. The EHS is now involved in:-

- a) The Lancashire-wide Environmental Health Managers organisation,
- b) East Lancashire Smokefree Group
- c) East Lancashire Night Time Noise Service
- d) Working groups representing Principal EHOs from all Lancashire Authorities on a range of environmental health functions
- e) Local Strategic Partnership Theme groups relating to Health and Wellbeing, Environment and Housing.
- f) Lancashire Climate Change Group
- g) Rossendale Food Forum

4.8 Future issues affecting the Environmental Health Service

The future of the EHS is affected by four main drivers in addition to the priorities and objectives of the Council and its partners:-

1. Technical issues – new powers or duties relating to specific functions
2. Staffing issues – the general availability of staff and their development
3. Enforcement issues – the way staff are developed and used to deliver services
4. Organisational issues – the way the service is presented, quality assured and documented

These issues can be considered as opportunities and threats to the service and may expose strengths and weaknesses in the EHS.

1. *Technical Issues*

a) An increasing number of requests for service are being received from tenants of buy-to-let landlords who are affected by the current financial situation. Work to maintain privately tenanted housing is being left undone on an increasing scale and people are turning to the Council to take enforcement action to a greater degree than previously.

b) The Private Water Supply legislation is being changed during 2009 to bring the UK in line with European legislation. The exact implications are not yet finalized, but this will require considerable input in the first year as all local supplies will need to be inspected and risk rated. There are approximately 350

private water supplies in Rossendale and each will need approximately 1 full day's inspection and assessment in the first year. Charges may be made for much of this work from the supply owners.

c) Following the publication of the Pitt Review in 2008 of the flooding that occurred in 2007, Local Authorities have recently been informed of their roles and responsibilities in relation to flood prevention and local flood risk management. These issues will develop rapidly during 2009 and require additional input by the EHS and others within Rossendale Borough Council who will be required to work closely with Lancashire County Council.

d) The impact of National Indicators 185, 186, and 194 is that progress will be required in relation to Climate Change adaptation and mitigation and this will require dedicated leadership on behalf of the Authority.

e) The Council may agree to the implementation of the Scores on the Doors Scheme when financial information becomes available. This will provide useful information to consumers to help their choice of food outlet, but will require implementation effort by EHS to establish and maintain the system. The timescale for this initiative is currently uncertain.

2. Staffing Issues

As with other services, recruitment to fill vacancies can prove problematic and a market supplement was needed in 2009 in order to recruit an EHO. Action is being taken to improve the development and retention of existing staff by creating work shadowing opportunities with other Authorities, agencies and partners in order to help increase job satisfaction and experience. In addition, consideration is being given to how we can develop EHOs and other staff within the Authority by training local staff who are currently without the appropriate qualifications or experience.

3. Enforcement issues

Greater involvement by the Local Better Regulation Executive will affect the design and delivery of enforcement activity in the future. All regulatory services will need to reconsider their enforcement activities in relation to the simplification programmes of national regulatory bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive, the Food Standards Agency, Defra, Environment Agency and others. These will inevitably affect current services, although services have already been changing in anticipation of the future requirements.

4. Organisational issues

a) There are considerable opportunities available for the improvement in the way information technology is used by EHS so as to enable staff to work away from the office for longer periods. This will increase flexibility, improve responses to customers and save wasted traveling time as well as help improve recording and monitoring of information.

b) Further work is needed to fully establish the service's quality management system and bring it up to date to comply with the recently published ISO 9000:2008 standard.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

5.1 There are no material financial implications arising from the report

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6. MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 The work of the Environmental Health Team is recognised. The Annual Report demonstrates the good work and progress being made by the Team.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

7.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Environmental Health Service has changed considerably during the past four years and is now a much more outward facing, co-operative and involved service aiming to fulfill its potential in relation to the delivery of outcomes on behalf of the Council. There will be pressures on the service during 2009 requiring increased effort and flexibility on the part of the existing staff, who have responded with tremendous enthusiasm and capability to previous challenges.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 That the performance of the Environmental Health Service in the past and the anticipated challenges in the future be noted.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 Consultation has been undertaken with customers as described above.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
None	