

Compliance and Enforcement Board

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on Microsoft Teams on the **26th April 2022**.

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Chairman);

Cllrs. Buchanan, Feacey, Forest, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllr. Spain.

Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Team Leader Planning Enforcement.

Also in attendance:

Cllrs. Harman, Ledger, Michael.

Team Leader Environmental Enforcement, Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager, Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Deputy Team Leader Planning Enforcement, Principal Litigator, Senior Planning Lawyer, Investigation and Enforcement Support Manager, Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

1. Notes of the Meeting of 25th January 2022

1.1 The Board agreed the notes as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 In relation to enforcement issues at Clover Leaf Roundabout, Cllr. Shorter declared that the landowner for his small holding had received a Community Protection Warning. Cllr Shorter said that he had no pecuniary interest in the matter.

3. Environmental Crime Enforcement in Ashford

3.1 The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key points within the report. The Chairman said that the work of the team was greatly appreciated by Members and by the public.

3.2 There was a question about a potential lack of KCC funding and the impact this might have on enforcement operations. The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement said that he thought KCC funding was likely to be forthcoming but that enforcement operations could continue successfully if it did not come forward.

- 3.3 A Member noted the issue over fires recently in Kingsnorth and asked Officers to ensure that Kingsnorth Parish Council were fully informed of outcomes of any enforcement action. He said communication was vital.
- 3.4 There was a question on whether farmers required a licence to clear scrap metal from their yards. The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement said that he did not believe this was the case as long as it was legitimate occasional waste and not part of regular business waste.
- 3.5 A Member asked if there had been sufficient communication to the public regarding the responsibility of the individual to ensure that their household contractors were licensed to dispose of waste. The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement said this matter had been publicised on the local radio and social media and that an item had been inserted into the Ashford for You magazine. There had also been a number of media releases.
- 3.6 In response to a question about charges for disposing of household DIY waste, the Team Leader Environmental Enforcement said that there had not yet been any clear decision from central government on the matter. The Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager added that there did not appear to be a trend in this direction amongst other authorities nationally. He pointed out that large scale DIY disposals were usually done by rogue traders, rather than householders themselves.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

4. Anti-Social Behaviour in Ashford - Update

- 4.1 The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager introduced this item and drew Members attention to the highlights within the report.
- 4.2 There were no follow-up questions and the Chairman congratulated the team on the impressive results.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

5. Planning Enforcement Update

- 5.1 The Deputy Team Leader Planning Enforcement introduced this item and highlighted the key points in the report.
- 5.2 A Member noted that there appeared to be a high number of open investigations. The Deputy Team Leader Planning Enforcement replied that this was partly due to a bundle of cases which were due to be processed together shortly and this would reduce the figures for the next quarter. There was a good rate of clearance for minor cases, but the more complex cases

involving senior officer were time-consuming and required a greater degree of effort. The team was currently carrying a vacancy, and it was hoped to recruit a new consultant to help clear the backlog shortly.

- 5.3 Several Members expressed concern about the workload and the long-term welfare of officers in the team, and asked whether there were enough resources in the team to cope with the workload. The Deputy Team Leader Planning Enforcement said that planning enforcement was a constant pressure, and that the team could do with more staff, although they did well with those that were available. She was confident that the vacancy was being addressed. In response to a question about the delay in publicising the vacancy, she advised that she did not think the delay was due to cost-saving efforts, but rather due to technical difficulties with the advert. She asked for it to be noted that in the last week the team had received callouts to two potential injunction sites, which took priority over all other work. She also advised that the team now had bank holiday cover in place, and that any enforcement emergencies should be reported to the Monitoring Centre on bank holidays.
- 5.4 A Member asked about progress at several specific sites. It was agreed that further information could be provided outside the meeting if required.
- 5.5 The Chairman said that Members greatly appreciated the work done by the team, but there remained some general concern about resourcing levels.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

6. Date of Next Meetings

- 6.1 26th July 2022 at 10am
25th October 2022 at 10am

Councillor Bell (Chairman)
Compliance and Enforcement Board

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