

CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

03 December 2020

Cllr David Harvey – Update on Portfolio Holder Priorities

City Management	<p>Environment and City Management deliver a large number of the council's front line practical services. They are front facing and have regular daily interactions with our communities. The City Management element of the directorate have largely been focussed with business as usual and making sure service delivery could be adapted to keep staff and residents safe.</p> <p>Our Business Continuity Plans have proved to be extremely useful and allowed us to prepare and be able to maintain the most critical services during the whole period.</p>
Waste, Recycling and Fleet	<p>Waste Management is one of our critical services and a great deal of work has been done to enable the service to operate as safely as possible under current conditions. All waste and recycling collections have continued as normal throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>For our operational workforce we implemented appropriate risk control measures recommended by the Waste Industry Safety & Health Forum, including restriction on collection crew size, 'cohorting' of crews to ensure the same people worked together as much as possible, staggering of start times & locations, social distancing at break times, ample supplies of PPE and hand gels & wipes and instruction in how to use them. These measures were discussed with the workforce and union prior to implementation.</p> <p>We initially prioritised the core services of refuse and recycling collection in anticipation of higher staff absence levels and temporarily suspended bulky waste collection and new garden waste subscriptions. This suspension was lifted in April when it became clear we had adequate staff resources which have remained largely consistent throughout.</p> <p>We used our usual communications channels to encourage residents to carry on recycling as normal. Materials such as glass and garden waste saw increases of 25% in the early weeks, cardboard levels are still high as more people shop on line.</p> <p>It is a great credit to all the waste and recycling staff that all collection rounds for refuse, recycling and garden waste have been completed on the scheduled day throughout the whole period. Their focus continues to be on delivering this vital service.</p>
Public and Green Spaces	<p><u>Public Toilets</u></p> <p>Public Toilets initially saw a huge amount of work, firstly in closing the 11 public toilets that were open, in line with</p>

government guidance. Paris Street toilets remained open throughout the period, barring an initial few days while we gathered the resource required. Then as the restrictions from the lockdown eased in the summer, work focused on reopening more public toilets safely. This included completing Covid-19 compliant risk assessments, and putting in place the signage, training, resources and additional cleaning materials for increased cleaning regimes.

The additional costs, together with some of the layouts of our toilets meant that only five of the 11 toilets could be opened safely. We opened Exeter Quay, Cowick Barton Playing Fields, Heavitree Pleasure Ground and Topsham Quay in addition to Paris Street. These are our most well used toilets and are now cleaned thoroughly with virucidal cleaning agents every hour.

Exeter Quay toilets were in great demand as the good weather and the reopening of hospitality venues for takeout beer and food, brought out large numbers of people to the Quay. With the assistance of our colleagues in Environmental Health and the Police, we employed Covid Marshalls to extend the toilets opening times to 10 pm.

Outdoor play and sports facilities

Around 80 of our Play Areas / Skateparks / Tennis Courts / MUGAS (multi use games areas) were initially closed and this was an enormous task to close and keep closed areas that are designed to be easily accessible. When the first lockdown restrictions started to ease in the summer, play areas were then re-opened with strict Covid-19 compliant cleaning regimes and signs advising of numbers to be using the area at any one time. We employed six additional people (now reducing to four people because of the shorter days) to ensure that these play spaces were kept as clean and safe as possible in line with the guidance.

Skateparks and tennis courts have recently been closed in line with the guidance for the second lockdown and we hope to open them again as soon as restrictions are lifted.. Skateparks are seeing a high number of incidents of people breaking into them to gain access. The governing body (Skate England) appealed to the Government to be given an exemption to keep skateparks open but it was turned down. At Flowerpots Skate park we have had to fence off the skate park with temporary fencing and switched off the lights to deter skaters using this site after dark. We are also seeing issues with skaters breaking into the electric cabinet and turning the lights on to light the park at night. This is clearly very dangerous and additional measures have been taken.

Burials and Cemeteries

Burials teams were initially split up to ensure some degree of resilience and additional plant and equipment were secured in case of increased demand. The teams were ready to work in shifts covering a 14 hours a day period if required. The management team worked with Devon County Council Excess

	<p>Deaths Team, preparing for any increased demand but thankfully did not materialise.</p> <p><u>Cleansing</u></p> <p>Sweeping team members were used to backfill the refuse teams that were either shielding or having to self-isolate. This meant the refuse service was able to keep going. The sweepers that remained within the service saw a significant increase in litter accumulations as businesses changed from eating in, to increased outdoor eating and take out. The teams also complete enhanced cleaning regimes focussing on touch points such as bins and street furniture. The service has remained agile and flexible in responding to the demands of the pandemic and keeping people as safe as possible when returning to our public spaces.</p>
<p>Waterways and Harbour Team</p>	<p>During the initial lockdown period water use on both the canal and estuary was restricted, with only obvious commercial activity being permitted. Our Harbour Patrol team undertook regular checks to provide guidance and advice as necessary.</p> <p>Canal Operatives made use of this quieter period to carry out maintenance tasks that might have otherwise inconvenienced users or prolonged the work (repairs to pontoons etc.).</p> <p>Topsham Ferry ceased service for the lockdown but as restrictions eased, was able to operate for the peak summer weeks, with revised COVID protocols. In order to help meet emergency in-year savings the Ferry service was suspended from September 2020 with plans to restart in April 2021.</p>
<p>Engineering</p>	<p>Engineering staff were heavily involved in planning and implementing of social distancing measures across the city. This included distancing reminder signage, marking pedestrian one-way routes and providing 'safe queuing areas' outside some of the key stores. They continue to improve, expand and refresh the signs and floor stencils.</p> <p>A number engineering projects with the potential to cause disruption to the public were undertaken during the lockdown period (for example the resurfacing of Magdalen Road car park). This had the additional benefit of providing work and therefore cash flow for contractors during an uncertain period.</p> <p>The team also took advantage of the closed play parks and refurbished major elements of play equipment in King George V, Anne Close, Haccombe Close, Cowick Barton and St Thomas play areas.</p> <p>Other schemes such as the renovation of the Station Road Playing Field pitches have continued as normal.</p>