

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 22 MARCH 2012
title: GENERAL REPORT
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: JAMES RUSSELL, HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform Committee of relevant issues which have arisen since the last meeting.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – The following reports generally relate to the Council's ambitions to make people's lives healthier and safer.

2 FLOOD PROTECTION GRANT UPDATE - RIBCHESTER

2.1 Further to my report to the last meeting of Committee, I am pleased to report that the Property Flood Protection scheme is continuing to make progress. Since the last meeting, the scheme has been out for quotations and tender and the contracts have recently been awarded.

2.2 Furthermore, the Environment Agency has agreed and provided additional funding in order to deliver a preferred 'Fit and Forget' scheme which provides an enhanced level of flood protection. Due to unavoidable delays in the tendering process and the need to seek additional funding, the scheme will run beyond the 31 March 2012 deadline. However the Grant funding is to be claimed in this financial year.

3 CLITHEROE MARKET - UPDATE

3.1 Further to my report to the previous meeting of Committee, Frank Watson has retired on Saturday, 26 February after 15 years as the Market Superintendent. As part of the Council's financial savings the role has now been reduced from 37 to 17 hours. The post is to be advertised in the near future and a replacement officer appointed. Arrangements are in place for the post to be covered on a temporary basis by the existing relief Market Superintendents.

4 UPDATE ON PEST CONTROL INCOME

4.1 Further to my report to the previous meeting of Committee, the income from the introduction of the extended pest control service charges has resulted in an additional income in the order of £1000 between the beginning of October and 29 February 2012 (ie 5 months).

4.2 Feedback from residents continues to be generally positive and understanding of the measures, a few residents elect to receive advice and undertake their own treatments initially, in order to avoid incurring the related charges.

4.3 A responsive service continues to be provided by one part time officer on a 3 day per week basis. However, it is now intended to proceed and review the options relating

to the vacant part time post in order to address the backlog of proactive work and plan how to meet expected summer demands.

5 FOOD INSPECTION UPDATE

- 5.1 I am pleased to report the ongoing progress with regard to addressing the backlog of food premise inspections. To the end of February, a total of 333 'initial programmed' inspections had been undertaken with the remaining Category A - C's (Higher Risk) being virtually completed. It is predicted that approximately 30 Category E (lowest risk) premises may remain outstanding at 31 March 2012. This being the case, these will be taken forward and added to the next year target.

6 LANCASHIRE DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC HEALTH - ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

- 6.1 The above report has recently been circulated by Lancashire County Council Joint Health Unit Team. For your assistance, I attach the introduction and conclusion as the Appendix to this report. The full document can be obtained from the following website –

www.eastlancspct.nhs.uk/about-us/annual-reports/additional/

7 RADIOACTIVITY IN FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT 2010

- 7.1 This is the 16th Annual Report on the monitoring of radioactivity in food and the environment. The report focuses on key information that shows that food is safe and the public's exposure to ionising radiation around the 39 nuclear sites around the UK is within legal limits.
- 7.2 The report generally concludes that levels monitored are either stable or continuing to reduce.
- 7.3 The environmental effects of Chernobyl continued to be monitored in 2010. There remain a total of 338 farms or part farms which are subject to restrictions (8 in England, 0 in Scotland and 330 in Wales), although 1 farm in Scotland has a conditional consent to ensure sheep are clean-grazed prior to slaughter. There are approximately 190,000 sheep within these restricted areas this represents a reduction of over 95% since 1986.
- 7.4 The accident at Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power station in Japan in March 2011 resulted in significant quantities of radioactivity being released to air and sea. At the end of March 2011, elevated iodine-131 levels were detected in the UK. The Environment Agency, the Food Standards Agency, the Health Protection Agency (HPA), NIEA and SEPA increased the scrutiny of their environmental monitoring programmes and took additional samples where appropriate. The levels detected in the UK environment mean that there is minimal risk to public health in the UK from the release of radioactive material at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power plant. Regular updates of monitoring data were hosted on the HPA website, and additionally SEPA have compiled a data report of all monitoring undertaken in Scotland. The report is available at :

http://www.sepa.org.uk/radioactive_substances/publications/other_reports.aspx

Full monitoring data results for the UK will be published in RIFE next year.

8 LICENCE TO EXPLORE FOR NATURAL GAS IN LANCASHIRE

- 8.1 You are probably aware of the recent reports in relation to the industrial process of 'fracking' of natural gas in Lancashire. The Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) has recently granted licences to 'explore for' natural gas and is considering 5 sites at present. Cuadrilla has been granted permission for exploratory drilling at 2 sites. If successful and licences for extraction are eventually granted, it could result in considerably more sites being necessary reaching across the Fylde coast reaching as far inland as Longridge.
- 8.2 Fracking is not a new process and has been used previously in the UK, but has experienced recent bad press linked to potential contamination of land. It is an established methodology and similar surveys are also being undertaken in Ireland and Poland. The outcomes of the exploratory licences granted in Lancashire will be used to influence national UK policy for other potential fields in Yorkshire, S Wales, South Downs, North Coast of Lake District and Central Valley of Scotland.
- 8.3 In Lancashire the process will consist of sinking a 4 inch borehole to a depth of 3 kilometres to access the underlying Bowland Shales. Water and sand with 1% additives then being injected at great pressure to fracture the rock to release the natural gas entrapped within the shales.
- 8.4 Planning permission will be required from Lancashire Council and the Health Protection Agency is currently preparing a position statement on this issue, which will be reported to this Committee when published.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For further information please ask for James Russell on 01200 414466.