

Spelthorne Service update 27 January 2015

Rubbish collection services all went ahead as planned over the Christmas and New Year period with very few problems and no delays.

Spelthorne Council, alongside several other Surrey authorities, has successfully bid for extra money to help homeless people and rough sleepers. A total of £247,500 – shared between six authorities and a housing association – is available for use until 2016. The money will be spent on, among other things, creating four single homeless support co-ordinators to work with the local Supporting Families Team.

Borough Councils in Spelthorne, Runnymede and Elmbridge have joined forces with Rentstart and Transform Housing to provide a winter shelter for people who might otherwise have to sleep rough. The shelter located near Walton will be open from the beginning of January until the end of March. Up to seven clients can be accommodated at any one time.

Three law enforcement officers are now patrolling the streets of Spelthorne helping to tackle issues such as fly tipping dog fouling and other forms of anti-social behaviour. The fourth post has been advertised and will be filled as soon as possible.

Cllr Daxa Patel was interviewed by Brooklands Radio on 17 December. She spoke on a range of issues including the Council's use of IT systems, the future of Ashford's multi-storey car park and the Council's role during emergencies such as flooding. Cllr Richard Smith-Ainsley was also interviewed by the radio station on 21 January and spoke about the role of the Planning Committee, the Council's Green Belt policy and the Eco Park.

Of the 335 calls made to the IT helpdesk in December, 26.6% were closed within an hour, 21.3% closed within six hours and 9.4% closed within the day - making a total of 57.3% closed within 24 hours.

Following a review of the Council's mobile phone contract, costs have fallen by almost £14.5K per annum. An annual saving of £11K has also been achieved thanks to the introduction of the Lync telephone system at Knowle Green and the Depot.

The introduction of a new textiles collection service was approved by Cabinet at the end of 2014 and the implementation phase is already well underway. The launch date has been moved to 23 March to capture any tonnage that may be generated over the Easter break.

Ditch clearance works have been undertaken at Black Ditch, the Mark Way Ditch, two ditches along Moor Lane and Sweeps Ditch.

The Stanwell Recoup (recycling) project is due to conduct its final sampling and analysis next week, after which a press release will be drafted to announce the 'winners' of the incentive trial.

Activities designed for people aged 50+ started in January at Spelthorne Leisure Centre, Ashford Table Tennis Club and Staines and Laleham Sports and Social Club thanks to funding from the Personalisation, Prevention and Partnership fund (PPPF).

As part of National Obesity Week, Leisure Services ran a three day pedometer challenge. Thirty staff participated and the winner, with 56,855 steps, won a month's membership at Spelthorne Leisure Centre.

The WW1 art competition for schools attracted many excellent pieces of work. These were displayed in the Council Offices on 19 January and staff and Councillors had an opportunity to vote for their favourite. All

participants will receive a copy of a book containing the artwork and the winners will each receive an additional prize.

Ann Salter of Maureen Campbell Court in Shepperton appeared at Guildford Crown Court on 15 January and was sentenced to a 12 month sentence, suspended for 18 months, and 200 hours of unpaid community work after pleading guilty to 11 counts of Benefit Fraud. Spelthorne Council and the Department for Work and Pensions carried out a joint investigation into Ms. Salter's claims for Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. The fraud, committed over an eight year period, resulted in an overpayment of £65,468.96.

Residents who may be thinking of eating out this Valentine's Day are being urged to check the restaurant's food hygiene rating before they book. Currently in Spelthorne, 93% of food businesses are rated as satisfactory, good or very good.

Further to the Cabinet decision to sell Bridge Street car park to a preferred developer, the site will not be passed on to the developer until they have obtained planning permission, which is likely to be in autumn 2015. In line with Cabinets requirements, the developer has given a clear commitment to ensuring the end result is befitting of its Thames side and conservation area setting, and to undertake meaningful public consultation before an application is submitted. The Council will use the money raised from the project to help secure the medium and long-term financial stability of the authority.

The November business start-up report showed that 65 new businesses started trading in Spelthorne during the previous month, placing Spelthorne 6th out of the 11 Surrey boroughs. The year-to-date growth rate of 1.7% gave Spelthorne the fastest growing number of new businesses in Surrey and marked it as the only borough with positive growth. The figures fair favourably with Surrey as a whole (-8.6%) and our adjoining boroughs of Elmbridge (-13.4%) and Runnymede (-10.3%) as well as bucking the trend of the rest of the country which has seen negative growth.

Sir William Perkins School has started work to build a new rowing boathouse on the river in Laleham. When completed, it will provide excellent rowing facilities, not just for the school itself, but also for young people in Spelthorne who might not otherwise have access to rowing. The Council worked closely with the school, leasing the land on which the boathouse will sit and negotiating access for the community.

The Licensing team have put in place interim arrangements for people who hold personal licences to sell alcohol to renew their licences following regulations that came into force on 5 January. This is in advance of the Deregulation Bill, likely to come into force later this year, which is set to abolish the need to renew these licences.

A pilot project was launched in December to enable the public to contact someone out of normal office hours about urgent or on-going noise complaints. Early indications are that residents have welcomed this new service.