

REPORT TITLE:	Discharge of Roles and Responsibilities since the last meeting of the Council
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AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY:	Public Services and Communities
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Introduction

The cost of living crisis has started to affect all of us, and Public Services and Communities are very much on the front line of trying to support our residents struggling to make ends meet. Over the years, faced with floods, Covid and other crises, a strong partnership has been developed between key Council services and local voluntary and community organisations. Every week I hear of new initiatives being taken by local people to try to provide practical help - hot meals, warm spaces, winter coats and school uniforms.

At the same time, often with very little notice, Council staff have to work out how to ensure that government payments reach people as quickly as possible in a fair and consistent way - not always as easy as it sounds!

As a directorate, we are also facing unprecedented increases in the costs of delivering our own services - so this is a tough time of year all round.

But I am proud of the efforts made by our staff to do their best, often in difficult circumstances. I hope you will enjoy this report about the wide range of activities carried out by us this autumn.

WELFARE AND BENEFITS

The Welfare and Benefits service has been working on annual auto registration of Free School Meals by making awards to those children who started school in September using eligibility information already held or by contacting parents. As of 30th June 2022, there were 9,532 children entitled to FSM which increased to 9,916 by 31 October 2022.

We are piloting a proactive approach to encourage applications for Discretionary Housing Payment. We have identified those households who currently receive housing benefit at a lower award than the rent charged and starting with those households with the highest shortfall, we will be contacting them over the next few weeks.

Applications for local welfare assistance increased by 64% in October compared to October 2021 noticeably from households struggling to cope with increasing bills and finding themselves with no means to replace broken essential white goods and beds.

Household Support Fund 3 (October 2022 – March 2023) Families with children and households with a disabled family member who are in receipt of housing benefit, council tax reduction and free school meals will receive a one-off payment in January 2023.

Grant funding has once again been given to Community Foundation for Calderdale who are inviting applications from local organisations who support individuals and households struggling with cost of living.

A new discretionary hardship fund has also been set up for those households who just sit outside the welfare support thresholds but are still struggling with household bills and food costs. The application form is in the final testing stage and will hopefully be live on our website during week commencing 14 November.

<https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/residents/community-and-living/money-and-wellbeing-calderdale/household-support-fund>

COMMUNITY PROTECTION

Bonfire Response

Over the last two months planning for the Bonfire period has taken place involving the Community Protection Team, Neighbourhoods Team, Green Spaces & Street Scene, West Yorkshire Police, and West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue, including:

- Visual audits of high-risk areas, with potential fire sources being removed
- Test purchasing of fireworks
- Bonfire education in schools
- Engagement with community groups
- Re-deployable CCTV moved to areas of previous hot spots for monitoring during this period, which included Vickerman Street
- Communications to schools and through social media.

A West Yorkshire Police Force Operational Plan (Operation Odiham) was in place covering the period and a Calderdale Partnership Control Room was set up with representatives from Council services, plus Police and Fire colleagues.

Members will be aware of the very sad news of the death of a young man on bonfire night. Police enquiries are continuing, and we are working with our partners and the community to avoid this happening again.

Updates are available on Twitter @CMBC_CPT and at #SaferCalderdale.

Days of Action

There are, unfortunately, numerous incidents of Fly Tipping and Duty of Care offences each week and, as part of the Council's 3 E's approach, the Community Protection Team recently held a Day of Action on 26th October in partnership with West Yorkshire Police and VOSA aiming to Engage, Educate and Enforce on issues around fly-tipping, unlicensed waste carriers and Taxi Licensing compliance. The day included a traffic interception site in West Vale targeting vehicles reasonably suspected of illegal activity and 36 vehicles were intercepted and checked for compliance:

- 7 drivers were informed of the need to gain a waste carriers licence, with a further 4 drivers' details being passed onto the Environment Agency for possible further action.
- 1 vehicle was taken off the road for non-compliance with vehicle standards.
- 1 taxi driver was given an immediate suspension due to the condition of his vehicle, and another was given a vehicle rectification notice.

The Community Safety Enforcement Officers also supported the Neighbourhood Teams in Todmorden for their day of action at the end of October. Similar to the session in West Vale, officers worked with VOSA to undertake vehicle checks on waste carriers and taxis operating in the area. On this occasion, all 27 vehicles stopped were operating in accordance with the relevant licensing regulations.

Purple Flag

Purple Flag is the gold standard for town centres, similar to Green Flag for parks and Blue Flag for beaches and recognises excellence in the management of the evening and night-time economy.

October is Purple Flag month, and as part of this, Donna Norman, Khizar Akbar, Grace Benn, and Jaymi Perks from the Community Protection Team were out and about in Halifax on Friday 21st October with West Yorkshire Police and Elected Members to promote Purple Flag.

Halifax was the first town in West Yorkshire to receive the accolade in 2010 and has kept it every year since. The scheme celebrates towns and cities that offer diverse, safe, clean, and well managed nights out, recognising excellence in the evening and night-time economy.

We've just submitted our renewal application to retain the accreditation for the 12th year in a row and, with the excellent partnerships in place with businesses, voluntary organisations and other statutory agencies, we have every confidence of continued success.

Food Prohibition Order

Environmental Health Officers attended Bradford Magistrates Court on 4th November after a fast-food takeaway premises in Halifax was formally closed by Officers on the 2nd of November, and a Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Order is now in place. This requires the business to stay closed until Officers are satisfied that the necessary improvements are made in the interests of public safety. Unfortunately, the need for this sort of enforcement action has increased recently, and there is work underway to support Food Business Operators to become more compliant. However, enforcement work will continue to be undertaken where food hygiene standards are not met.

BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

Parkwood Crematorium

We continue to be asked for later afternoon appointments for cremations, and also Saturday services, although there is a slight decrease in the number of bookings – this could be due to Kirklees being able to offer more cremations at Fixby now improvement works are nearly completed. The chapel is now back to pre-covid level of funeral attendees, but as we are still being cautious, we are recommending the use of hand sanitising stations for everyone entering the building, together with offering face coverings to those visitors who feel they would like to wear them.

Preparations are being made for the annual service of remembrance in December where we arrange an evening of carols, readings (both civil and religious) and the opportunity to leave a message on the memory tree to loved ones. This is arranged in conjunction with Elland Churches Together, Co-Operative Funeral Services and Civil Celebrant Sarah Garg.

A further electric vehicle is also being procured for the service to use at Parkwood and this is due for delivery early next year.

Cemeteries

The demand for burials has remained high into Autumn and this has had an impact on the level of maintenance in the cemeteries, so the service has been using contractors in four of our operational cemeteries (Luddenden, Exley, Sowerby Bridge and Rastrick) to undertake grass cutting and general clearance to get the appearance up to a more pleasing standard. We are exploring assistance through Community Payback for one of the biggest cemeteries (Brighouse) to help with tasks such as pathways and boundary maintenance, removal of saplings from graves, and leaf/detritus clearance. In the meantime, staff from Parkwood have continued weekly visits to keep the garden of remembrance and the entrance to the cemetery clean and tidy, with positive feedback being received from the public. We are keen to develop further links with volunteer/Friends' groups, building on the success of the Friends of Lister Lane

Cemetery and have been approached by members of the public who are looking at volunteering in Sowerby Bridge and Luddenden, and a new group at Christ Church in Todmorden have already been busy, with very pleasing results.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste & Recycling collections continue to be far more stable than they were at the beginning of the year, with only minimal disruption to the front-line routes due to occasional resource issues and vehicle breakdowns. Any collections missed on the scheduled day are generally picked up the following day, except for areas with access issues where smaller vehicles return at the weekend.

Discussions are underway with Suez to explore the possibility of making Waste & Recycling collections on Bank Holidays (excluding Christmas and New Year) from 2023. This would mitigate many of the issues that arise in these periods due to the lack of catch-up opportunities at the weekend (as Saturday becomes a normal collection day).

Collection calendars will again not be delivered this year. They will be available online and links will be sent to all households that subscribe to our email reminder service. Colleagues in Customer First will again assist, actively encouraging sign up to the collection day email reminder service and it will be promoted on various channels including ezine, ecall, community newsletters, email auto responses and the council's website. Currently there are over 38,000 email reminder subscribers, representing around 40% of households in the borough. Anyone unable to access online channels can have a hard copy posted to them. The link to sign up to the email reminder service is: <https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/environment/waste/household-collections/collectiondayfinder.jsp>.

We will soon be heading into the busy Christmas holiday season which normally sees additional amounts of waste & recycling produced at households. To assist the crews as much as possible please encourage people to squash plastic bottles and cans to maximise capacity in the white sacks, whilst also ensuring the sack is sealed with the Velcro fasteners.

Very large volumes of corrugated cardboard cause delays to recycling collections, as the crew have to return to the depot to unload more often. Over the last two years in particular, there has been a huge shift to online shopping, and this often arrives in large boxes. The popularity of meal kits delivered in boxes has also brought about a big increase in the amount of cardboard coming out of households. We are asking residents to help keep the routes running efficiently by folding, tearing, or cutting up cardboard so it fits into the recycling box. This maximises use of vehicle space by helping the onboard compaction, so allows more card to be loaded onto the vehicles. For large amounts of

cardboard from a one-off purchase, it would help if residents could spread the load by putting out a small amount each week. There are also cardboard skips at the household waste recycling centres for any extra cardboard if residents are able to take it there. Thin card, like cereal boxes, toilet roll tubes, etc can go into the green sack for weekly recycling, along with paper and cartons (Tetra pak).

TRANSPORT SERVICES

The Home to School Transport service has settled into routine following the start of the new academic year. The rise in SEND pupil demand continues to put service delivery (and budgets) under pressure and the service is continually firefighting to recruit the number of Drivers and Passenger Attendants (PA) required. Staff turnover is high, due to the age profile of the workforce and applications for vacancies is low. The service is 17 staff short at present, and Driver and PA recruitment remains open throughout the year.

The Council's fleet of vehicles is now 16% electric. The latest additions to the fleet have been a Vauxhall eCorsa for Old Gate Children's Home, Brighthouse and a further three Toyota Proace City Electric on order to replace diesel equivalents in Parking Services, Bereavement Services and Libraries.

The ambition is to de-carbonise the whole fleet of 200 vehicles by 2030. In order to achieve this once in a generation transition, it will involve a large-scale multi-service project to be led by Transport Services to ensure there is the electric vehicle charging infrastructure available to keep the fleet operational. The fleet replacement programme is scheduled to take place in phases over the next eight years. All diesel vehicles currently in the fleet should be able to be replaced by an electric vehicle. The electric car market is developing rapidly, but the electric commercial vehicle market is lagging behind a little and replacing our wheelchair accessible minibus and Green Spaces and Street Scene fleet with electric equivalents is going to be a little more challenging. Providing the charging infrastructure in the right locations is crucial, and grid capacity, physical space and charging speeds will all be issues the project will face.

GREEN SPACES & STREET SCENE

One task that takes a lot of time and resource at this time of year is leaf clearance, with the priority being to keep areas of high footfall clear and safe, and to ensure that leaves do not interfere with drainage and gullies at a time when we are likely to experience periods of high and intense rainfall.

An additional large sweeper will be brought in this year (we have managed to 'swop', temporarily, one of our smaller sweepers for a much more efficient larger vehicle) and a

further sweeper is funded through the flood prevention team to concentrate on areas that we know are vulnerable to surface water flooding. These mechanical sweepers work closely with our manual teams to maximise impact, and we are also introducing new ways of treating the algae/moss growth on pavements that we know can cause additional problems.

We have reintroduced winter bedding this year to bring some colour to what can be very dismal and depressing months, including at memorials which have also been checked to make sure they are in a suitable condition for Remembrance commemorations.

Work is also planned over winter to repair rotten walkway boards in Jungle Experience at Manor Heath, using our inhouse staff, so that this popular facility can reopen next spring.

Finally, as the winter weather starts to show its face, we are getting all the 600+ salt bins located throughout the borough checked and refilled as necessary, and our normal monitoring and response arrangements are in place to ensure the highway network is gritted as necessary during any periods of ice and snow.

PARKING SERVICES

Parking Strategy

A Parking Strategy for the borough was approved by Cabinet in October, as was an Air Quality Strategy, and so the bi-annual review of parking charges will now take place within this context, with a report to Cabinet early next year.

Todmorden and Brighouse Sports centres

The formal parking restrictions which were advertised in July 2022 to introduce measures to ensure turnover of spaces to support users became operational on 3 October 2022.

Haworth Old Road, Hebden Bridge

A Resident Permit Zone has now been introduced, following consultation with residents, to deal with long-standing issues in this area caused by inconsiderate and anti-social parking by visitors to Lumb Falls.

Brighouse Accelerator Scheme - Parklets

The Parklets that were introduced in Brighouse on Commercial Street and Bethel Street car park in March 2021, using an experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) will now be a permanent feature following consultation. There were objections but, on balance, the positive impact was judged to outweigh the concerns raised.

School Streets

The Cornholme J&I School Street became operational on 10 October 2022, which has increased the number of operational school streets across the borough to 17, and the school street associated with Wainstalls J&I School is planned for later this year.

NEIGHBOURHOODS & COHESION

Neighbourhood Teams

All teams worked closely with community safety colleagues and wider partners on bonfire activity. Recent partnership activity has included fly-tipping action on the route into Ripponden from Huddersfield and a very successful Week of Action in Todmorden.

Guidance has been provided to all Ward Councillors around use of Ward Forum Grants to support small local community groups with energy costs as a matter of exception this winter.

All officers are receiving training in how to offer the best support to residents regarding the cost of living challenges and using Money Worries resources.

Asylum & Modern Slavery

St Augustine's are delivering refugee awareness training in the lower valley to a wide range of voluntary sector organisations. The hope is to increase resilience and skills to support new migrants in the lower valley area which is some distance from the main source of support at St Augustine's.

Prevent Team

The new Community and Volunteer Development Officer is now in post – she is prioritising roundtable meetings, setting up the communications strategy and has started booking in briefing sessions with social work and fostering teams.

The Co-ordinator is prioritising the annual funding bid, ensuring the situational risk assessment is fully populated with the latest information and ensuring that we are embedding Prevent across other strategies in the council e.g., climate change, cultural programme, and that the Protect and Prevent Strategies are in close alignment.

Cohesion & Equality Team

The team have been supporting a range of awareness sessions including Hate Crime Awareness week and Islamic awareness for the Environment Agency.

The Moral Economy Conference took place at Halifax Minster in October with an attendance of 160 delegates covering subjects including moral economy, nurturing community cohesion, climate change and Islamic finance.

The Equality Progress Report for 2022 including the Workforce and Gender Pay reports was presented to Cabinet earlier in November accompanied by a review of the Councils Equality and Diversity Policy Statement that reflect the six corporate equality objectives agreed in 2021.

SPORTS SERVICES

It was hugely disappointing to have to make the very difficult decision to pause the development of Halifax Leisure Centre due to the current economic uncertainty around inflation and cost of living.

Planning continues with Public Health colleagues in relation to sports role in integrated health and wellbeing support for adults. Sport services is a crucial part of keeping people well along with preventing illness in those at risk so exploring our offer to ensure it meets public health needs as well as commercial requirements is to be a key theme in reviewing the service.

Along with the above talks are underway with Adult Services and Wellbeing around using Sport Services assets (both buildings and staff) to support the ageing well and anticipatory care plans.

The Better Living Service continues to provide a dedicated weight management support to an identified cohort of patients from NHPCN. The project involves individuals being invited for a 'triage' appointment with a Better Living Trainer to discuss what is important to them; outline the many different behaviour change programmes that are available in Calderdale to support people to lose weight (e.g., NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP), Digital Weight Management Programme (DWMP), Slimming World, Better Living Service); and support the individual to access the programme which will best meet their needs.

CULTURAL SERVICES

Museums

- Shibden Hall has now closed for the season having had a successful year. We have exceeded income targets and visitor numbers are back to pre-COVID levels.
- We still have the Craft Fair, a wedding, and some private hires taking place over winter.
- We now hope to get on with any building works or improvements to the site including housebody window preservation.
- Bankfield Museum continues with Fashion in Anne Lister's Time, Costumes from Gentleman Jack and Shibden 600 exhibitions.

- We are working on a packed programme of events for 2023 and thinking ahead to 2024.
- Tickets are now on sale for talks and balls via Eventbrite.
- We hosted the Literary Houses Group annual meeting at Bankfield with representatives of houses and museums from Austen to Wordsworth from all over the country.

Libraries

Libraries as Warm Spaces this winter –the service has started to promote libraries as warm spaces. The idea is that libraries across the borough are places people are welcome to simply come in from the cold. We have a variety of things on offer across our service including warm refreshments and free activities and not forgetting access to computers and Wi-fi; newspapers and books; study and workspace and a warm welcome for everyone

Sylvia Plath Festival - The Library Service was a partner in Sylvia Plath Literary Festival 21st - 23rd October 2022 which marked the 90th birthday of the legendary poet, and coincided with the publication of *After Sylvia*, an inspiring anthology of new poems and essays in celebration of her life and work. The weekend festival featured talks, readings, workshops and events at venues across Hebden Bridge and Heptonstall. The events held at Hebden Bridge Library were attended by 110 people and there were many compliments about the library and the library team.

Half Term activities and events - As well as all the normal events, activities; job clubs; IT sessions; Local History groups and courses; craft sessions/groups; business support sessions; readers, social groups and clubs and story and activity sessions for the under 5's the library service ran a number of special events and activities for Half Term across a range of libraries some of the highlights included Imagination Gaming at Central Library; a fun day of activities at Cromwell Bottom, which included stories in the woods, crafts, a character trail and a guest appearance from the Gruffalo; a Haka (and Bollywood) performance at Elland Library celebrating RLWC2021 cultural festival; a range of special story tots; story times and Halloween crafts and a range of workshops including Electro Dough. All the events were well attended, and the library team received a lot of positive feedback.

Cultural Development

CalderdaleCreates launch event took place at Artworks on Tuesday 1st November with over 100 people in attendance, including Cllr Lynn. Keynote from Martin Sutherland was received very well and good discussion around Year of Culture. All ideas are now being collated and will be fed back in due course. Initial assessment of the feedback cards are nearly all attendees have signed up to being network members and a good percentage have signed up to being involved in the steering group and or delivering training.

Creative Producer Training and Fundraising Training courses have sold out. Creative Producer took place at the end of September with 15 attendees over two days. National Arts fundraising School bitesize will take place at Square Chapel on 15 – 16 November with over 30 people registered to attend each day so 60 in total. Working on training schedule for 2023 taking into account training needs identified and skills analysis of the sector coming out of launch event.

A new Culture Programme Manager has been appointed – Kayleigh Boyle joined the council on the 12th September and is tasked with bringing into being Calderdale Year of Culture in 2024 programme.

CUSTOMER ACCESS

Contact Centre – Telephony and Face to Face

Our newly appointed Security Officer has been spending time with our customers at Central Library and 42 Market Street so he can get to know them before we open Horton Street (HCF) next year. The renovations are ahead of schedule so we are looking forward to opening in January 2023 as planned.

We currently have 2.5 FTE vacancies; Interviews are being held this month and it is hoped these members of staff will be in place before HCF reopens.

Advisers and Team Leaders from Customer First attended the pensioner fairs that were held in Brighouse and Todmorden last month. The team received compliments on the day from members of the public who had previously used our service and wanted to pass on feedback face to face.

Homelessness Prevention

Customer First Homelessness Prevention Team continues to see a high demand for support, with clients with increasingly complex needs struggling to sustain a tenancy.

As Winter approaches and the energy crisis looms clients already struggling face a grim choice of paying their rent or buying food/paying utility bills with little respite in sight, making the demand for our support service ever greater.

The Winter Shelter is now open with improved safeguarding in place. Meetings are being held weekly with the Housing Team to make sure any problems and issues can be dealt with promptly.

Complaints and Compliments

During the second quarter of 2022/23, 52 complaints were received council wide; this is compared to 38 in the same quarter of the previous year, and 87 during Q1 of this year. All complaints were evenly spread out with no clear area of concern; Public Services received the highest number of complaints per Directorate at 14.

The new Complaints and Compliments System Implementation has been planned and the aim is to have this fully operational by the 1 April 2023. This will enable the team to work much more efficiently as well as providing much improved management information.

Digital Access

The Web Team are continuing to support colleagues with ensuring content for our website is accessible. As well as scheduled workshops, ad-hoc support is also available, and the team are starting to see the positive impact this is having.

Work continues to improve the customer experience by transforming the webforms that we use to report problems. This has been very successful in timely resolution and in diverting contact away from telephone.

Register Office

Birth and death registration numbers are back to normal levels, although there was the usual seasonal increase in the number of babies being born in September. Birth appointments are currently being booked around a week in advance, and there are death appointments available within 2 working days at least 95% of the time, in line with performance targets.

Ceremony bookings are levelling off, after the huge increase we have seen in the last two years. By the end of December, we will have performed and registered over 950 ceremonies, pre-Covid we averaged around 650 a year.