

Noise Nuisance

- A complaint was received regarding noise from a local club and initial emails being ignored. Environmental Health attended numerous site visits and visited the club in question. A meeting was arranged with various CCBC officers and the club to discuss use of outdoor areas resulting in noise. The club were accommodating and happy to discuss any future events and take on board advice provided by our CCBC officers. An apology was also provided with reference to previous complaints being ignored. The explanation for this was that Environmental Health deal with high volumes of requests for services relating to allegations of noise and they are now able to target resources more effectively.

Highways

- Issues were brought to our attention regarding the condition of a local footway. Instructions were issued for a highways inspector to visit the area to action if necessary. The inspector concluded that there were many issues with the footway in question and actioned works to bring the footway to a satisfactory standard. The complainant was happy with the outcome.

Waste Services

- A complaint was received with reference to a dog waste bin being full. A crew were instructed to empty the bin. However, weeks later we received an additional email stating that the bin was full again and that this needed to be looked into. The bin is situated by the side of a bus stop and therefore unpleasant for residents using the public transport. It was established by the Area Foreman that an increase in collections was necessary. Therefore, an inspection took place and it was agreed that this particular bin be emptied on a more regular basis. The resident is now happy with the outcome.

Tree Maintenance

- A resident of the Borough made a complaint regarding overhanging trees and lack of response to previous calls. We apologised for the service they received concerning the prior enquiries with regard to these trees, which they found disappointing. We agreed that the response to the enquiries was lacking, and this was understood fully. We explained that the demand on the tree section is constantly at a very high level, and has historically been a very under resourced department. This is something that is currently being addressed internally. With extensive responsibilities for all trees on Council held land across the county borough areas, including all tree inspections and all maintenance, this can sometimes result in a delay in responding to residents and carrying it out any resultant work. This can at times be the case with regard to timely communications to residents. We confirmed that the trees in question have been re-inspected and works are to be carried out imminently. Therefore the resident was happy with the outcome.

Housing

- An elderly tenant's daughter appealed against a recharge her mother received for an alarm call out, stating the alarm had been tampered with. The appeal letter advised that she was present when her mother signed for the tenancy and when they were advised there was an alarm present they explained they would not require an alarm and made an immediate request for the alarm to be removed. They explained that they would need to be in and out of the property to decorate etc so could the alarm be removed as soon as possible. They were advised at that time that 24hrs notice was required to remove the alarm but it would be disarmed with immediate effect. On completing the sign up the tenant and her family went to the new property. At that time the alarm went off. On checking with the housing office there

was no apparent reason why the alarm had not been disarmed and the housing officer agreed to contact the alarm company again. A couple of days later the alarm had not been removed, however it was placed in an area they wanted to decorate so the tenant's son in law unscrewed the alarm believing it to have been disarmed. A short time later an engineer arrived at the property explaining he had received a call out as the alarm had been 'tampered' with. Subsequently the tenant received a recharge for the call out. While considering this appeal it was accepted that the information provided at sign up was not clear enough that even when the alarm has been disarmed is still remains active and should not be tampered with in any way. As a result the recharge was withdrawn and the wording on the alarm instruction sheet has been amended to try to prevent any future misunderstanding.

- An owner occupier contacted the building maintenance team to question why the renewed fence between them and their neighbour is only 900mm high when another neighbour has recently had a new fence and theirs is 1200mm high. The owner occupier is unhappy as they have to contribute £500 towards the replacement fence and due to its height, it is failing to keep the neighbour's dog out of their garden. The Area Housing Manager explained their fence was renewed by the Housing Repairs Operations team some time ago and they replaced the fence on a 'like for like' basis. The neighbouring fence was renewed under the Welsh Housing Quality Standards programme which determines replacement fencing must be at least 1200mm in height. In this circumstance, even though the divisional fence between the owner occupier and council property was appropriate, the Chief Housing Officer has recommended defective fencing is replaced with 1200mm fencing in the future

Customer Services

A complaint was received regarding the assistance received when applying for a blue badge.

An applicant telephoned the switchboard and was put through to the Blue Badge team who said an application needed to be made on line via GOV.UK. This should not have happened and the application should have been dealt with there and then.

When the online application was received from Gov.UK there was nothing in the form that would indicate that the applicant had a life limiting condition, which may have been as a result of the route selected on the form which meant that no other information was passed on and the application was dealt with as a normal PIP application with no special assistance offered.

The applicant was sent a letter asking them to make an appointment. During a subsequent telephone call it became clear that the applicant had a life- limiting condition. If a request is received directly from someone with a life limiting condition the application is usually dealt with over the telephone and the documentation is dealt with after the application has been processed. An applicant is not required to attend an appointment for this

However the call was still dealt with as a standard application. The partner of the applicant subsequently attended the offices and the Advisor who was unaware of the sensitivities asked why the applicant did not attend.

Following investigation of the complaint it was clear that the application should have been escalated to a senior advisor when it became clear that the applicant had a life limiting condition who could have processed the application straight away. An opportunity was also missed to speed up the process as the applicant was not told that there were earlier appointments available in an alternative office. The appointment with the partner should also have been dealt with more sensitively.

As a result of the complaint a full and unreserved apology was given. In addition the calls were reviewed and further staff training will be provided. The Blue Badge Application process is also in the process of being reviewed and redesigned. Officers will also pass on to the team managing the national Blue Badge on-line application process the issues raised.

Other (Cross Directorate)

A complaint arose as a result of actions undertaken in relation to a process to recover a contribution for the removal of a joint chimney stack between a Council Tenant and a private home owner. The incorrect process was followed and the complainant was incorrectly referred to as a Council Tenant.

As a result of the complaint the processes and procedures were reviewed and improved to prevent this error from occurring in future. Instructions to invoice private individuals for recharges will be made clear at the outset. These invoices should then follow the standard recovery process and will ensure that there is no reference to Housing tenancy matters or Housing waiting list applications in the reminder letters.

The complaint also included reference to the timing of the payment and the reminder letters sent. Whilst it is not uncommon for payments and reminder letter to cross over, what became clear was that the final reminder letter and indeed all reminder letters could be more explicit where this occurs. As such all automatic reminder letters were to advise that if payment had already been made then the letter could be ignored.