

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 09 December 2022

Statement from: Councillor D McNally, Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards

TRADING STANDARDS

Concerns have been raised nationally regarding the increased uptake in vaping among young people under the age of 18. The Trading Standards Service made 8 attempts to purchase vapes with the assistance of a volunteer under the age of 18 in the six months to September with 2 resulting in illegal sales. Guidance was issued to the sellers and they will be re-tested. The service plans to undertake further age restricted sales exercises in the coming months that will include vaping products as well as tobacco and alcohol.

The Trading Standards Service have removed 2108 non-compliant disposable vapes from the market over the same period. As well as having non-compliant labelling many exceeded the maximum permitted reservoir capacity of 2ml. Officers have also submitted 7 samples of disposable vapes and 8 rechargeable devices for safety testing.

To ensure that retailers are aware of their responsibilities the Trading Standards Service have produced an advice pack that has been sent to more than 100 businesses identified as being likely to sell vaping products.

Having received several safety related complaints regarding a business trading through online selling platforms including Amazon and Ebay, Trading Standards Officers carried out an inspection at the seller's warehouse. During the inspection a number of items of electrical equipment and furniture were examined and found to be noncompliant. Suspension notices were issued in respect of the electrical equipment and notices were issued requiring furniture and household accessories to be labelled with the correct consumer information.

Samples of the electrical equipment were seized and submitted for testing. All failed to meet essential safety requirements. Trading Standards Officers served notices requiring the business to issue a recall notice and the withdrawal of the items found to pose a risk of electric shock from the market. Advice was provided to allow the business to bring products into compliance where noncompliance was limited to technical documentation and labelling.

A further inspection was carried out to examine the remaining products held in their warehouse. Again, Officers identified problems with electrical goods and toys, and thus suspension notices were issued. Further samples were seized and have been submitted for testing.

Since the visit advising the business their obligations, they have decided to voluntarily withdraw all electrical products and toys from sale. Checks have been carried out to confirm they have removed their products from all selling platforms. When all test results have been received Officers will again provide advice as to how products can be brought into compliance if possible and will confirm how unsafe products are to be disposed of.

WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES

There are some particularly challenging issues in the waste sector as energy prices increase, electricity costs have increased by 822% since July 2020 and this is causing waste disposal costs to escalate with the financial consequence yet to be quantified. The high cost of diesel is also increasing the cost of material haulage, fuels has increased by 218% in the last 12 months and this represents an annual increase of £117,000 per year.

Whilst the budget increases represent an ongoing challenge, there has been some particularly positive news to report from Waste Services. The roll out of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership (LWP) project for the separate collection and disposal of paper and card has continued with all households in East Lindsey now having received their purple lidded bins with the first collection of paper and card across the whole district in November.

Our Officers are working on the ground with district council staff to improve the quality of material received, LCC staff are also supporting the Customer Service team in the call centre to help deal with queries from the public. In relation to the material being collected, the first full loads went to the paper recycler in November and we have yet to receive their quality reports but visual inspections show good quality.

The project is now complete in Boston, North Kesteven and West Lindsey and these districts are still showing good quality material which is being recycled into paper. Since the roll out commenced in Boston in April 2021, the total cost avoidance from diverting this material from the Mixed Dry Recycled bins is £575,000. This helps to pay back the capital investment for wheely bins and plans are now being made for the continuation of the project in South Kesteven, South Holland and the City of Lincoln.

The Energy from Waste facility continues to produce energy from 170,000 tonnes of waste which cannot be recycled. The facility also acts as a visitor centre and in the last 6 months we have delivered 12 community group talks and 11 schools interactive sessions. We also have Officers who have produced educational material for schools on waste and recycling, with Officers starting to visit schools to discuss these important issues. This is a new initiative which will become county wide. In addition, Officers have spent 2 days at the Lincolnshire Show where over 200 primary school children engaged in waste related exercises and the same Officers have attended Revesby Country show and over a dozen market stalls to promote the National Recycling week and the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle campaigns.

The new Household Waste Recycling Centre at Tattershall is operating efficiently and is creating a saving of £150,000 per year compared to the previous service at Kirkby on Bain. Operating this facility ourselves has allowed us to recently enter into a partnership agreement with the Lincolnshire Air Ambulance for material to be sold and reused by the public. This is beneficial to Lincolnshire County Council in having material diverted away from disposal which will reduce our costs and enables income to be generated for a very worthy charity. This reuse initiative is going to be on a trial basis and if successful could be widened out to other Household Waste Recycling Centres.