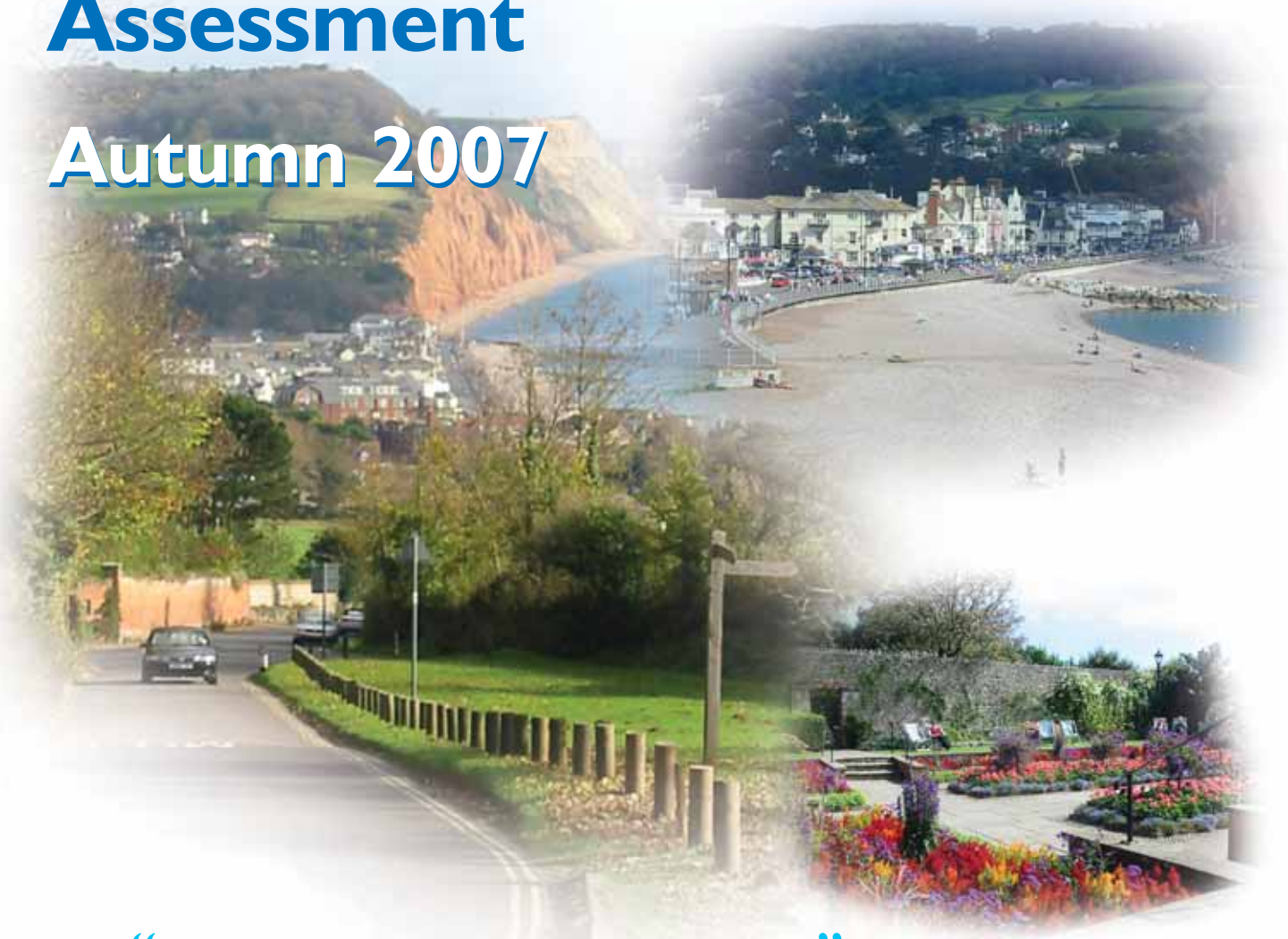




CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE
Environmental Health

Sidmouth Neighbourhood Assessment

Autumn 2007



“What a wonderful place to live”

“It’s just perfect”

“Beautiful gardens, stunning views
and friendly people”

These are some of the comments received from the residents of Sidmouth recently when Environmental Health staff carried out a neighbourhood assessment with the local Police.

Over 350 homes were visited by Environmental Health staff and local Police Community Support Officers during a recent neighbourhood assessment.

Officers carried out a door to door survey in various areas of Sidmouth to ask people whether they had any comments about the Council's services and whether they had any concerns or complaints about their neighbourhood.

Around half the residents had no complaints at all, but some people suggested changes or improvements to their neighbourhood and there were a range of comments or concerns from the public about a variety of issues.



The main areas of concern were:

Dog fouling

Numerous complaints were reported concerning dog fouling in public open spaces, although most people agreed this is no longer a major problem on the pavements in the town. A few also asked if the dog bins could be emptied more often in The Byes. Several people complained about the amount of fouling in Arcot Park around the football field, skateboard park and The Byes. One resident of Primley Road was annoyed by people who let their dogs off the lead before entering The Byes causing fouling on the pavement. All complaints have been logged and any areas of concern will be visited by the Council's enforcement wardens in the future at various times. If you wish to make a complaint or speak to someone about dog fouling, please call Environmental Health on **01395 517457**.



Antisocial behaviour



Some residents were bothered by abusive youths around the Arcot Park area. The PCSOs are aware of the problems and two individuals are being pursued for anti social behaviour orders. They have recently signed behaviour contracts.



Complaints were also made about incidents of vandalism, late night drunks and general antisocial behaviour causing a disturbance in the town centre at night. The Police have launched a scheme to deal with under age drinking and alcohol related problems. There will be a team of 6 Officers targeting these issues in the town centre late at night in the near future, and this operation will be repeated at different times during the coming months.

Litter

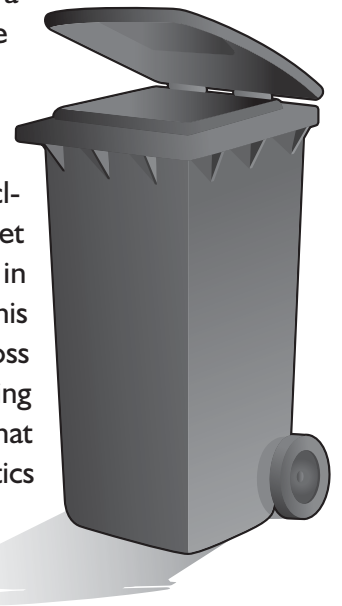


There were several complaints about litter, especially in Arcot Park and within Manstone Lane football field near the skateboard park, also in Newtown and the High Street. Environmental Health staff and the REACT Enforcement Wardens will be issuing fixed penalty tickets for litter in the future to combat this antisocial problem across the district. Several residents told us they pick up other people's litter whenever they see it to keep the town looking clean and tidy. Generally most people thought the town centre and gardens were very well kept by StreetScene and free from discarded litter.



Recycling

Many people expressed a wish to be able to recycle plastics and cardboard and to have their recycling collected weekly. Weekly collections of recycling, including plastic bottles, are set to begin in the New Year in the east of the district. This will eventually roll out across the rest of the district including Sidmouth. It is intended that cardboard and other plastics will also be included in the recycling schemes in the future.



Housing complaints

A few individual complaints were made about the condition of houses in the town and one resident in Holmdale told us the drain in the road seemed inadequate to deal with heavy rain. The complaint has been passed to South West Water who have recorded the issue and promised to look into the problem shortly.

There were also some requests for more advice concerning rats. Environmental Health Officers will be contacting the householders for more information and offering advice and help. If you wish to report rats or any other pests, please contact the Council's Pest Control Service on **01395 571517**.

Advice was offered to residents on grants available for cavity wall and loft insulation. There are currently grants offered to all householders for help towards the cost of energy efficiency measures. If you would like any further information on what you could be entitled to please call **0800 512012**.



There was a report of a long term empty property at Sidmouth Road, Tipton St John. Investigations by the Environmental Health Housing team showed the property had been empty for some considerable time, but work has now begun to renovate the house and it is

likely to be occupied soon. If you know of a long term empty property which could be brought back into use please call the empty home team on **0845 1110278**.

A number of Council tenants reported problems in their rented properties which have been dealt with by the Housing section or logged for action in the near future. These included complaints about a neighbour's overgrown garden, rats in a manhole, a faulty boiler, a request to fence off an open plan garden and enquiries about loft insulation.

Noise & Fumes

Numerous people said they were being bothered by the behaviour of a tenant in a Council owned property. Reports of foul language, shouting and loud music were all passed to East Devon's Estate Management officers who are investigating this problem. Action can be taken if individuals are in breach of their tenancy agreement.

The Council runs a 24 hour out of hours noise service. If you are bothered by noise from loud music in your home, you can report this at night to the noise team on **01395 516854**.

Seagulls

Many people complained that seagulls caused noise and nuisance. Some people asked the Council to cull them, others blamed people for leaving rubbish around or feeding them. There are concerns about noise and mess but also the possible impact on the tourist economy if visitors stay away from seafront hotels. A year ago the Council employed a leading seagull expert who reported that the urban gull populations are increasing rapidly and are very difficult to remove once a colony is established and traditional control methods, such as culling are ineffective. As a result the Council has asked the Government to take the lead in finding effective ways of controlling numbers. In the meantime, it is anticipated that the planned introduction of wheeled bins and gull proof sacks will help to reduce some of the problems in the future.

The pest control contract in East Devon has recently been awarded to Rentokil and they will also be asked to look at different approaches to tackling the seagull problems in the future.



Alternatively you may speak to an Environmental Health Officer in confidence during working hours by calling **01395 517456**.

Environmental Health Officers are currently looking into complaints about fumes and noise from a large generator in Sidmouth and complaints about the buses that park in All Saints Road and leave their engines running for 15 to 20 minutes causing fumes and annoying nearby residents. EDDC has informed Stagecoach that use of the site as a bus depot must cease by the end of 2007.



Speeding

Many complaints were made about speeding motor bikes and cars in Manstone Avenue, Bennetts Hill and Manstone Lane, also about boy racers in the town centre. As a result Sidmouth Police and the PCSOs have increased the number of 'need for speed' operations they have been running. This has resulted in a greater number of problem moped riders being dealt with. Specialist traffic units in unmarked and marked cars will be visiting the area to further deal with these problems during the next few months.

Some people requested additional speed humps in Manstone Avenue to reduce speeding vehicles. Devon County Council advise there is no funding for this at the present time and they try to avoid these traffic calming measures wherever possible as they can increase noise and air pollution.



Others thought the existing humps in Manstone Lane caused damage to their vehicles. These speed humps have recently been criticised in the press following a survey and Devon County Council have informed us they are considering re-surfacing the humps in bitmac in the future which should improve them.

Parking

Several people were annoyed by cars being parked on double yellow lines, disabled badge holders parking irresponsibly causing obstructions and other bad parking around the Town Centre.

Ottery St Mary's traffic warden will also be working in Sidmouth town centre in the near future and the PCSOs have recently been given new powers to issue fixed penalty tickets. This will help to tackle the problems of bad driving, parking on double yellow lines and speeding traffic in and around Sidmouth.



There is an ongoing joint operation between the PCSOs, parents and school children taking place to tackle the problems of parking outside schools throughout the year.

There was a request to turn the zebra crossing on the seafront into an automated crossing with traffic lights to avoid the long delays caused by the constant flow of pedestrians going to and from the beach in the summer. Devon County Council said this had been looked into before and it had been decided that changing the current zebra crossing to a pelican crossing would be too expensive. Traffic lights would not be in keeping with this environmentally sensitive area of esplanade.

Some people asked if delivery lorries could be banned from the town centre during the day time. This would require a legal Traffic Order and the approval of the Police, County Councillors and Town Council. It is thought the inconvenience to businesses and noise nuisance from early and late deliveries may lead to even more disruption and complaints.

Every person who contributed to the neighbourhood assessment said they enjoyed living in Sidmouth and many said they felt very fortunate to reside in such a picturesque and charming seaside town.



If you have a further comments on the neighbourhood assessment please call Debbie Fletcher or Andrew Ennis on **01395 517457** or email dfletcher@eastdevon.gov.uk