

COMMUNITY & LEISURE CABINET COMMITTEE

The Environmental Enforcement Team

Thursday 3rd June 2021.

Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of

Gravesham
Borough Council



The Environmental Enforcement Team

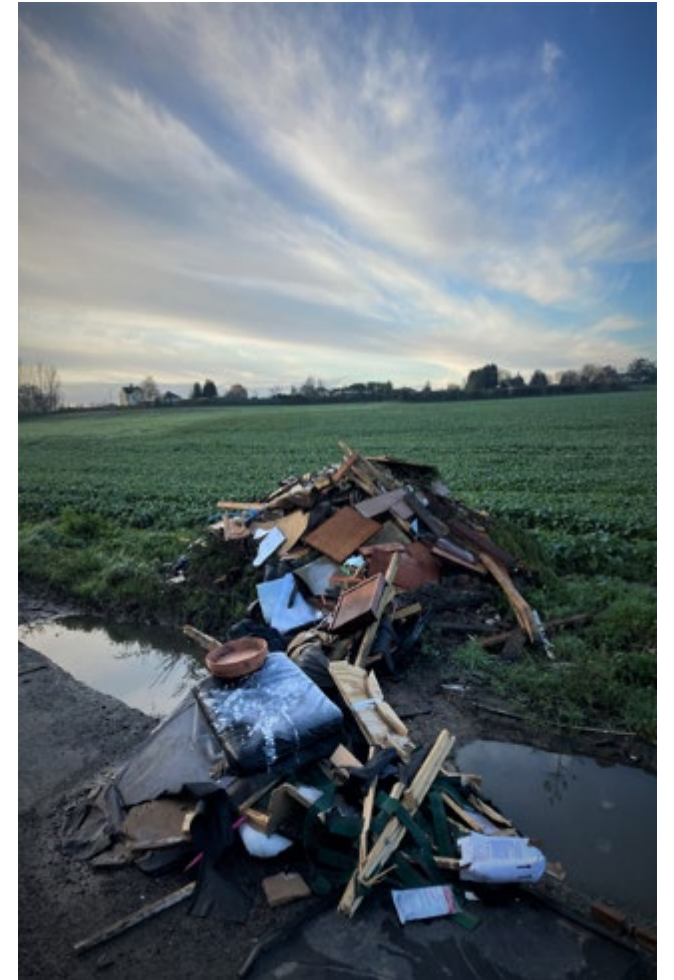
In 2020 the decision was made to form a dedicated team of officers to deal with environmental crime in Gravesham.

The Environmental Enforcement Team came into being in September 2020 and initially comprised of a Manager and 3 Safer Place Officers.

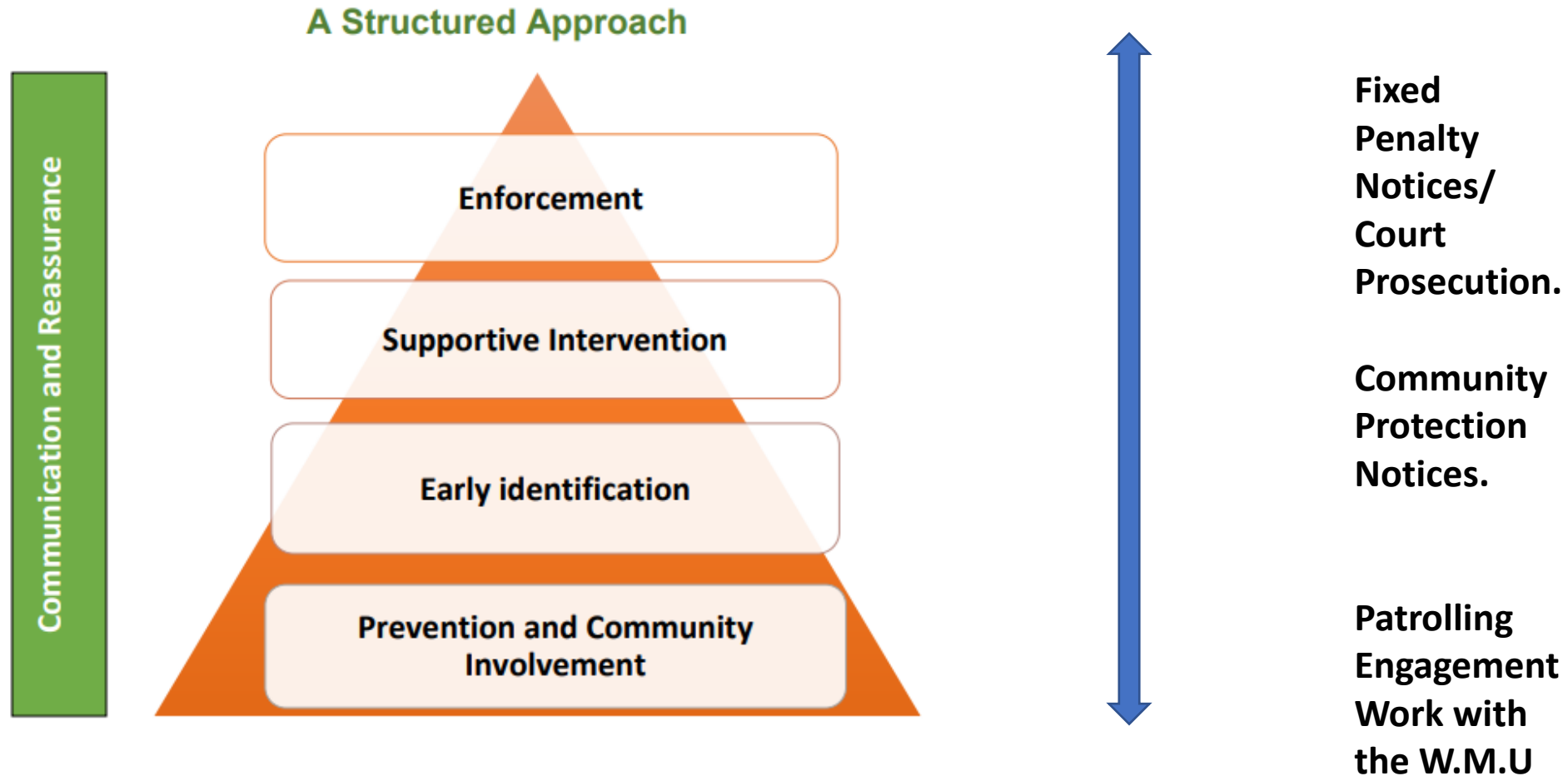
During the following months a greater understanding of the role has developed and the Safer Place Officers have become Street Scene Enforcement Officers (SSEOs).

In addition an Environmental Crime Investigator has joined the team.

The team are currently recruiting to a full strength of Five(5) SSEOs



Our enforcement principles.



Working towards an Environmental Enforcement Strategy.

As the Environmental Enforcement Team is a new team, its remit and priorities are being shaped by experience. The last 8 months have allowed us recruit appropriate staff and create and adjust processes. In addition it is allowing us to identify and set priorities.

Our priorities at this time are:

- Identifying and targeting persistent offenders.
- Identifying and proactively targeting 'hot spot' locations through patrol, response to reports and deployment of cameras.
- Focusing on areas where there is a serious detriment to the local community and impact on amenity.
- Working with the Communications Team to promote our zero tolerance to environmental crime and as a result build confidence, within our communities, that action will be taken against offenders.

Our future aim is to continue to develop best practices, further define priorities and create an 'Environmental Enforcement Strategy' for Gravesham Borough Council.

What is the role of the Street Scene Enforcement Officer?

Early intervention through engagement with the community to deal with issues and offer advice. Identifying where ignorance of the rules, regulations and law are the cause of environmental problems.

Education through sign-posting, providing information and pre-enforcement warnings.

Enforcement by issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Littering, Fly-tipping and Failing in Duty of Care. The issuing of Community Protection Notices and Fixed Penalties for breach of those notices.

High Visibility Patrolling to deter offences, provide reassurance and deal with any offences witnessed.

To carry out specialist project work by working with partner agencies, both internally and externally to tackle long term environmental crime issues. This includes the deployment of covert cameras.

What is the role of the Environmental Crime Investigator?

In conjunction with the Environmental Enforcement Manager the Environmental Crime Investigator is responsible for carrying out enquiries into complicated and protracted environmental crime investigations.

They will:

- Take witness statements.
- Carry out enquiries into individuals, businesses and organisations.
- Formally interview suspects in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- Prepare case files for court prosecution.
- Act as presenting officer at court.
- Work with partner agencies in proactive operations (Operation Assist)

In addition, they will, when necessary support the work of the Street Scene Enforcement Officers.

Reporting.

Since November 2020 Gravesham Borough Council have introduced a reporting system that ensures that all reports are triaged, attended if evidence is likely to be secured and passed to the Waste Management Unit for clearance as soon as possible.

All reports of fly-tipping should be made at:

<https://www.gravesham.gov.uk/home/street-care-and-cleaning/fly-tipping/report-fly-tipping>

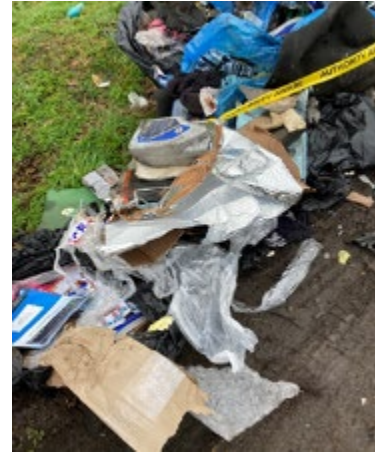
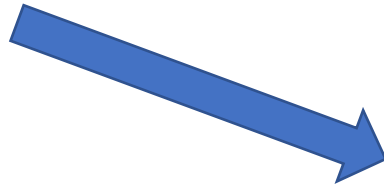
Or by calling

01474 337000.

Initial Scene attendance and investigation.

Attend the scene.

Search waste and seek other evidential possibilities.



What can we use as evidence?



Witness statements.



Physical Evidence found at the scene.



Photographs & CCTV Evidence.

Case Study 1. Lillechurch Road Higham.

- Reported through GBC Website.
- Officers attended and found documentary evidence leading to address in Higham
- A vulnerable victim had paid £80 to have waste cleared.
- Social Media research identified offender, however he had given false details and created a false Facebook account.
- Enquiries identified offender and his home address in Sittingbourne.
- S.108 Notice served on him and invited for interview.
- Offender refused to cooperate and has been charged under S.110 of the Environment act 1995 and has been summonsed to court.



Case Study 2. Stanbrook Road Northfleet.

- Report received via GBC Website.
- Street Scene Enforcement Officers attended and searched waste.
- Names and addresses found on paperwork in waste.
- Officers visited address and spoke to occupant, who admitted placing items at location.
- Offender issued £400 Fixed Penalty Notice.

This is an identified 'hot spot' area and proactive patrol and enforcement have resulted in Six Fixed Penalty Notices for Fly tipping and another for littering in the last Four Months.



Case Study 3. Canal Road Higham. November 2020

- Report received of approximately 200 tons of waste tipped in Canal Road, Buckland Road and beside a fishing lake.
- Investigations led to an illegal waste company which had formally 'traded' from a nearby industrial site.
- Vehicles identified through CCTV.
- Owner of company left area and refused to cooperate with investigation.
- Owner and employees subsequently identified and traced to addresses in Maidstone and Northfleet.
- Notices requiring company documents served on offenders.
- Interviews under caution to take place.
- This enquiry could take up to a year to conclude and will result in a court prosecution case.



Proactive Enforcement Action.

Gravesham Borough Council Officers have begun to carry out proactive enforcement work through the use of covert cameras and by working with Kent Police and partner agencies to target those involved in environmental crime.

On 24th April 2021 Environmental Enforcement Officers carried out Operation assist with Kent Police and Dartford Borough Council. Vehicles identified as involved in environmental crime were stopped by the police and the occupants interviewed by council officers.

During the day 8 vehicles were seized by the police for insurance offences and several drivers were dealt with for waste carriage documentation offences.



The Environmental Enforcement Teams work so far.

September 2020-April 2021.

250 cases raised.

1 case awaiting court prosecution

21 £400 Fixed Penalty Tickets issued for Fly-tipping.

15 £150 Fixed Penalty Tickets issued for Littering.

90 Community Protection Notice warnings issued for minor infringements.

2 Community protection Notices issued.

April/May 2021.

63 cases raised

5 Fixed penalty Notices for fly-tipping.

42 Community Protection Notice warnings.

1 Community Protection Notice.

The Future. Our key aims for 2021-22

- A reduction in Fly tipping reports due to engagement, enforcement and publicity.
- Recruitment to full team strength.
- Regular proactive operations with partner agencies to target offenders.
- Expansion of delegated authorities to allow us to use the full range of Environmental Crime powers available to local authorities.
- The regular deployment of covert CCTV cameras to hot spot areas.
- The creation of a Gravesham Borough Council Environmental Enforcement Strategy; setting out our role, powers, principles and goals.

