



Overview Scrutiny Committee

Review of Street Cleanliness, Littering and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough Topic Review

Report - September 2022

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Foreword

The Overview Scrutiny Committee felt it would be beneficial to explore the Street Cleansing and Enforcement Services following increased funding and improvements made to the Street Cleansing Service and the setting up of a new Environmental Enforcement Team in the past two years.

The Committee wanted to understand where the resources were being directed and whether the current resource level was sufficient to provide what is a core service to residents of the borough.

This topic review has identified a number of potential improvements that could be made to the way in which the services are delivered across the borough.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the officers involved in the review for their time and assistance in providing comprehensive information which has enabled Members to discuss, debate and identify potential improvements for consideration.

Cllr Baljit Hayre

Chair of the Sub-group

1. Introduction and Summary of Recommendations

- 1.1 In September 2019, the Overview Scrutiny Committee selected the subject of Street Cleanliness, Littering, and Fly-tipping for a topic review. The terms of reference for the review focused on:
- reviewing and understand education, prevention & communication
 - detection & enforcement
 - removal & cleansing
 - quality assurance / quality control
- 1.2 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the start of the review was delayed. In the meantime both the Street Cleansing and Enforcement functions have developed significantly since the original review was commissioned
- 1.3 Throughout the review, Members of the sub-group have been provided with a substantial amount of information to review and analyse. The information provided prompted numerous questions from Members and in-depth discussion about the way in which elements of the Street Cleansing and Fly-tipping Enforcement services are provided across the borough.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1.4 In summary, the Scrutiny Topic review of Street Cleanliness, Littering, and Fly-tipping has identified three recommendations for Cabinet consideration

RECOMMENDATION	Report page
<p>1. Introduction of a business scheme similar to Street Champions – Establish a scheme similar to the Street Champions programme, so assisting businesses to keep the road/pavement outside their business clean. The Council would provide information, equipment and bags for the project.</p> <p>There will be a one-off cost of £3,000 to set up this project.</p> <p><i>Timeframe for Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• October 2023	7
<p>2. Roll out the digital version of Duty of Care Training – A digital version of Duty of Care Training for businesses is available. The training could be rolled out to all businesses across the borough so they properly understand their responsibilities for waste disposal. This should lead to a</p>	7

	reduction in fly-tipping cases.	
	<i>Timeframe for Actions</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2023 	
3.	Funding for Days of Action - The Days of Action programme is critical to identifying rogue waste carriers. There is currently a funding gap of about £5,000 per Kent Council. It is recommended that the Council allocates £5,000 for future years to fund this critical project.	8
	<i>Timeframe for Actions</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2023 	

- 1.5 Further information to support these recommendations is contained within the body of the report.

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2. Review Findings

WORKSTREAM 1 - EDUCATION, PREVENTION & COMMUNICATION

- 2.1 Members of the Overview Scrutiny Topic Review Group were provided with an update on the education and communications work that has been done over the past three years. Examples were provided on the education and communication work undertaken to educate residents and visitors around litter prevention.
- 2.2 The review group were shown examples of the Council's long running 'No More Litter' campaign which is used to communicate key messages about littering and street cleanliness. Targeted campaigns have also been used for different parts of the borough to better encourage behavioural change and get residents to take more pride in these areas.
- 2.3 Members of the Group were introduced to the Street Champions programme that was introduced in March 2020. The programme encourages residents to adopt a street or area to keep clean and enable them to encourage other residents to take pride in their area.
- 2.4 The Street Champions programme was awarded a Certificate of Excellence 2022 for Community Engagement at the Public Sector Transformation Awards this year.
- 2.5 The review group was interested in speaking to some of the Street Champions. A meeting was held on 3rd March 2022 with some of the Street Champions who were invited to discuss the programme which included responses to the following questions;
 - 2.5.1 How do the Street Champions stay in touch with the Council?
 - 2.5.2 Do you report other problems such as fly-tipping?
 - 2.5.3 Ideas on how to attract more Street Champions?
 - 2.5.4 Do you go out individually or as a group?
 - 2.5.5 How often do you go out?
 - 2.5.6 Are you in contact with your local councillors.?
- 2.6 Members of the review group were interested in how businesses could be encouraged to keep the area around their shops clean and tidy in a similar way to the Street Champions. The opportunity to introduce a business scheme similar to Street Champions was raised by the Group.

RECOMMENDATION

Introduction of a business scheme similar to Street Champions – Establish a scheme similar to the Street Champions programme, so assisting businesses to keep the road/pavement outside their business clean. The Council would provide information, equipment and bags for the project.

- 2.7 Members of the Group discussed how the younger generation could be educated to take pride in their local environment, including the proper disposal of litter and moving towards net zero. The group were provided an update on recent visits carried out by the Communications Manager and the Waste Projects and Compliance Officer to a number of schools to discuss these issues.
- 2.8 The Review Group visited Cecil Road School on 25th April 2022 to witness the schools visits in person.
- 2.9 Duty of Care Training - Funded from the KCC fly-tip fund, the last round of duty of care training for businesses in Gravesham took place in February 2020, attracting 70 attendees, the highest in Kent. An e-learning package has been developed by KCC to be used to educate local businesses about their duty of care.

RECOMMENDATION

Roll out the digital version of Duty of Care Training – A digital version of Duty of Care Training for business is available. The training could be rolled out to all business across the borough so they properly understand their responsibilities for waste disposal. This should lead to a reduction in fly-tipping cases.

WORKSTREAM 2 - DETECTION & ENFORCEMENT

- 2.10 It was explained to the review group that in September 2020 a new Environmental Enforcement Team was established to tackle fly-tipping and enviro crime across the borough. In the past there was a gap between reporting and removal of fly-tipped waste which meant offenders of fly-tipping were not identified and prosecuted.
- 2.11 The review group was provided with examples of where enforcement action has been taken whether that be a fixed penalty notice or by a full prosecution. The work carried out by the Environmental Enforcement Team has led to a drop in the number of fly-tipping incidents across the borough.

- 2.12 The other type of enforcement actions such as Community Protection Notices which are available to the Environmental Enforcement Team were explained to the review group.
- 2.13 The work of the Environmental Enforcement Team is not just enforcement, they have an education role where they provide advice to residents and businesses on how they should deal with their waste. This is done in cases where it is felt an enforcement penalty is not required.
- 2.14 It was explained that the Environmental Enforcement Team work closely with partners such as the Environment Agency and other Councils through the Kent Resource Partnership. This includes the sharing of best practice, sharing of enforcement information leading to joint prosecutions and carrying out vehicle checks with the Police to identify rogue waste carriers.
- 2.15 The 'Days of Action' programme that is run under the Kent Resource Partnership is where enforcement agencies such as the Police and District Enforcement Teams carry out stop and searches of vehicles which are carrying waste to establish whether they are road legal and carrying the correct waste documentation.
- 2.16 The Days of Action programme is run across the whole of Kent and is essential to removing rogue waste carriers from the industry. Generally, these rogue waste carriers are the ones who dump the large loads of waste across the County especially in the rural settings which in some cases can cause a lot of disruption by blocking the roads.
- 2.17 The programme was previously funded by KCC, however this funding has now stopped. It has been agreed that the funding for the programme for 2022/23 will be covered from the Kent Resource Partnership Project Fund, however there needs to be a long-term solution for this extremely important programme to continue.
- 2.18 Discussions have been held between the Partnership and the Police. To fund the project and to allow for the police to have dedicated officers to carry out the stops and searches, the cost would be approximately £5,000 per district per year. The risk of not continuing the programme is that without checks these rogue waste carriers will continue to operate and dump waste across the County so increasing fly-tipping incidents and increasing costs to the taxpayer for its removal.

RECOMMENDATION

Funding for Days of Action - The Days of Action programme is critical to identifying rogue waste carriers. There is currently a funding gap of about £5,000 per Kent Council. It is recommended that the Council allocates £5,000 for future years to fund this critical project.

WORKSTREAM 3 - REMOVAL & CLEANSING

- 2.19 The Members of the review group were provided with a summary of the current hours of operation for the Street Cleansing service, which have been extended in recent years to provide better service coverage and provisions. The current working hours are;

Monday to Thursday – 7.00am to 3.30pm

Friday – 7.00am to 2.30pm

- 2.20 The main changes to the working hours have been in the town centre where there are staff working from 7.00am to 6.00pm, seven days a week. It was explained to the group that the increased hours in the town centre, especially at the weekend has led to a significant improvement in the cleanliness of the town centre.
- 2.21 The change in working practices and equipment was discussed by the group and it was agreed that the street washing machine and new mechanical sweeper have led to significant improvements in the cleanliness of the streets within the borough in the last couple of years.
- 2.22 The review group commended officers on the improvements which have been made to the cleanliness of the borough in recent years and the noticeable improvements that the new equipment has made on the borough's street scene
- 2.23 Members of the group were keen to speak to the Street Cleansing Staff to get their view on the service. A meeting was held on 22nd June 2022.
- 2.24 A number of issues were raised by the operational staff
- 2.24.1 Fly-tipped Hazardous Waste Removal – There are set procedures in place for the identification and removal of hazardous waste which has been fly-tipped. The procedures have been reviewed in consultation with the staff following the comments at the meeting and have been updated. These procedures have always included the use of a specialist removal company when there are unknown chemicals which have been dumped. Updated asbestos awareness training was carried out on 21 September 2022, this is part of the yearly Health & Safety Training Programme.
- 2.24.2 New Uniform – The Waste Management Service are moving to an orange uniform from the 1 November 2022. The staff have been consulted on the move to a fully orange uniform and are supportive. The provision of gloves and boots is continually under review and staff are consulted on any changes that are made.
- 2.24.3 Collection of excess black sacks – When the non-collection of excess waste policy was re-introduced in early 2022, there were increased incidents where the Street Cleansing Staff had to collect black sacks from outside properties due to the refuse service not collecting the sacks. There has been a procedure in place for a number of months where residents are contacted if

they have excess waste, this intervention has led to a large decrease in the incidents when the Cleansing Team have to collect excess black sacks.

- 2.24.4 Lockers and Showers – The welfare facilities at Brookvale Depot are currently being reviewed, this review will include the provision of updated lockers and showers.
- 2.24.5 Work related vaccinations – There had previously been a programme of offering certain worked related vaccinations to front line staff. The re-starting of this programme is currently being investigated by the Council's HR Team.
- 2.24.6 Phones and Tablets – The Waste Management Service is currently in the process of introducing tablets to the Street Cleansing Team for mobile working, replacing the current paper-based system. These tablets will allow staff to communicate with Managers during the working day.
- 2.25 The staff were positive about the service and the Members of the group present were encouraged with the enthusiasm and dedication showed by the staff to their roles.
- 2.26 The review group were interested in the provision of litter bins. It was explained that a litter bin policy has been approved in February 2021, to allow for there to be uniformity of litter bins across the borough.
- 2.27 A summary of new litter bin provision was provided to the review group, this has included new 'recycling on-the-go' bins being placed at Woodlands Park, Riverside Leisure Area, St Andrews Gardens and every shopping parade across the borough. These new bins have been very successful especially at encouraging residents & visitors to recycle the litter. To help with the implementation of the programme, the Council received £13,180 following a successful bid to the WRAP Binrastructure – The right bin in the right place Fund
- 2.28 At some of the main open spaces such as Woodland Parks, Riverside Leisure Area and Camer Park, there have been large bulk bins installed at strategic locations to increase the bin provision during the busy periods.
- 2.29 The litter bins across the borough are emptied at different frequencies dependant on their location and usage. It was explained to the group that a lot of work had been done on reviewing the empty schedule for each bin, this had led to a large drop in reports of overflowing bins.
- 2.30 The group were informed that a trial is currently being undertaken using bin sensors which monitor the fill rate of litter bins and use smart technology to produce an emptying schedule for the crews. These sensors are being used in the rural areas to see whether they can reduce the crew mileage so reducing carbon emissions. The trial is due to end in January 2023.
- 2.31 The review group was interested in the joint working especially with Kent County Council. There is joint working with KCC on removal of fly-tipping, cleaning of high speed roads and weed removal. Although these areas are a good start, it was felt

that stronger relationships and joint working could be established with KCC for the betterment of the borough especially the faster removal of fly-tipping which is blocking roads.

WORKSTREAM 4 - QUALITY ASSURANCE / QUALITY CONTROL

- 2.32 The review group were interested in the process for the reporting of fly-tipping. It was explained that fly-tipping requests were reported through the website for residents and staff. The fly-tipping requests go to the Enforcement Team to review so they can establish whether an investigation should be carried out. Once they have finished, the request is then passed to the Waste Management Team to remove the waste.
- 2.33 To identify and arrange the quick removal of fly-tipping, a number of officers now report fly-tipping through the website, whether that be the enforcement officer, waste management team or housing officers. It is essential that all fly-tipping is reported through the website to establish the full extent of fly-tipping and to assist in the identification of hotspots.
- 2.34 The reporting system is set up so the reporter of the fly-tipping is kept up to date at each step of the process. This recent addition has been well-received by members of the public.
- 2.35 It was explained to the group that the Street Cleansing Team is in the process of moving away from paper-based system to a digital platform. In recent years the waste and recycling service has used a digital platform, which has been very successful.
- 2.36 The new system allows for fly-tipping removal work to be routed more efficiently to enable the operatives to close down jobs whilst on site and to take photos of work before and after collection.
- 2.37 All the current litter and dog bins have been mapped and are being uploaded to the system. Again, the operatives will log when the bins are emptied so providing better management information.
- 2.38 The review group asked whether the work carried out by the Street Cleansing Team is monitored. The monitoring of work is carried out by the Street Cleansing Manager, who checks all the staff on regular basis and carries out pre/post work checks. A WhatsApp group is used to enable operatives to post photos of the work they have carried out.