

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th November 2010

DOG FOULING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Portfolio holder for housing, local environment and health
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Environmental Services

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The report contains details of the dog fouling awareness campaign which has been running since late August 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

Members note the outcomes of the dog fouling campaign including on going awareness raising and enforcement action to tackle dog fouling.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members requested that a dog fouling awareness campaign should be carried out during 2010 and this action was included as a key deliverable in the environmental services business plan 2010/11.
- 3.2 The campaign supplements the on-going work carried out by enforcement officers in relation to monitoring and action to tackle dog fouling.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The vast primary footpath network of footpaths in Redditch run behind housing areas, through industrial areas, to recreational areas and to district shops and often dogs are off their leads which gives greater temptation to the owners to “turn a blind eye”. Bagged dog fouling has been found in recreation areas and on footpaths and hanging from trees.
- 4.2 Dog fouling is removed from hard surfaced areas as part of litter picking operations. Instances of dog fouling in certain locations – such as outside schools – are treated as hazardous with a one hour response time for clearing the fouling once it is reported.
- 4.3 Enforcement officers carry out proactive and reactive action in relation to dog fouling, monitoring ‘hot spot’ areas and responding to complaints received. As with other offences such as fly-tipping, a phased approach is

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th November 2010

used as appropriate, either giving advice, a verbal caution, a written caution or issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). In dealing with dog fouling, officers normally often give advice or a written caution and rarely need to issue a FPN. The campaign supports this approach of providing people with advice and information.

- 4.4 The campaign was timed to coincide with a national campaign run by the Keep Britain Tidy Group with resources targeted at awareness raising to a much higher level than is normally available. The aim of the campaign is to draw attention to the problem of dog fouling, to let people know that they should pick it up and use a litter or dog bin to dispose of it safely.
- 4.5 Areas targeted by the campaign were identified through local knowledge of the Borough, complaint 'hot-spots' and by ward Members and are listed in Appendix 1. The campaign then consisted of the following actions:
- 4.5.1 Initial monitoring of dog fouling incidents to assess the level of the problem;
- 4.5.2 Awareness raising campaign run through:
- (a) A2 temporary signs displayed on lampposts etc.
 - (b) Initial press release (taken up by the Advertiser and the Standard);
 - (c) Spraying each of the "incidents" with high visibility orange spray to highlight to those responsible that somebody was monitoring the situation and to raise awareness;
 - (d) Advertising on 2 bus shelter sites at Sainsbury's and near Tesco on Studley Rd.
 - (e) Walking the areas over 2/3 weeks, wearing high visibility 'dog patrol' vests and communicating with every member of the public we met (dog walkers and non-dog walkers) to explain what we were doing. The communication was well received and we feel that it was a positive publicity exercise for the council as a whole.
- 4.5.3 At the end of the period we conducted another monitoring exercise to evaluate if the campaign had made a difference; detailed results are included at Appendix 1 but overall there was a massive 68% reduction in the amount of dog fouling found across the target areas with the highest level of success in Matchborough (100% reduction), the Arrow Valley Country Park (91% reduction) and Church Hill North (83% reduction).

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th November 2010

- 4.5.4 The temporary signs were removed and replaced with longer lasting steel signs.
- 4.6 As part of the on-going campaign we are now looking to carry out the following:
- 4.6.1 Look at the signage on the bins to explain that “dog poo-any bin will do” and a telephone number to call if the bin is full.
 - 4.6.2 Issue another press release outlining the actions and the results
 - 4.6.3 Put a plan together to maintain a higher than normal profile in these areas and utilise enforcement as appropriate, so that we do not lose the benefit of the work that has been carried out.
 - 4.6.4 Liaise with community support officers on how we can work in partnership with them in continuing the campaign.
 - 4.6.5 Enforcement officers and waste management officers will then continue to monitor the areas and take appropriate action.
- 4.7 In all of these areas, as time permits we are trying to identify root causes for the problem, perhaps there are other factors influencing the situation. The footpath running alongside Batchley Brook, identified as one of the ‘hot spot’ areas and a busy route to two major schools, is a prime example of this. A meeting was held at the Batchley support group where all the appropriate council agencies including the police and community support officers met to discuss the way forward. The aim is to provide a cleaner and safer environment, resulting in less anti-social behaviour, littering, dog fouling etc. as part of a holistic approach.
- 4.8 So far the campaign has had least success in Brockhill Park and we are looking at landscape improvements, such as cutting grass bordering the footpaths lower than at present to see if that makes a difference.
- 4.9 We are issuing regular updates to local members of the actions being taken and results as appropriate.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The low cost of running the campaign, comprising largely from the cost of printing of posters and leaflets, has been met through existing budgets which are also used to promote other aspects of waste awareness. This and limited staff resources mean that we are unable to maintain this level of awareness raising as attention will also need to be paid to other priorities, such as recycling or fly-tipping.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th November 2010

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Dog fouling is classed as litter for the purposes of monitoring the level of cleanliness through National Indicator 195. The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse states that, "dog faeces are to be treated as if they were refuse when on certain descriptions of public land. (Dog fouling is a separate offence from littering)."
- 6.2 Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 the Council has a duty to keep public land clear of litter and refuse and dog fouling is classed as 'refuse' when on certain types of land. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 repealed the Dogs Fouling of Land Act 1996 and dog fouling is controlled by way of Dog Control Orders. £50 Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued for dog fouling offences on land designated under the Act, which includes all public open spaces in the Borough (other than woodland).

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications and we have set out how we will deal with the removal of dog fouling in our draft cleansing service standards.

8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

Provision of good quality, customer focused street cleansing services meets the Council priority of a 'Clean and Green' Borough.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The most significant health and safety risk from carrying out the campaign is that of violence and aggression from residents who are challenged when they allow their dog to foul; officers undertaking the campaign are experienced and trained in dealing with this risk.
- 9.2 The greatest risk to public health from dog faeces is toxocariasis which is spread via unwashed vegetables and dog faeces. Young children in particular are at risk due to their weaker immune systems and because they are more likely to come into contact with dog faeces through playing on grass areas etc.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th November 2010

10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

The vast majority of customers who we have spoken to through the campaign have been very positive about it and are pleased that the Council is doing more to tackle the problem of dog fouling.

11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct equalities and diversity implications.

12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

There are no direct value for money, procurement and asset management implications.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

There are no direct climate change, carbon or biodiversity implications.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct human resources implications.

15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct Governance or performance management implications.

16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

Direct links have been made between the quality of the local environmental in terms of cleansing and community safety and well being.

17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct health inequalities implications.

18. LESSONS LEARNT

18.1 We have learned a number of things from carrying out the campaign including:

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th November 2010

- 18.1.1 There will be a need to work with officers from a number of services and external partners, such as schools, to tackle issues holistically;
- 18.1.2 It is very difficult to evaluate the impact and success of posters and consequently we would probably not use them again.
- 18.1.3 Metal signs cannot be erected using plastic tie wraps, as they can easily be removed and metal is currently a valuable material; we would use plastic signs in future.
- 18.1.4 We need to support promotional and awareness raising work with tougher enforcement action where needed – e.g. use of FPNs;
- 18.1.5 Set out how we will continue the campaign at the start – e.g. will we continue to use spray and how will we monitor results.
- 18.1.6 The campaign was very successful in reducing the amount of dog fouling.

19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Community and stakeholder engagement is what the campaign is all about. It is estimated that around 200 residents have been spoken to as part of the campaign.

20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	No
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	Yes
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	No
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No
Climate Change Manager	No

21. WARDS AFFECTED

The campaign has run across several wards (see appendix 1) and it is anticipated that awareness raising work will continue as further 'hot spot' areas are identified.

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

17th November 2010

22. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 List of areas targeted through the campaign and results.

23. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Code of Practice on Litter & Refuse 2006.
NI 195 handbook

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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