

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 March 2021

REPORT TITLE:	LITTER AND DOG FOULING UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

Following a discussion held at Committee on 22 October 2020, an update was requested regarding litter in Wirral and what happens once it has been collected.

This report provides an update to Members regarding litter collection and treatment in Wirral and summarises the proposed Dog Fouling Strategy.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions at the end of March 2020, Wirral has seen a 53% increase in street cleansing waste collected. Online reports of dog fouling have also increased by 23%.

The Council will follow set stages to tackle hot spot locations of dog fouling and litter:

1. **Intelligence-led decision making** – gathering information to highlight hot spot locations and experiences from local residents.
2. **Enabling** – audit of existing infrastructure (bins and dog fouling bag dispensers), to make sure that there is sufficient and fit-for-purpose litter bin provision, that is in the right place.
3. **Education** – communication campaigns, signage, floor stencils.
4. **Engagement** – face-to-face engagement (when permitted) with people at hot spot locations.
5. **Enforcement** – we are actively considering in-house environmental enforcement solutions, in light of the results of the Council's budget consultation. Enforcement will be the final step, following the above stages. A further report will come back to the Committee at the first meeting of the new municipal year to recommend how this income will be generated.

All collected litter and street cleansing is sent with Wirral's household waste to the energy from waste facility in Teesside, where it is burned to generate heat and electricity. None of the litter is separated for recycling, due to high levels of contamination (non-recyclable materials, food and liquids).

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough. It is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee are requested to:

1. Note and comment on the report.
2. Support the new staged approach to litter and dog fouling. The information gathered will be used to develop the dog fouling strategy.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This report is to inform the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on the current status of litter and dog fouling in Wirral. Therefore, Members may wish to comment on or make suggestions to add to the work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Members of the Committee requested an update to the Committee on litter and dog fouling in the Borough. Therefore, no other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Litter

Wirral Council spends around £4m per year picking up litter, sweeping the streets and clearing fly tipping.

- 3.2 Since April 2020 (just after the start of the first national lockdown due to Covid-19), the tonnage of collected street cleansing has increased by an average of 53%, compared with collected tonnages in 2019. Between April 2020 and February 2021, this equated to an additional 2,640 tonnes of street cleansing and litter. This is likely due to the stay-at-home order and people only being permitted to take limited, local outdoor exercise.
- 3.3 The Council normally schedules additional resources for coastal locations over the Summer months, when there would traditionally be a higher footfall at these locations. This year was no exception, but due to the increased visitor numbers to these locations due to travel restrictions, an additional £193k of resources was provided from Covid-19 funding to cover the period of 1 June to 25 October, including:
- 29 extra bulk bins (1100ltr) placed at strategic locations around the borough, e.g. The Dips, New Brighton. This increased usual provision by 118% from June to August, compared to the same period in 2019.
 - Additional street cleansing permanent presence, with extended hours of operation, at Wirral's main coastal destinations.
 - Additional prom crew to empty litter bins.
- 3.4 In Summer 2020, a total of 51 tonnes was collected from the bulk bins at coastal and parks locations and an additional 409 tonnes of litter was collected over the weekends from the prom and other coastal locations compared to the summer period in 2019 (a 26% increase).
- 3.5 According to the National Litter Survey, carried out by Keep Britain Tidy in 2017/18, The most commonly littered item is cigarette butts, found on 79% of sites. The

following three most littered items, all ‘food and drink on the go’ related, are confectionery packs (found on 60% of sites), soft drink bottles and cans (52%) and fast food related litter (33%). Since this survey and as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a new litter type observed – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), e.g. face masks and disposable gloves.

- 3.6 The Council suspended the loan of litter picking equipment, due to the health risks of Covid-19 transmissions and also closure of Council venues. However, the Council has supplied over 150 litter picking kits (litter picker, bag hoop and high viz vest) this year, to local groups and individuals carrying out litter picks in their local area. In addition, the Council has recently received requests from locations seeking to be a Love Where You Live Hub and requests from schools for kits that can be used by students and their families. This will provide another 100 litter picking kits for residents. Wirral’s waste and street cleansing contractor, Biffa Waste Ltd, has also donated 90 litter pickers to the newly created Wirral Wombles, for distribution to their members (Facebook group, with 1.3k members as of 24 Feb 2021).
- 3.7 All collected litter and street cleansing is sent with Wirral’s household waste to the energy from waste facility in Teesside, where it is burned to generate heat and electricity. None of the litter is separated for recycling, due to high levels of contamination (non-recyclable materials, food and liquids) when a trial was undertaken a few years ago. It is likely that England will approve a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks bottles and cans as part of the Environment Bill, which is currently going through Parliament. If rolled out, this will likely result in a reduction of these materials being littered.

3.8 Dog Fouling

The Residents Survey of 2017 carried out by Ipsos Mori on behalf of the Council found that dog fouling was a major concern among residents. The Residents Survey analysis report said: “We know that the appearance of the borough is very important to Wirral residents. Area cleanliness is a key driver to local area satisfaction and also of the Council representing value for money, so it is important to understand what shapes perceptions of litter issues. Dog fouling comes out as the top issue across the board, with all constituencies bar Wirral West naming it as the top issue in their area.” Ipsos Mori, 2017.

Table 1 – Percentage of residents listing Dog Fouling as their top issue of concern

Constituency Area	People siting Dog Fouling as a problem in their local area	People siting Dog Fouling as a problem in the Borough
Wallasey	69%	61%
Birkenhead	67%	67%
Wirral West	57%	56%
Wirral South	50%	52%

3.14 **Intelligence-led decision making**

It is important to identify “hot spot” locations, to effectively target communications and engagement campaigns. Instances of dog fouling can be logged on the Council’s website (https://my.wirral.gov.uk/service/Dog_fouling_problem_report) and this data will be used to identify locations where dog fouling is recorded as being a problem.

3.15 **Enabling**

At identified locations where levels of litter and/or dog fouling are high, we will carry out an audit of existing infrastructure - how many bins are there in the location, are they in the right locations, are they fit for purpose, clean and in good repair, are they emptied frequently, are they in the right location (start/end of a walk) etc. In addition, to help responsible dog walkers who may have run out of bags, we will continue to support the current provision of 10 Tikspac dog poo bag boards and will invest in an additional 10 boards for identified hot spot locations.

3.16 The Council will continue to support litter picking volunteers, through advice, providing kit and continuing the partnership working with our contractor, Biffa Waste Ltd, to pick up bags of collected litter.

3.17 **Education**

We will develop a social media campaign, to highlight responsible dog ownership and what people can do to “do the right thing” and keep Wirral’s streets and public places safe and pleasant. In identified hot spot locations, we will install site-specific signage, reminding dog walkers that they should clean up after their dogs and put the waste into a bin – any bin will do. Location of bins will be highlighted. Where the surface is acceptable, painted stencils will be applied to footpaths, for example in the photograph below, which shows painted green footprints leading to the nearest litter bin:



3.18 A communication campaign will be developed to:

- Encourage use of bins.
- Encourage reusable products e.g. masks, cups, water bottles.
- Highlight reporting of hotspot locations to help assess infrastructure and engagement opportunities.
- Encourage responsible dog ownership.

3.19 Engagement

Where the above methods are not resulting in a reduction of dog fouling, an engagement campaign will be developed, which will be implemented when Covid-19 social distancing restrictions allow. Any face-to-face engagement must be carried out in a safe manner. Engagement will centre around speaking with people in hot spot locations, for example dog walkers, signposting to infrastructure available (bins and TiksPac boards) and offering help where required in the form of additional supplies of dog poo bags.

3.20 Enforcement

Where education and infrastructure are in place and dog fouling is still occurring, this will be being perpetrated by a few irresponsible dog owners. In these locations, Wirral Council will seek to carry out enforcement action, in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the 2021/22 budget includes a permanent annual saving of £150,000 to be achieved from 'Income generated from establishing targeted and discretionary environmental enforcement'. The information contained within this report might provide intelligence on the deliverability of this savings target. Full Council on 1 March 2021 agreed a recommendation that this proposal would be brought back to the Committee to develop and implement these proposals, in order to achieve the saving of £150,000 in 2021/22 and each year thereafter. Enforcement from litter and dog fouling could form part of this proposal and a further report will come back to the Committee at the first meeting of the new municipal year to recommend how this income will be generated.

4.2 It should be noted that increased levels of litter generate additional collection and disposal costs, which are likely to cause a pressure in 2021/22 if it continues.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council has a duty of care under Section 89(1) and (2) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to keep specified land clear of litter and refuse, and to keep public highways for which they are responsible clean.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 The Dog Fouling Strategy and litter campaign programmes will be managed by existing staff from within the Waste and Environmental Services Team, in partnership with colleagues from the Communications Team and Parks and Environment Team.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There is a risk of reputational damage to the Council if there are high levels of litter and dog fouling. To ensure that people want to live and visit Wirral, it is important to encourage environmental stewardship and care of the environment. Residents and visitors will be actively encouraged to use litter bins, clean up after their dogs and hold on to their litter until they can either get to a bin, or arrive back at their home.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Council currently uses a reporting tool to gather information on litter and dog fouling hot spot locations. However, a communications campaign will encourage a greater use of this facility, to engage with local residents, visitors and dog owners regarding litter and dog fouling, litter bin provision and locations, emptying frequency and provision of dog poo bags and litter picking equipment.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 This report is for information purposes only, however the Dog Fouling Strategy will have equality implications and an impact review will be carried out and presented as part of the strategy development and approval.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The information report has no direct impacts. However, reducing litter improves the local environmental quality for all. Reducing levels of waste is a key aspect of the Council's Environment & Climate Emergency Policy, therefore public education campaigns about waste minimisation and personal responsibility will be developed.
- 10.2 All collected litter and street cleansing is sent with Wirral's household waste to the energy from waste facility in Teesside, where it is burned to generate heat and electricity. There is currently no scope to separate recyclable materials from collected litter, due to high levels of contamination. However, it is likely that England will approve a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks bottles and cans as part of the Environment Bill, which is currently going through Parliament. If rolled out, this will likely result in a reduction of these materials being littered and an increase in recycling of on-the-go drinks packaging.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Litter in England, The Local Environmental Quality Survey Of England 2017/18 -
https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/sites/default/files/resource/National%20Litter%20Survey%20201718_0.pdf

The Residents Survey of 2017, Ipsos Mori -
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/About%20the%20council/Wirral%20Plan/Wirral%20Residents%20survey%20results%202017.pdf>

The information on the number of reports of areas of dog fouling concerns has been extracted from the Council's CRM system.

Tonnage data has been provided by Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority, as part of monthly reporting and monitoring.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport	22 October 2020