

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

29 MARCH 2012

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b><i>TACKLING DOG FOULING IN WIRRAL</i></b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b><i>ALL</i></b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b><i>DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT</i></b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	YES

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is to provide information to Cabinet in respect of the strategy and associated activity to be undertaken by the Dog Fouling Enforcement Team and partners aimed at preventing and controlling dog fouling.
- 1.2 The report seeks the endorsement of Cabinet for a zero tolerance approach to the enforcement of dog fouling infringements.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 In response to the increasing public concern in respect of dog fouling the budget resolution of 2011/2012 established a Dog Fouling Enforcement Team to continue the work of a previous team of trainees set up with "Future jobs Funding". This team is now established and comprises a team leader and 4 enforcement officers.
- 2.2 In 2011/2012, the Area Forums prepared their local Neighbourhood plans. After consulting with residents eight area forums of the eleven cited dog fouling as a priority for them. As well as a general concern about the issue some specific themes were apparent:
  - Concern about specific street locations.
  - Issues in parks and play areas and other amenity areas.
  - The need for more dog fouling bins.
  - Enforcement against those who fail to clean up after their pet.
- 2.3 In recognition of the significance of the problem to Area Forums the budget for 2012/2013, has made provision to enable the Dog Fouling Team to be doubled in size which will increase the resource available for the activities of the team. This activity includes,
  - Enforcement activity in the form of general patrols and targeted observations at hot spots.
  - Education and awareness raising at events and in the course of patrolling

- Working with partners, Area Forums and Friends groups as part of a coalition against to support responsible good ownership and tackle those who behave irresponsibly.
- Noting and reporting other streetscene issues such as littering and graffiti. (2860 this financial year)

### **3.0 THE APPROACH TO TACKLING DOG FOULING**

3.1 One of the key objectives in tackling dog fouling dog fouling is concerned with changing the behaviour of those individuals that do not clean up after their pet. Hence the approach is aimed at bringing about that behaviour change based principally upon the following:

- Education and awareness – challenging the unwanted behaviour and influencing the adoption of the desired behaviour. This is usually achieved through campaigns like Wirral’s own “Give a Dog a Bad Name”. It is also achieved by contact with individuals, and building coalitions with Area Forums and friends of parks groups, park rangers, schools etc
- Enforcement – education and enforcement is then backed up by robust zero tolerance enforcement policy to deal with people who break the law and ignore the educative approach. Enforcement action will provide a deterrent for those who do the wrong thing and incentive for individuals to do the right thing. The majority who now pick up after their pets want to see those that do not punished. Publicity is also sought through the local press for cases of dog fouling successfully prosecuted at Birkenhead Magistrates Court.

3.2 This kind of approach is commonly seen in other local council campaigns and the elements mentioned above were components of the “Pick Up or Pay Up”, campaign of South Ayrshire Council in their submission to the Municipal Journal Awards in 2011.

### **4.0 MAKING IT HAPPEN**

4.1 Education and awareness-raising is a continuous process and the Team seek opportunities to talk the groups and the public about responsible dog ownership. In May, an ambassador initiative is being launched at a doggy event called “Bark in the Park”; where the Team are hoping to recruit volunteer dog walkers to be ambassadors for responsible dog walking.

4.2 A number of other ideas to raise education and awareness are being considered, for example:

- To encourage dog walkers to pick up an extra fouling for every one of theirs. (Possible use of a volunteer to help coordinate this work)
- The purchase of dog poop bag holders in the shape of a bone to reward responsible owners and encourage others to comply.
- Purchase of “thank you” cards for distribution to responsible owners
- The potential for another broad campaign with a message similar to that of the “Pick Up or Pay Up” campaign of South Ayrshire.

4.3 In respect of enforcement the Team has been taking a more robust approach to dog fouling and have issued 109 fixed penalty notices so far and four have been prosecuted with four more awaiting due process. This more robust approach involving a zero tolerance for those breaking the fouling laws is supported by comments made by members of Area Forums when reflecting their concerns about the problem. An enlarged Team will enable more patrols and generally enhance the “presence” of enforcement officers.

4.4 The enforcement patrols are proactive and intelligence led and focus on the areas where complaints are concentrated, the obvious hotspots (e.g. the approaches to parks and outside schools) and during times when dog walkers are most active. The Team will liaise more closely with Area Forums to ensure that they respond to the specific concerns that they have clearly articulated.

4.5 To further enhance enforcement activity the Team has:

- Planned “plain clothes” patrols in hot spot areas to increase the possibility of enforcement as dog walkers will pick up if they see a uniformed officer
- Police Community Support Officers were trained and authorised last year to issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling.
- Adhesive dog fouling warning signs were made available to the public so that they could display them themselves (subject to guidance as to where they are may be placed)

In addition the potential need to seek additional legal powers to assist enforcement, particularly in high risk areas is being evaluated.

4.6 In order to build the coalition against dog fouling working with partners and interest groups is important and the Team are doing the following to bring interested parties together:

- A Dog Fouling Steering Group has been convened which comprises representatives of Technical Services, Dog Fouling Enforcement Team, Environmental Health Service and Animal Wardens and its role is to co-ordinate the response to dog fouling. It is proposed that the group will also include external stakeholders in the future.
- Joint working with RSL wardens to support area based dog fouling initiatives
- Attendance at, and liaison with, Area Forums to identify areas to be targeted for enforcement.
- Through Park Rangers to make links with park and amenity users and friends groups.

## **5.0 CLEANING UP THE MESS**

5.1 Regrettably, there is clear evidence left on Wirral’s streets which attests to the fact that not all people pick up after their pets. The removal of fouling from the highway is part

of the street cleansing contract and dog fouling is monitored as part of the environmental audits carried out by Streetscene officers.

- 5.2 The street cleaning contractor is currently evaluating new equipment which has been distributed to operatives and which facilitates the effective and sanitary removal of fouling from the highway. If successful this should improve performance in this aspect of the contract.
- 5.3 The issue of additional dog fouling bins has been raised by some Area Forums. Part of the solution to this may lie in making it clear that normal litter bins can be used for the disposal of dog fouling. However, the concerns of the Area Forums will be considered as part of the ongoing work of the Steering Group as mentioned in 4.6 above.

## **6.0 SEEKING BEST PRACTICE AND INNOVATION**

- 6.1 The Team is continually trying to find the best and most innovative ways to improve the response to dog fouling. Links are maintained with the national body "Keep Britain Tidy" and are valuable in providing the shared knowledge from other council areas. Information from submissions for national awards (such as South Ayrshire) can be another source of inspiration. During the last broad campaign in Wirral "Give a Dog a Bad Name" (2009) a prize draw was offered to owners picking up after their dog. This was an example of initiatives utilised successfully in other council areas.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The Council has a duty to consider the health and wellbeing of its citizens.

## **8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 The report contains ideas to be considered within the overall strategy to tackle dog fouling.

## **9.0 CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 The problem of dog fouling has been identified as a significant issue for residents by the consultation process that developed the Neighbourhood Plans for the Area Forums.

## **10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 10.1 None

## **11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 11.1 The budget for 2012-2013 has allocated an additional £120,000 to be used to double the size of the Dog Fouling Enforcement Team.

## **12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 Where cases are referred for prosecution to the Council's Legal Services Section, such prosecution will be instigated and progressed in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Policy as quickly as possible. Where convictions are secured, the nature

and significance of the impact of the offence(s) will be brought to the attention of the Court for the purposes of sentencing in accordance with Court Sentencing Guidelines.

### **13.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 No because there is no relevance to equality.

### **14.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 None

### **15.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 Dog faeces can contain the eggs of the Toxocara parasite which pose a risk to children who may put their fingers in their mouths or eat sweets etc. after handling dogs or falling in areas where dogs have fouled. The eggs can still infect after lying dormant in the ground for up to 12 months.

### **16.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

16.1 That Members note the actions and approach to dog fouling and endorse a zero tolerance approach to the enforcement of dog fouling.

### **17.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

17.1 The robust enforcement against those that fail to pick up after heir pet is supported by residents and is apparent in the neighbourhood Plans of Area Forums.

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### **APPENDICES**

None

### **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

South Ayrshire Council, submission to Municipal Journal Awards 2011.  
[http://awards.themj.co.uk/library/media/pdfs/MJ%20Awards%20EH\\_Tackling%20DF.doc](http://awards.themj.co.uk/library/media/pdfs/MJ%20Awards%20EH_Tackling%20DF.doc)

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>3 December 2008</b>