

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## BIRKENHEAD CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE

24<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2014

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>BIRKENHEAD CONSTITUENCY</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>MARK SMITH, ENVIRONMENT AND REGULATION</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report updates Members of the Committee on the environmental initiatives undertaken in the Birkenhead area by the Council's Waste and Environmental Services section. The Committee is requested to consider a range of suggestions for enhanced pro-environmental activity in the area.

1.2 It is widely recognised that good environmental quality can have a positive impact on people's health and well-being. The recommendations made within this report therefore support the Council's strategic priorities "Protecting vulnerable people and communities" and "Narrowing the gap in inequalities".

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

#### 2.1 Tackling alleyway dumping

##### 2.1.1 Borough wide approach

The Council has returned to four weekly cleansing of alleyways for a period of two years (Minute 76, Council 25 February 2014 refers). A £400K contribution from the Waste Development Fund is being used over a two year campaign period to drive pro-environmental behaviours and maximise recycling of household waste in terraced housing areas across the borough.

It is essential that this service change is supplemented with enhanced education and enforcement activity in order to discourage residents from using the alleyways as an easy alternative to using legitimate waste disposal routes. At Cabinet on 10 April (Minute 189 refers) agreement was given to launch a "Good Neighbour" Campaign, designed to identify and engage pro-environmental residents to help promote and eventually "normalise" good waste management practices.

The campaign is well underway, with hundreds of "Good Neighbour packs already being used by residents.

Residents can request a “Good Neighbour Pack” from the Council. The pack provides more detailed advice around managing waste, instructions and advice around the reporting of fly tipping offences as well as the following:

- A “Love Wirral - Keep our Street Tidy” Window Sticker.
- An A4 “Good Neighbour” weather proof notice to be placed on their back yard wall or gate supporting a pledge to manage their waste responsibly and asking others to do the same.
- 8 x Good Neighbour postcards. Residents can send these postcards anonymously to neighbours that share their alleyway, to encourage people to act responsibly.

All residents that request the pack will be asked to provide feedback to the Council on the level of effectiveness of the Good Neighbour approach. Packs are also being marketed directly to all residents that live in terraced areas that have reported alleyway dumping, or paid for a bulky waste collection in the last 12 months and through “neighbourhood watch” groups.

The project is supported by a temporary Council funded “Waste Investigation Unit”. This crew have been deployed throughout the two year period until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 and funded through the waste development fund. They work closely with the environmental enforcement team to gather evidence for the prosecution of fly tipping offences in order to deter private landlords and contractors from illegal waste disposal. Every time evidence is found in an alleyway, all households sharing the alleyway are left with a postcard to let them know the dumping in their alleyway is being investigated. Further notifications to the same households are planned should any household in the vicinity be subsequently issued a fixed penalty notice. To date 14 fixed penalty notices have been issued in the Birkenhead Constituency area, with a further 39 in the final stages of processing before they are issued in the next 7 days.

### 2.1.2 Targeted Approach

It is also important to recognise that the waste collection systems operating in terraced housing areas may themselves be barriers to effective household waste management. The quantity and quality of recycling recovered from terraced housing areas is much lower than in other areas. Part of the pilot project will carry out extensive consultation to determine if a more effective waste collection system could be implemented.

The Harrowby Road area in Birkenhead has been selected for inclusion in a pilot study due to the high number of waste related referrals and tonnage of dumped waste per household. Recycling performance is also much lower than other areas of the borough.

The initial aims of this project are:

- To reduce alley way dumping through the normalising of compliant behaviour;
- To review the waste collection system in each pilot area and identify more effective alternatives;
- To explore the local appetite for and effectiveness of community based incentives on pro-waste management behaviours;

- To engage with stakeholders, including private/social landlords and letting/estate agents in order to put in place systems and procedures that promote good household waste management;
- To use an asset based community development (ABCD) approach to identify resources in the communities to support the required change;
- To gain a greater understanding of the barriers to good household waste management and pro-environmental behaviour specific to the communities residing in the pilot areas and to develop a range of cost effective solutions to overcome these barriers that may be replicated on a larger scale.

Initial door knocking work was carried out in May 2014 as part of the “7 Beats Project” with the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in a number of locations across the constituency. As part of this exercise residents were offered free replacement wheeled bins as lack of bins emerged as a major barrier for residents complying to the Council’s waste collection system.

Several other locations within the constituency were offered free skips and wheeled bins as part of the joint campaign. The campaign was very successful and enabled PCSO’s to make contact with residents that may otherwise have not engaged with them.

## **2.2 Dog Fouling**

Officers request that the Constituency Committee highlight any dog fouling “hot spots” to the waste and environmental Services team for inclusion in the upcoming anti-dog fouling campaign. Up to five locations per constituency will be identified at any one time over a six month period. The locations will support a high profile poster campaign and benefit from enhanced patrols, based on intelligence gathered from residents, businesses and/or site users living, working or visiting the areas targeted. If caught failing to clean up after their dog, perpetrators will be issued a fixed penalty notice. The campaign, due to commence in July will now begin in the autumn, due to delays with the launch of the National Keep Britain Tidy campaign

## **2.3 Littering**

Currently between 60 and 80 fixed penalty notices are issued for littering offences each year in the Wirral (excluding those issue for depositing waste in alleyways). A number of Local Authorities are commissioning this activity out to private enforcement agencies. Early indications are that this is leading to a significant increase in the number of people being fined for dropping litter. Combined with a comprehensive awareness campaign, this approach is likely to reduce litter over time in targeted areas. Costs are reduced (often to zero) through appropriate income share arrangements with the contractor.

Officers from Waste and Environmental Services are in early discussions with participating Local Authorities with a view to developing a proposal for Wirral Council Cabinet to consider.

## **2.4 Local Businesses**

The 'Love Wirral Grant' encourages individuals, groups, schools & businesses to improve and maintain their local area which in turn encourages people to take pride and responsibility in keeping their part of Wirral clean. Each applicant could apply for up to £500. 104 successful applications were received and following public voting 80 projects were awarded 'Love Wirral Grant' funding. This grant is being continued into 2014/15.

Every business operating in a secondary retail location has been contacted to help prevent littering. Businesses were offered window stickers and "till adverts" that showed their support and requested their customers to use litter bins or take their rubbish home with them.

## **3.0 ENHANCED SERVICE PROVISION**

**Appendix 1** outlines the costs of a number of initiatives that could be provided in addition to the borough wide campaign initiatives and usual service provision.

It is important to consider the following should the Committee wish to allocate funding to any of the initiatives on the list.

### **3.1 Tackling Smoking Related Litter**

Smoking related litter is the most common type of littering and also the type of littering that is most easily detectable during enforcement campaigns, due to the habitual nature of this offence. The provision of portable ashtrays provides a non-confrontational way of "educating" smokers as to the consequences of discarding their butts.

### **3.2 Provision of free wheeled bins to residents**

The introduction of a charge for replacement and new wheeled bins for residents means that some residents have opted not to purchase one. This can lead to increased alleyway dumping and have a "knock-on" effect where other wheeled bins are subsequently stolen. Throughout 2014/15, as a result of alleyway dumping investigations, if residents state that they dumped their waste because they did not have a bin, then they are offered replacement bins free of charge (second hand where available). The proposal in **Appendix 1** will involve wider promotion of the free bin offer to Birkenhead Constituents through this local funding. Officers consider this initiative to be sustainable as the bins, if looked after, can last for around 10 years. Anyone receiving free bins will be required to commit to using them correctly.

### **3.3 Grot Spots – Mapping and intelligence**

Whilst every effort is made to cleanse the public highway to a high standard, a number of grot spots exist in the Constituency area that bring down environmental quality. These areas are usually not covered within the realms of the Waste and Environmental Streetscene Services Contract with Biffa PLC. Furthermore, litter and waste often escapes onto surrounding streets from such locations. Such areas of land

can attract anti-social behaviour and other low level environmental crime. **Appendix 1** outlines the opportunity for the Committee to request additional enforcement resources to carry out land registry searches, track down absent land owners and service notice on the land owner (or the land where this is not possible). Whilst this is an on-going issue, and would not be resolved by one-off funding, building up initial intelligence and mapping unmanaged land ownership would be a huge step forward in aiding swifter enforcement action in the future, as well as helping to determine the best course of action for individual pieces of land where ownership can not be determined. This additional resource would also service notices and clear the land through “works in default”, where ownership has been successfully identified.

### **3.4 Bulky Waste collections**

A price has been provided for one-off collections of bulky household items, where residents in a designated area are able to put out unwanted items free of charge at a specified time or collection. This initiative is a very popular method of reducing fly tipping, and sometimes funded through housing associations in various parts of the country. It is important to highlight this type of service does not provide a sustainable solution and does not encourage pro-environmental behaviours in the longer term. However, this service could be offered on a street by street basis as part of an incentive scheme, or to residents who participate in other community led activities.

### **4.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 4.1 Should any enhanced initiative be purchased by the Committee, a risk register will be developed as an important element of the project’s management toolkit.

### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Budget provision has already been approved for all initiatives outlined in Section 2 of this report. The costs for any enhanced services the Committee may wish to consider are outlined in **Appendix 1** and represent the real cost of the service to the Council. No Council administration charges have been added and any supporting communications necessary to carry out the activities will be absorbed by the existing waste provisions communications budget.

### **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes – Please see the EIA from 13 April 2014 Cabinet (Tackling Alleyway Dumping)

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010-0>

Please note that an EIA for enhanced services will be produced on request of those services

## 8.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The initiatives outlined in this report seek to improve the local environmental quality of resident living in the Birkenhead Constituency area. A number of initiatives will help residents to segregate their recyclable waste for re-processing.

## 9.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no planning or community safety implications arising from this report.

## 10.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

10.1 The Constituency Committee is requested to:

- (i) Note the progress of the borough wide environmental campaigns to tackle waste related issues as outlined in **Section 2** of this report;
- (ii) Note the enhanced initiatives and associated costs available to the Constituency Committee as outlined in **Appendix 1**.
- (iii) Request officers for costings for any alternatives to the suggested enhanced initiative outlined.

## 11.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

11.1 Protecting the local environmental is a key priority determined by the Birkenhead Constituency Committee. The enhanced services available to the committee have been designed to bring added value to a suite of new borough wide initiatives aimed at engendering pro-environmental behaviours amongst local residents.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Tara Dumas  
Waste and Environmental Services Manager  
telephone: (0151 606 2453)

email: [taradumas@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:taradumas@wirral.gov.uk)

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Enhanced Environmental Services Options

## REFERENCE MATERIAL

1. When it comes to litter which side of the fence are you? (2013) keep Britain Tidy

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Budget Council	25/02/14
Cabinet - Tacking Alleyway Dumping	13/04/14

## APPENDIX 1

### Birkenhead Constituency Options for enhanced preventative actions to protect the local environment

Lead Officer	Organisation	Team	Tel.	Email
Tara Dumas	WMBC	Waste and Environmental Services	01516062453	taradumas@wirral.gov.uk
Description of "Offer" to residents				
Description	Quantity	Approx max Value £	Amount of constituency funding requested	
Bin Amnesty – to offer free replacement bins to residents who have no bin, or who's bin is damaged beyond repair – includes proactive promotion of "time limited" offer	Est. 500 bins (grey/green)	£14,000	£14,000 suggested cap  £28/bin (with free delivery)	
Bin Amnesty – to offer free additional recycling bins to those who qualify for additional capacity (subject to evidence the resident is recycling)	Est 100 bins	£2800	£0 Existing council reserve fund	
Graffiti / fly posting removal blitz in immediate area	Up to three localised areas in one 12 month period	Can do FOC under terms of graffiti contract	£0	
Anti-graffiti coating - can be applied to residents and/or businesses properties with permission where repeated graffiti attacks occur – onus on resident /business to wash down subsequent graffiti attacks with water.	Depends upon referral rate – would suggest a cap on total spend	TBD by constituency panel	£10/square metre	

Hand out portable ashtrays to smokers within a household to deter the presence of cigarette butts by parked cars that are difficult to clean (branding could state "Birkenhead Constituency: Working together towards a cleaner environment" or something?) Place in all outlets selling tobacco within constituency area	4000	£2320	£2320 Or approx £0.58ea
Promote and provide "Good Neighbour packs" to residents stating they are concerned with the levels of alleyway dumping.	Up to 4000 available	n/a as being delivered as Borough wide project.	£0
Non-highway Grot Spot management	1 x FTE	£15,000	£15,000 for 6 months (up to 2 month lead time required to appoint)
Bulky waste amnesty days (including sorting for recycling) – kerbside collection for bulky household items in defined residential areas.	1 (for approximately 500-700 households – Mondays only)	£1540 (based on £220 per hour for 7 hours)	£1540 per localised area