

Wirral Council

Love Wirral Strategy

October 2021

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 Wirral Plan 2021-2026 Pledge: Sustainable Environment	3
1.2 People Doing More	3
1.3 Encourage Positive Behaviour	4
1.4 One Landscape	4
1.5 Climate Emergency	4
1.6 National Litter Strategy	5
2. Purpose and Scope of the Love Wirral Strategy	5
3. Our Priorities	6
4. Causes of Litter	6
4.1 Location of Litter Bins	6
4.2 Lack of Public Awareness on the Impact of Litter	7
4.3 Tourism and Leisure	8
4.4 Irresponsible Dog Ownership	8
4.5 Smoking	9
4.6 Eating on the Go	9
4.7 Beach Debris	9
5. How We Will Work to Increase Positive Behaviours	10
5.1 Intelligence-led decision making	10
5.2 Enabling desired behaviour	11
5.3 Education	11
5.4 Engagement	11
5.5 Enforcement	12
6. Monitoring and Measuring Performance	12
7. Conclusion	12
8. References	13
Case Study – Wirral Wombles.....	13

1. Introduction

1.1 Wirral Plan 2021-2026 Pledge: Sustainable Environment

Protect our cherished local environment and improve street cleanliness

Wirral is a fantastic place to live, with its beautiful coastline, plentiful parks and historic towns and villages. We want to preserve this, ensuring that we have clean and safe beaches and green spaces to enjoy and urban areas that are prosperous, vibrant and welcoming.

It is well documented that the environment in which people live has a significant impact upon their quality of life. From the last customer survey completed in 2017, we know that the appearance of the borough is very important to Wirral residents. Area cleanliness is a key driver for local area satisfaction and dog fouling in particular is seen as an issue in most areas.

This strategy sets out to further develop on the successes of the Loving our Environment strategy, engaging with Wirral's communities to engender a pride in the local area and environment. We will focus on education, engagement, infrastructure and proportionate enforcement, to encourage people towards positive behaviour.

We are committed to empowering residents to help them protect their local environment, where communities are proud of their area and love where they live.

1.2 People Doing More

Over the past few years, we have supported Wirral residents to do more in their local environment, providing over 600 litter picking kits and collected litter removal to individuals, groups and schools. Many parks are supported by "Friends of" volunteers.

We are committed to building on these positive relationships, to support and empower residents to take an active role in improving and looking after their local area. We will continue to listen and improve our relationship with volunteers and

work within local areas to provide sustainable solutions and improvements to the local environment. This could include supporting volunteers with equipment, advice and support to look after areas of land and building curriculums in partnership with schools that will enable young people to take an active role in their local area.

1.3 Encourage Positive Behaviour

Our environment can be spoiled by the anti-social and uncaring actions of a minority of residents and visitors. We are clear that behaviour change needs to occur, to prevent litter and anti-social behaviour occurring in the first place. We will support residents and councillors to lead by example and promote and encourage people to take more responsibility for their actions, reinforcing desired social norms.

The causes of littering and other environmental crimes are varied and often linked to wider social and deprivation issues. Therefore, affecting lasting behaviour change will require agencies operating in the community to work together on a long-term basis to address such issues. Some locations will require intensive community engagement through partner arrangements to deter anti-social behaviour.

1.4 One Landscape

Poorly maintained and untidy land adversely affects our residents' quality of life and can have a negative effect on the perception of the local area as a whole. We will work with communities to target problem locations for action and will support communities to find sustainable solutions for the maintenance and beautification of unmanaged areas of land. We will work with landowners to encourage good maintenance standards that complement the local area.

1.5 Climate Emergency

Wirral Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and one of the areas for action is operating more sustainably. In addition to being a standalone issue, litter is linked with waste reduction and by extension to our collective response to the global climate emergency. Minimising the resources, energy and materials required to

produce things in the first place has obvious climate benefit, but it also effectively limits the amount of waste that might end up as litter.

1.6 National Litter Strategy

In April 2017, the UK government published the National Litter Strategy for England. The strategy aims to reduce litter in England and establish an anti-littering culture, with an aim to educate young people on the importance of not littering and the effects litter can have. The strategy also places a focus on engaging with local communities with an emphasis on empowering them to help tackle littering. This was brought about after a national survey found that 81% of respondents were angry and frustrated with the amount of litter in England.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Love Wirral Strategy

In the municipal year 2020/21, Wirral experienced a 50% increase in litter and street cleansing removal compared with 2019/20 (3,000 tonnes more), because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The numbers of visitors to our stunning coastal areas have increased and this has implications for our street cleansing resources. Although likely due to the stay-at-home order (part of the suite of legislation introduced to tackle the pandemic) and people only being permitted to take limited, local outdoor exercise, it is possible that there will be a change in behaviour going forward, that leads to the higher footfall continuing for the next few years.

In Summer 2020, a total of 51 tonnes of litter was collected from the bulk bins at coastal and park 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). The significant increase in litter across the borough was again a direct impact of the restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with people's movement restricted to their local area. It is anticipated that the higher levels of footfall will remain, particularly at coastal areas, and therefore additional resource and approach to tackling litter is required.

Street cleansing in Wirral costs around £4 million per year, or £27 per household.

These statistics highlight the issue faced by Wirral Council and the need to produce an effective strategy to tackle this issue.

This strategy will focus on the following areas, all of which contribute to a clean local area, where people feel safe happy to live:

- Litter
- Dog Fouling
- Trade Waste
- Graffiti and Fly posting
- Litter Control Notice / Litter Clearance Notice

3. Our Priorities

- Creating high levels of enjoyment and user experience of Wirral's public areas for all users.
- Providing a safe environment for all users of Wirral's public places.
- Increasing responsible dog ownership.
- Residents and visitors protect, respect and enjoy Wirral.

4. Causes of Litter

This strategy sets out to identify the main issues that have a detrimental effect on local environmental quality in Wirral, any gaps in knowledge and what resources and authority we have available to us to tackle these. It outlines opportunities where community action, collaborative working, education and stakeholder engagement can be best used to compliment current work or provide alternative ways of tackling litter.

4.1 Location of Litter Bins

WRAP's 'Binrastructure' guidance document "The Right Bin in the Right Place" emphasises the importance of having strategically placed litter bins. Research on

the placement of bins shows that the closer people are to a bin, the less likely they are to litter. It also shows that location is an important factor to encourage people to dispose of their litter in a bin.

Factors which influence whether a bin is placed in the right location include:

- Messaging/logos on the bin and how these relate to the location.
- The type of bin for the location.
- The types of materials the bin collects.
- The footfall at the location the bin is installed.

If an unsuitable bin is placed in an unsuitable location, it has been found that people are more likely to litter than if the type of bin and the location of the bin are suitable and convenient for people to use.

4.2 Lack of Public Awareness on the Impact of Litter

The National Litter Strategy sets out a need for greater education and public awareness on the issue of litter. Whilst there is a growing public perception that litter is an issue in England, there is still a disconnect in how litter should be managed and why litter is an important issue.

Smoking related litter was found to be the most abundant form of litter in the 2017/18 national litter survey carried out by Keep Britain Tidy. 79% of sites surveyed were found to have smoking related litter present; an increase of 6.2% from the 2014/2015 survey.

Confectionary packets and related waste were the second most abundant form of litter, with 60% of sites found to have this type of litter present. Littering issues are found to be particularly high in less affluent areas. Education and the raising of awareness to needs to have a focus on these areas across Wirral.

Educating and supporting young people in Wirral to be environmentally conscious and active continues to be extremely important to us. Schools participate in the Eco-

Schools programme and frequently carry out litter picking activity in their local areas. Youth groups, such as Scouts, Guides and Youth Clubs also frequently carry out litter picks. Litter picking activities highlight the issue for participants and encourages the 'correct' behaviour of taking litter home or using a litter bin.

4.3 Tourism and Leisure

Visitors form a crucial part of the local economy in Wirral, but they increase footfall in certain areas of the borough, in particular the beach, parks and open spaces. Increased footfall generates increased volumes of litter that need to be managed effectively. It is therefore important to consider where bins are placed to provide enough facilities for visitors and tourists.

4.4 Irresponsible Dog Ownership

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. Dog fouling can cause serious health problems and is the cause of considerable numbers of complaints about street and beach cleanliness.

While there is increasing public pressure on dog owners to clear up dog mess, there remains a small minority of dog owners that either fail to clear up after their pets or pick up but fail to bin it. The presence of dog foul in an area causes concerns around health of people, livestock, wildlife and in some instances water quality. It is important to try to tackle dog fouling in a strategic manner, providing appropriate waste facilities for dog foul and educating people on the issues of dog fouling.

In 2018, 10 dog poo bag dispensing boards were provided by Tikspac and were installed at key locations around the borough. The boards were sponsored by local businesses, Biffa Services Ltd and the Council and have been maintained and refilled through successful collaboration with local residents, volunteers and Council colleagues. Over the two years that they have been in use, 127,500 bags have been used by dog walkers in need.

4.5 Smoking

Smoking was the most abundant form of littering in the Keep Britain Tidy survey for litter in both 2014/2015 and 2017/2018. There is a significant issue with some smokers disposing of smoking related litter such as cigarette ends irresponsibly. Whilst the reason for this is unknown it is possible that there is a lack of disposal facilities for smokers or that there is a lack of awareness of the environmental impact smoking related litter has.

4.6 Eating on the Go

As national habits and behaviours have changed, there has been an increase in 'eating on the go'. This increase has led to more litter from packaging dropped by people in a rush to eat or by people discarding packaging or other items such as chewing gum from out of their car. To tackle this, education and behavioural change is needed so that those who drop litter in this way understand the implications on the environment and the local area. It is worth noting that this issue has been less widespread during the Covid-19 pandemic, with more people working from home. It is possible that 'eating on the go' litter will become less of a problem if changes in working practices continue for some after the pandemic.

4.7 Beach Debris

A specific issue for Wirral's coastal areas is debris that gets washed up on the shoreline.

This can include:

- Plastics
- Cans
- Glass
- Industrial Waste
- Animal Carcasses
- Oil (including Palm Oil)

This is hard to prevent but must be managed by the local authority. A wider national and international approach is required to tackle this issue at source, but ensuring adequate bin provision at these areas will help to reduce additional litter entering the water and being washed up by the tide.

5. How We Will Work to Increase Positive Behaviours

The Council will follow set stages to reduce litter, dog fouling and other forms of environmental crime and will focus on education and engagement primarily. Enforcement will be used where these methods have failed, where possible. The implementation of one specific stage may be enough to resolve the issue at one location whereas another location may need to try several stages in a gradual approach to reduce the issue.

5.1 Intelligence-led decision making

In addition to Council-wide education campaigns, it is important to identify “hot spot” locations, to effectively target communications and engagement and make the most efficient use of available resources. Members of the public can be our most effective eyes and ears on the ground – reporting instances of litter, dog fouling, incorrectly stored rubbish from shops and businesses for example.

Instances of dog fouling can currently be logged on the Council’s website (https://my.wirral.gov.uk/service/Dog_fouling_problem_report), but we will develop this further to report other instances of environmental crime. This information will be used to target resources to areas most in need. We will ensure that the form is easy to use, so that people want to use it so that accurate and up to date information can be obtained and analysed. This will be used to determine hot spot locations and the following can then be implemented:

5.2 Enabling desired behaviour

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

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.

5.3 Education

We will develop a suite of education resources, from social media campaigns and signage at hot spot locations, to highlighting the location of litter bins.

Collaboration with local volunteers and businesses will be fostered to share information and help further raise awareness of the issues and impacts of littering in our area.

We will continue to support schools and youth groups to carry out environmental projects that aim to improve their local area.

5.4 Engagement

Where the above methods are not resulting in a reduction of littering, dog fouling, or other behaviour detrimental to the local environmental quality, an engagement campaign will be developed.

Engagement will centre around speaking with residents, visitors and dog walkers, signposting to infrastructure available (bins and dog poo bag dispensing boards) and offering help where required.

5.5 Enforcement

We understand that even with the education and engagement in place, there will remain a small minority of people who will commit environmental crime. In these instances, Wirral Council will seek to carry out enforcement action, in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy, which is available to view, download or print by typing in this link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/environmental%20problems/Enforcement%20Policy%20-%202020.pdf>

The Enforcement Policy states, "We will seek to promote advice, guidance, and support to assist businesses and individuals to comply, but where it becomes necessary to take enforcement action, we will do so. Wirral Council will always choose an enforcement method that is relevant and proportionate to the offence or contravention."

6. Monitoring and Measuring Performance

Wirral Council Officers carry out regular monitoring of street cleansing for contract management purposes. In addition to this, we will carry out additional assessments where hot spot locations are brought to our attention, to monitor progress and the effectiveness of actions put in place at that location.

An annual review of the strategy will take place, assessing progress on each of the steps and reporting outcomes that have been achieved through the delivery of the strategy.

7. Conclusion

We know that the people of Wirral are passionate about our environment and want to work together to make it a clean and beautiful place to live, work and play. Together with Wirral's residents we are committed to creating an attractive local environment. This strategy sets out our joint approach to ensure all residents Love Wirral and to inspire more of them to participate in the management of their local environment.

8. References

HM Government Litter Strategy for England, April 2017 -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630999/litter-strategy-for-england-2017-v2.pdf#:~:text=The%20common%20aim%20of%20all%20the%20actions%20in,to%20put%20their%20rubbish%20in%20the%20right%20bins.

WRAP 'Binrastructure2 – The Right Bin in the Right Place -

<https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/binrastructure-right-bin-right-place>

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>

Case Study

The Rise of the Wirral Wombles during COVID-19 Pandemic

During lockdowns, an increased number of COVID-19 cases caused staff shortages across workforces due to illness or isolation. Wirral Council's waste collection and street cleansing contractor, Biffa, was no exception and had to prioritise their services. As a result, Wirral Council relied heavily on volunteers, who helped to keep the borough clean and tidy. One such group is the Wirral Wombles:

Wirral Wombles

This is a group of like-minded people who come together to inspire and support each other to make the Wirral an even better place to be. Anyone can be a 'womble' – all they have to do is pledge to pick up a couple of pieces of litter when they're out and about. Their Facebook group boasts more than 2,700 members, who post photos

regularly of their own litter picks, which can range from one or two items to three or four bin-bags full. Since the inception of the Wirral Wombles in January 2021, they have collected at least 24 tonnes of litter across the borough (this is the estimated tonnage of collected litter reported – there will likely be more that has not been recorded).

The Wombles say: "Wirral Wombles all began because we just wanted to get like-minded people who love and appreciate our wonderful Wirral peninsula together. It's been fantastic to find so many wonderful people, some who were already active as litter pickers and others who have been inspired by the group. We love the idea of keeping your patch clean and giving the Wirral the love it deserves."

Below is a photo of a stone, with a smiley face and writing on it that says "Thank you for keeping this beach clean! Enjoy!"

