



1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update Scrutiny Commission on the work of the Clean Neighbourhood team to reduce dog fouling.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

Scrutiny Commission endorses the work of the Clean Neighbourhood team outlined in this report.

3. **BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT**

Dog fouling and litter have been identified in numerous surveys as having the biggest detrimental impact on clean neighbourhoods in the Borough. Tackling dog fouling and litter, and changing behaviour to prevent these environmental crimes will be the priority for the Clean Neighbourhood Service during 2013 /14.

Reports of incidents of dog fouling and requests for dog fouling stencils are decreasing in number :-

2012/13: 155 (to end of January 2013)

2011/12: 272

2010/11: 295

2009/10: 337

The problem increases significantly during the winter months (because darker nights and mornings mean dog walkers are not as easily seen if they do not clean up after their dog), and in poorer weather (dog walkers are less inclined to spend time outdoors clearing up dog fouling).

Highest numbers of incidents are reported in Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton.

The Clean Neighbourhood Service has recently been restructured into locality based teams aligning the Neighbourhood Wardens enforcement and engagement roles with the street cleansing staff to ensure we tackle dirty neighbourhoods by:

1. Ensuring we are cleaning areas efficiently and effectively.
2. Education - Changing behaviour of people who commit environmental crime to reduce the incidence of litter, dog fouling etc.
3. Engagement – working with partners and communities to reduce the incidence of dog fouling. To do this successfully we need to make this everyone's responsibility.
4. Environment – removing the excuses dog owners have by providing plenty of places they can dispose of dog fouling.
5. Enforcement – Where we have intelligence, targeting patrols to issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling.

The Dog Warden is based within Environmental Health and primarily deals with dog welfare issues and encouraging responsible dog ownership. She works with the Neighbourhood Warden's where relevant on education and engagement initiatives.

Our key methods of tackling dog fouling are:-

1. Clearing dog fouling – all street cleaners pick up dog fouling when they see it. Reports of dog fouling are normally visited and cleaned within 24 hours (longer if reported at weekends). The Council began a programme of pavement sweeping in Hinckley in February 2013. This is increasing the removal of dog fouling, and will be extended across the Borough during 2013/14. NB removal of dog fouling on parish council land is a parish council responsibility.
2. Provision of bins – The number of litter bins has been increased and new bins are installed where requested. All Borough Council litter bins are now able to be used for the disposal of bagged dog waste and this has been promoted through the “any bin will do” stickers which now appear on the majority of litter bins. These tickets can be supplied free of charge to Parish Council’s for their bins on parks if requested. Separate dog waste bins are provided by HBBC on Council owned green spaces. Where these are in Hinckley these are funded through the Hinckley area budgets.
3. Stencils on pavements in problem areas – all street cleaning teams now regularly spray temporary stencils on pavements when they receive a complaint about dog fouling. These usually last for 3-6 months. This raises the awareness amongst dog owners that they can be fined for not cleaning up after their dog, and that the Council are aware that dog owners are not cleaning up after their dogs in this location.
4. “Wanted” posters which request information about people not cleaning up after their dogs. This acts as a deterrent by raising awareness amongst dog owners that we are aware of a dog fouling problem in this area and will be issuing fixed penalty notices if we identify offenders, and that the general public can also report offenders.
5. Report it cards – these are distributed to households near where problems have been reported. They request residents to report people not cleaning up after their dogs and provide information which can be used for enforcement e.g. description of offenders, time of fouling etc. These are also given out at hot spots e.g. jittys / parks whilst the Neighbourhood Wardens are patrolling to raise awareness that we are enforcing and that there is a problem in this area. Report it cards returned are followed up by patrols by the Neighbourhood Wardens.
6. Large “Clean up and keep everyone safe” signs are used by the Neighbourhood Wardens on sites with persistent problems e.g. Burbage Common, Thornton reservoir. These are available for use by Parish Councils on their parks on request.
7. On going work with schools who report a problem, or near where we identify there to be a problem. This is a focus of our efforts during Spring 2013. Letters have been sent to 48 schools and so far in partnership with the schools, the dog warden, the Neighbourhood Wardens will be working with 7 schools (assemblies for children, talking to parents, and report it card handouts at school gates at the end of the school day). Schools signed up to date are St Peters Primary (Market Bosworth), Burbage Juniors, Burbage Infants, St Margaret’s Primary (Stoke Golding), Newlands Primary (Barwell), Richmond Primary (Hinckley) and Elizabeth Woodville Primary (Grobby). It is hoped that more schools will join us over the next few weeks,
8. Monitoring – the Local Environment Quality System (LEQ) we currently use is derived from NI195 and does not measure incidents of dog fouling. A new monitoring system is being introduced from April 2013 which will target improvements in cleanliness of our dirtiest areas. Incidents of dog fouling will be monitoring, and dog fouling hot spots selected for monitoring.
9. Enforcement – Catching offenders and enforcement is difficult, and time consuming. National research (Keep Britain Tidy Group) suggests that receiving a fine only has a short term benefit in terms of changing peoples behaviour and that education and engagement are far more effective methods of reducing

environmental crime. The Neighbourhood Wardens therefore patrol areas where we have intelligence which directs us to an offender i.e. where we have a description of a dog, times the dog fouls etc. This includes early morning patrols. 2 fpn's for dog fouling have been issued April – January 2012/13, 6 during 2011/12. The Borough Council has in the past paid for training of parish council staff but very few fpn's have been issued by these staff. The Civil Parking Enforcement Officers started enforcing for environmental crimes in 2010 and whilst they regularly issue litter from vehicle fines, the nature of their work means they do not encounter acts of dog fouling.

10. Project Endeavour – Imminent changes are planned to record incidents of dog fouling and other environmental crime as antisocial behaviour within the Sentinel system. This data will then be available to all partners within Project Endeavour and enable the partnerships resources to be tactically deployed to tackling priority dog fouling incidents.
11. Free dog fouling bags – the Neighbourhood Wardens, street cleansing staff and grounds maintenance staff continue to provide free dog bags at community events, throughout their working day and through Hollycroft Park, Burbage Common Visitor Centre and at the Council reception.
12. General awareness raising through press releases, articles in parish council news letters, signage on Council vehicles etc.

Additional measures we will be seeking to implement during 2013/14 are:-

1. Partnerships with parish council's (letter sent to every parish in February 2013), community houses and other community groups such as Hinckley Neighbourhood Watch to increase distribution of report it cards, increase awareness amongst dog owners that not clearing up after dogs is not acceptable to the wider community. The involvement of other organisations is key to reducing this problem.
2. Increase reporting and intelligence from the community about people who do not clean up after their dogs.
3. Targeting professional dog walkers to ensure they are cleaning up after their dogs.
4. Targeting report it cards and wanted posters at Vets, dog grooming parlours, pet food stores, dog training businesses etc to increase awareness amongst dog owners that they need to clean up after their dogs and that responsible dog owners will be reporting them too.
5. Pre-empting the winter 2013/14 increase in incidents of dog fouling through coverage in the Borough Bulletin, twitter, face book and the local press of the Borough Council's work to reduce dog fouling and encourage responsible dog ownership.
6. Maximise opportunities to work with other local councils and join national campaigns.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (TO)

There are no financial implications arising from this report. All the expenditure referred to (posters, bins, signs, publicity etc) can be met within existing Street Cleansing and Neighbourhood Warden budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (AB)

Although the Dog (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 has been repealed the Council still has power to prosecute for dog fouling under transitional provisions and for the serving of fixed penalty notices.

6. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Clean Neighbourhoods is one of the five Corporate Plan priorities. Reducing the incidence of dog fouling is key to achieving this priority.

7. CONSULTATION

Consultation for the enforcement policy for the Neighbourhood Wardens in 2009, identified littering and dog fouling to be the resident's main concerns.

Citizens Panel survey 2011 identified enforcement and education as one of the top 4 priorities for improvement. A post was moved from Green Spaces to the Clean Neighbourhoods Service to increase the resources for education and engagement. The Clean Neighbourhood Officer started September 2012.

Citizen's panel survey 2012 identified Clean Neighbourhoods as residents top priority council service.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

It is the Council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

No significant risks have been identified in association with this report.

9. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

No equalities issues identified.

Dog fouling occurs across the Borough. The Clean Neighbourhood Service works across the Borough to reduce incidents of dog fouling.

10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community Safety implications – joint working through Project Endeavour
- Environmental implications – reducing dog fouling improves the environment.
- ICT implications - none
- Asset Management implications - none
- Human Resources implications - none
- Planning Implications - none
- Voluntary Sector – partnerships will be required

Background papers: None

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