

SCRUTINY PANEL B

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 20th October, 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Christian Chapman in the Chair;

Councillors Trevor Locke, Warren Nuttall,
David Walters and Caroline Wilkinson.

Apology for Absence: Councillor Dale Grounds.

Officers Present: Alastair Blunkett, Lynn Cain, Robert Docherty,
Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillors Samantha Deakin and Helen-Ann Smith.

SB.5 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

SB.6 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 21 July 2022, be received and approved as a correct record.

SB.7 Scrutiny Review: Dog Fouling and Littering

The Chairman introduced the report and reminded the Panel that the 'Dog Fouling and Littering' review had been added to the Scrutiny Work Programme by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2022. Having already held one meeting to discuss the topic in July 2022, Members were now poised to gain insight into how littering and dog fouling issues were currently being addressed within the portfolios of the two Executive Lead Members in attendance at the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the following Members/Officers to the meeting:

- Robert Docherty (Director of Place and Communities)
- Alastair Blunkett (Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods and Environment)
- Councillor Helen-Ann Smith (Deputy Leader and Executive Lead Member for Community Safety and Crime Reduction)
- Councillor Samantha Deakin (Executive Lead Member for Parks, Town Centres and Environmental Services.)

The Panel undertook a Question/Answer session and deliberated on a series of discussion topics as follows:

Question:	Response:
<p>What work is being undertaken to find a replacement service now the WISE pilot contract has ended?</p>	<p>The Council is looking at an internal solution following the end of the WISE contract. No Government funding is available so the Council will be seeing a budget deficit once a new system is in place. All options are being considered with one being the intermittent use of agency staff in hotspot areas (Cllr. Helen-Ann Smith)</p>
<p>Are we currently still issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in hotspot areas?</p>	<p>Yes, the Community Protection Officers (CPOs) are still undertaking this enforcement role amongst a vast array of other duties (Cllr. HAS)</p> <p>Residents are now reporting incidences of littering and dog fouling through the ADC online portal which has proved effective. Recent and comparative data in respect of this service will be submitted to the January 2023 meeting for consideration (Alastair Blunkett)</p>
<p>As the enforcement work undertaken by WISE was cost neutral to the Council, how can we replicate the service without additional cost?</p>	<p>Similar companies to WISE are on the market and other authorities are providing the service by covering the cost of agency staff with the income generated from fines but should an internal solution be preferred, there will almost inevitably be a growth in budget to cover costs (AB)</p>
<p>WISE were very efficient in their enforcement measures if not somewhat over-zealous at times and were also cost-neutral to the Council. This is what is needed to keep the streets/parks clean, and the Council should have continued with the contract. It is now going to cost the tax-payer money to provide another solution.</p>	<p>A service review of the Community Protection and Waste Collection Teams are underway at present and any potential savings/efficiency measures from this will be examined as part of all the options for a replacement service going forward. (Robert Docherty)</p>

<p>What were the issues surrounding the enforcement methods used by WISE?</p>	<p>Many complaints were received that WISE employees were persistently following people (oftentimes women) and making them feel vulnerable and uncomfortable. They were failing to have their camera equipment operational at all times and were causing reputational damage to the Authority (Cllr. HAS)</p> <p>They were also reluctant to patrol the Council's parks and open spaces as requested because these areas, as opposed to town centres, were not as lucrative for them. (Cllr. Samantha Deakin)</p>
<p>Was there any educational campaign running alongside the WISE enforcement pilot scheme?</p>	<p>Efforts were made but there is still a long way to go. The Council are currently looking at bin wraps, stencilling on pavements, volunteer litter picks. Engaging the community in such events has a positive impact and increases resident's pride in their areas. (Cllr. SD)</p> <p>Some very positive and rewarding educational work with primary schools came out of the Spring Clean Campaign and the Council is currently revisiting its processes for recruiting volunteers to provide a more flexible approach.</p> <p>As part of recent consultations for the Government's Waste Strategy Review, there are proposals for larger food outlets choosing to pay local authorities to clean around their premises or it becoming the responsibility of their staff to undertake the work. Longer term this option could bring in more revenue for the Council as early indications from external retail providers revealed a desire for the Council to facilitate the process. (Cllr. HAS)</p>

<p>Derbyshire City Council were currently undertaking targeted jet washing and cleaning of streets which had been well received. Is this something the Council could look at?</p>	<p>Yes, all initiatives are considered to improve the standards of the environment that we live in. The information is noted.</p>
<p>It is imperative that the Council continues to keep accurate locational data in relation to hotspot areas that need targeted action.</p>	<p>Agreed. The Council does already facilitate continuous data capture in relation to hotspot areas across the District, but this is more for incidences of dog fouling than littering which is more random by nature (Cllr. HAS)</p> <p>There are many good practices out there for reducing incidences of dog fouling and littering but the Council does not have enough officers or hours to do them all. The Council has to find a balance within the financial parameters available. (RD)</p>
<p>The CPOs undertake a lot of different types of work, can you say how much time they spend on enforcement work for dog fouling and littering?</p>	<p>Yes, I can provide that information at the next meeting but just to reiterate, the CPOs undertake a variety of different roles and once they are out on patrol, a reactive approach is adopted dependant on what they are faced with on that particular day. (Cllr. HS)</p>
<p>Is there any correlation between incidences of dog fouling and the number of bins provided in any particular area?</p>	<p>No, unfortunately there isn't. Bins are often vandalised in hotspot areas and whether dog foul is picked up by a dog owner is often down to their own particular standards and not whether they have bins easily available to them. (Cllr. SD)</p> <p>The Council no longer has dedicated dog bins as concentrated amounts of dog foul are classified as hazardous waste and need to be disposed of differently. If the dog foul is mixed up with general waste then it can be disposed of in the normal manner.</p> <p>The Council is always trying different ways of reducing incidences of dog fouling with campaigns, bin wraps, informational dog poo trees, enforcement measures, education etc. (AB)</p>

<p>In respect of targeted campaigns, does the Council analyse the data to see if incidences of fouling are reduced?</p>	<p>Yes, analysis is always undertaken, and the Council is getting better at sharing information across Council services rather than working in isolation (Cllr. SD)</p>
<p>Do Council staff who work within the parks and open spaces also report additional issues as well as undertaking their assigned tasks?</p>	<p>Yes, we ask all staff to be aware of the surroundings they are working in and to report back to the offices wherever possible in relation to any separate incidences of littering/fly tipping etc.</p> <p>There is a review of the Waste Collection service being undertaken at present and the Council is definitely moving away from a system thinking approach and more towards a more encompassing cleaner, greener methodology (Cllr.SD)</p> <p>The Council will definitely be keeping all the good bits of the service and updating any methods of working that are outdated. The team will then be able to be more proactive, flexible and resilient (RD)</p>
<p>Did the Council used to sell dog poo bags?</p>	<p>Yes, it did but the provision of such bags, even with advertising income, proved to be too expensive and unable to compete with cheaper bags being sold in shops. (Cllr. SD)</p> <p>The bags were also heavily subsidised by the Council and this was an ongoing cost to the Authority. (RD)</p>
<p>Is the constant reduction in funding and monies available to the Council an issue for tackling littering and dog fouling in the District?</p>	<p>Yes, it is. Years ago, we had much larger budgets which enabled the Council to employ many more staff to undertake the job. The Council however continues to do a magnificent job of keeping its towns, parks and open spaces clean and tidy for residents, with fewer staff and fewer resources. (Cllr. HAS)</p>

Is primary school education in relation to littering and dog fouling awareness a job for the County Council?

No, the Council works very hard to have a presence in local primary schools and educate young children. Litter pick packs and wormeries were provided to schools earlier in the year and Ashfield's primary schools definitely want to be involved. Also, Ashfield School have ambassadors who take the protection of their climate and local environment very seriously indeed. (Cllr. SD)

On conclusion of the question and answer session, the Scrutiny Research Officer thanked everyone for their comments, input and ideas. The discussion had been extremely useful and would inform the review going forward.

RESOLVED

that the Scrutiny Research Officer be requested to undertake the following in readiness for the next meeting of the Panel:

- a) to ascertain the current process for recruitment of volunteers by the Council;
- b) to obtain current data in relation to hotspot areas, number of reported incidences of dog fouling and littering across the District and maps outlining the location of bins within the Council's parks and open spaces;
- c) to provide an overview of the Council's efforts to raise awareness of environmental issues (including the implications of littering and dog fouling) with young children through primary school visits and campaigns;
- d) to submit a progress update, if available, in respect of how the Council is intending to provide an enforcement service in relation to incidences of dog fouling and littering by individuals and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) as required.

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm

Chairman.