

Report To:	CABINET	Date:	26 JANUARY 2021
Heading:	ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER		
Portfolio Holder:	CLLR DAVID MARTIN, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR STREETS, PARKS AND TOWN CENTRES		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	YES		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

To present to Cabinet a summary of activities the Council undertakes in keeping the District clean and safe and to propose further steps to ensure continuous improvement.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

- 1) Notes the significant progress made in keeping Ashfield clean and safe.
- 2) Endorses the proposed enhancements to operational services, community engagement and environmental enforcement.
- 3) Approves the development of an Environmental Charter to incorporate the enhancements set out in this report and to delegate finalisation of this charter to the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Streets, Parks and Town Centres and the Director of Place and Communities.
- 4) Approves the effective communication of the Council's current performance and the proposed Environmental Charter to Ashfield residents.
- 5) Endorses the regular performance updates to be presented to Cabinet as part of the Council's wider performance framework.

Background

Amongst the Council's top priorities is a commitment to make Ashfield cleaner and safer and in recent times, the Council has made great strides in this direction.

The Council's effort is significant, reflecting the priority afforded to ensure a cleaner and safer Ashfield, which is aided by many community-minded citizens.

In many respects, this is the Council's day job, and it is worthwhile reflecting on the many services provided on a daily basis.

Waste

The Council undertakes more than a quarter of a million waste collections from around 56,500 properties each month. On average, 1,000 tonnes of household waste is collected weekly.

At peak times of the year such as the Big Ashfield Spring Clean, the Council collects an additional 250 tonnes of waste and over the Christmas period, an additional 110 tonnes of residual waste is collected. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has collected an additional 748 tonnes of waste, recognising that residents often have additional waste to dispose of.

Our Bulky Waste service helps householders who have large items to dispose of and cannot take such items to the Household Waste and Recycling Centre; during a typical week, the Council collects 163 items of bulky waste, averaging around 8,500 items collected per year. During the Spring Clean period of February and March, the Council sees an average intake of 8,400 items in a 3-week period.

Recycling levels in the District are being maintained at 40% and an intake of between 500 to 700 tonnes of recycled waste is collected each year, combined with Garden and Glass tonnage. Recycling rates tend to increase over the summer months due to an increased intake of glass and garden waste.

It was especially pleasing that the Council was recognised on the 16th December 2020 by the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) in being shortlisted for the best Waste Management and Recycling Service. This was in recognition of the work undertaken throughout the pandemic to maintain visible, frontline waste services to Ashfield residents. The Chief Executive of APSE, Paul O'Brien said "After a year of such turmoil for our communities, every finalist and every winner thoroughly deserves to be recognised for the fantastic work they do at the frontline of local public services".

Street Cleansing

How clean a street is affects how people feel about where they live and is why the Council puts so much effort and resource into keeping Ashfield clean.

We collect around 1,100 tonnes of street sweepings every year, which consists of organic waste, sands, silt, coarse and large aggregates, whilst our Street Scene crews empty 992 litter bins each week.

Our Street Scene staff are constantly cleaning the District and operate 7 days a week.

In 2020 the Council removed around 950 fly tips, 570 reported items of litter and glass, 40 pieces of graffiti and has cleaned up 180 incidences of reported dog fouling.

Parks and Open Spaces

Parks and Green Spaces have never been more important and given the pandemic, everyone is grateful of high-quality green space where they can spend time outdoors.

The Council is proud of our six Green Flag parks, reflecting the investment and focus the Council has placed on improving parks:

- Brierley Forest Park
- Kingsway Park
- Sutton Lawn Park
- Titchfield Park (Hucknall)
- Selston Country Park
- Portland Park

The Council cuts 1046 miles of grass every week, much of which is on our parks and the remainder, on roads and footways.

We have invested heavily in the quality of our parks and recent examples of this include new and upgraded facilities at Titchfield Park, Hucknall and Titchfield Park, Kirkby, improvements at Skegby recreation ground and significant infrastructure improvements at Kings Mill Reservoir, all of which is in addition to Sutton Lawn and Brierley Forest Park improvements.

Further investment is planned during the coming weeks with an exciting new play space at Lindley's Lane and £366k of wider improvements at Healdswood Recreation Ground, Riley Recreation Ground, Nuncargate Rec, Rowan Drive, and West Park.

And of course, the Council's recent investment in the annual management of three BMX tracks.

Community Involvement

The Council is grateful to residents who get involved in keeping the District clean and safe, in particular, those community activists who organise community litter picks. We will continue to support these groups.

There is little doubt that the majority of residents want to live and work in safe, attractive environments and the Council will always do all it reasonably can to facilitate and encourage such community action.

Environmental Crime

It is a sad reality that a very small minority of people who live in or visit Ashfield do not treat our District with the respect and love it deserves and think it is acceptable to litter, fly tip or allow their dogs to foul public places; this is why the Council has an environmental enforcement function.

It is regretful that it has been necessary for the Council to undertake environmental enforcement action throughout 2020, including:

- 7 convictions for breaches of Community Protection Notices specifically for waste on land/accumulation
- Served 32 Community Protection Notices specifically for waste on land/accumulation
- Served 89 Community Protection Warnings relating to waste on land/accumulation
- Issued 51 Fixed Penalty Notices specifically relating to waste / litter
- Served 34 Notices under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act.
- Issued 238 warning letters before action for untidy gardens.
- Issued 18 formal tenancy warnings for untidy gardens.

Where Next?

The Council is rightly proud of its efforts to keep the District clean and safe but it is equally true that the Council is restless to improve further and whilst this is made ever more challenging due to budgetary constraints, the Council commits to use all of its available resources to make further improvements, building upon the current position of strength.

Cabinet is asked to consider the enhancements proposed below.

Waste

The Council commits to additional waste campaigns throughout the year to support residents in disposing of their waste in a responsible and convenient manner.

- Spring Clean – side waste collected alongside the general waste bin on a designated week and requests for free bulky waste collections accepted over a 3-week period
- Bag-It – one bag of side waste collected alongside general waste bin
- Skip into Summer – Flying skips (bin trucks) located at 80 different locations throughout the district on a Saturday morning over a 5-week period to allow free disposal of waste
- Christmas Side Waste – one bag of side waste collected on the first general waste collection after Christmas

Street Cleansing

The Council deploys street cleansing staff throughout the District and will prioritise cleanliness; this is why we commit to emptying 1000 litter bins weekly and removing any dangerous items that have been littered within 24 hours of being reported.

We recognise that residents are most concerned with their immediate surroundings and is why we commit to mechanically sweeping every street in the District at least once in every six-week period; this is regardless of whether residents live in our urban centres or in rural locations.

Graffiti can be offensive and for offensive graffiti, we commit to remove it within 24 hours of it being reported within the working week and for all other graffiti, to remove it within 7 days of it being reported where it is on public buildings. If graffiti is on private buildings, liaison with the building owner will be necessary.

Parks and Open Spaces

The Council truly appreciates the community value of green space and is why we will mow, during peak summer months, some 1,046 miles of green space and grass verges.

In addition, we pledge to plant over 1000 new trees each year.

During the 2020/21 planting season, 530 native trees have been planted at Kings Mill Reservoir, and a further 539 are being planted across Titchfield Park Hucknall, Sutton Lawn and the Summit Pit open space.

Plans are underway for the 2021/22 tree planting which will commence in September 2021.

Community Involvement

Keeping the District clean and safe requires everyone to play their part and we will support and encourage local groups to organise community clean ups and supply litter pickers and bags for collected waste. In the current COVID context, such groups are not permitted but during the summer months and when such activities are allowed, the Council will stand shoulder to shoulder with community minded residents.

Furthermore, over the next 12 months, the Council will develop a network of 'Clean Champions' to encourage such community action; this will be an informal network of like-minded residents who can exchange ideas and good practice, supported by the Council as the whole community is mobilised around keeping Ashfield safe and clean.

Environmental Crime

It is an unfortunate reality that not everyone shares such a community mindset and there is a minority of people who do not respect our District's environment and these people will be dealt with robustly and where the evidence allows, the Council will initiate fines and legal proceedings.

The Council will stand alongside the overwhelming majority of residents who care passionately for the District's environment.

This means that the Council will:

- Issue Fixed Penalty Notices (fines) for littering and dog fouling and those in breach of the Council's Public Spaces Protection Order.
- Serve enforcement notices for waste on private land and untidy gardens
- Investigate every reported fly tip and where evidence allows, initiate legal proceedings.
- Increase the number of mobile CCTV cameras and
- Install mobile CCTV at fly tipping and environmental crime hot spots.
- Provide high visibility, targeted patrolling in high footfall areas such as town centres, estates, parks and other priority hotspots to tackle ASB and enviro-crime.
- Serve enforcement notices on landlords or building owners who do not look after their premises and allow them to become eyesores.
- Work with partners, including the Police, Housing Associations and the County Council to ensure an integrated approach to environmental crime.

Communicating the Plan

It is important that this plan is effectively communicated to residents of the District.

Once the Environmental Charter is finalised, a wrap-around and detailed communications campaign is proposed, including a notification to each household

It is imperative that everyone plays their part and the Council encourages good environmental behaviours and discourages poor behaviour; part of this campaign will include a recruitment drive

for residents to become 'Clean Champions' as well as alerting those who may be tempted to commit environmental crime that the likelihood of being caught in the future will significantly increase.

Performance Reporting

The Council's performance management arrangements include a performance scorecard being presented to the Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

As from 2021/22, this Charter will be included in the corporate performance reporting arrangements and reported alongside other key performance metrics.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The Environmental Charter supports the Council's Cleaner and Greener Theme.

Legal:

The Council carries out street cleansing as part of its statutory duty and carries out grass cutting and weed treatment on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council under contract.

The Legal Team provides advice and assistance in relation to enforcement work, including taking matters forward for prosecution where evidence allows.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Contained within the service budget
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	Contained within the service budget
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Risk to service provision due to Covid 19	The Council has robust Business Continuity Plans which prioritise services in emergency situations. The global pandemic has provided challenges for many local authorities and local outbreak plans are being developed to reduce the risk to services in the future.

Human Resources:

There are no implications

Equalities:

There are no implications

Other Implications:

n.a

Reason(s) for Urgency

n.a

Reason(s) for Exemption

n.a

Background Papers

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