
THE ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGN – FIRST YEAR REVIEW

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members on the progress of the Environmental Campaign launched in September 2005, and how this has dealt with environmental issues that affect the street scene of the District.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council provided a sum of £40,000 to deal with the environmental street scene issues in 2005/06. These included litter, litter on private land, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, weeds in town centres, graffiti, and dog fouling.
- 2.2 Funding has been allocated in 2006/07, to continue the programme. A detailed cost implementation programme comparing 2005/06 and 2006/07 is shown in Appendix A.
- 2.3 The Council agreed a programme of actions (Min 274/05), in order to gain the maximum benefit from the additional money in dealing with these issues, now and in the future. An Educational Campaign was a key part of the programme and emphasised the positive feelings about cleanliness in the District and worked to deal with target problem areas.
- 2.4 The emphasis on “hot spots” has had a very positive impact and does not appear to have encouraged any negative reaction in terms of the cleanliness of the District.

3 CURRENT STATUS OF THE CAMPAIGN

- 3.1 The Campaign was given a press launch on 12 September 2005, with Members of the Council, staff from Rochford District Council and Serviceteam, and members of the public representing voluntary groups in attendance.
- 3.2 A first review was held on the 10 October 2005 to mark the first month and the results of this review were reported through the Members Bulletin. A summary of outcomes is included in Appendix A. This review was also subject to a press release to maintain the publicity.
- 3.3 A second review was carried out in April 2006, to identify any trends that were arising and to consider the effects of the campaign. The results of this second review are also included in Appendix A.
- 3.4 A number of “hot spots” have been identified through the various reporting mechanisms that exist within the Council and these were targeted for monitoring. Signs indicating the monitoring of these locations have been erected and the Contract Monitoring Officers have monitored the “hot spots” on a regular basis.

3.5 The “Reporting Environmental Problems” link on the front of the Council’s web site has encouraged people to report problems, with the number of reports as follows - figures from 13/03/06 until 18/07/06:

- 14 Abandoned Vehicles
- 13 Street Cleansing
- 7 Graffiti
- 4 Dog Fouling
- 1 Fly posting

Litter (including litter on private land)

3.6 A Protocol similar to that agreed for dealing with graffiti on private buildings has been introduced. This seeks the occupiers’ approval for the Council to enter the land and deal with the problem if necessary. The number of complaints dealt with under this protocol is as follows:

- 22 sites on private land.
- 55 locations on Highways.
- 58 areas on Council land (these figures are related just to July 2006).

Schools will be targeted in terms of improving their environment. There will be an enhanced programme of education related to recycling and littering. Materials are being produced and work will start in schools from September 2006, targeting approx. 25 schools per year.

Fly Tipping

3.7 The Council deals with approximately 400 reports of fly tipping per year; this figure has not changed significantly over the last few years, although it has slightly increased. Currently, fly tips dealt with by our own contractor are collected within 24 hours, but it takes almost 11 days when the material is of a “special” type (such as asbestos or I.T equipment) and needs to be collected by the County contractor.

Abandoned Vehicles

3.8 The number of abandoned vehicles reported has gone down in the last two years and is currently around 280 vehicles per year, with only 53 disposed of in the period. The Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) require measurement of the time taken to deal with the report and then the time taken to remove the vehicle. Both are in the top quartile of Councils, with figures of 91.67% (BVPI 218a) and 84.21% (BVPI 218b).

3.9 A new link to the DVLA has been set up that enables Council staff to access the DVLA records directly, which has enabled improved performance in dealing with abandoned vehicles.

Weeds on the Highway (particularly town centres)

- 3.10 The problem of weeds on the highway has increased since the introduction of the legislation, which reduced the toxicity of weed killers. A programme of spraying is carried out by County Highways three times a year, but this does not appear to be as effective. In town centres particularly, the presence of weeds in beds and those coming through the pavement and adjacent to buildings, has had a detrimental impact on the quality of the environment.
- 3.11 Some weed clearance has therefore been undertaken, especially during the growing season. This work is being done in consultation with Parish / Town Councils, looking to bring mutual benefit to both parties at a very low cost. To date, Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh have been included in this process, with Hockley Parish carrying out the work in their area with their contractor being paid half a day per month additional time to deal with this problem.

Graffiti

- 3.12 Graffiti is already subject to a comprehensive approach between the Police, the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Officer, the Arts Development Officer, the Essex Youth Service and a local artist. Much work has already been done in terms of identifying culprits and the Police have been proactive in tracking down the perpetrators. Joint initiatives have also been set up in an attempt to channel the creative energy of these people into something that is creative, rather than destructive, and a number of "Spray Can Art" initiatives have been undertaken in Hawkwell that have had a significant impact in Hockley.
- 3.13 The protocol for dealing with graffiti on private buildings is still encountering some difficulties in obtaining agreement from some owners to enable the Council to carry out the work, and is especially relevant when the occupier is not the owner. In many instances where this authority has written to the property occupier, there has been no reply. This has been particularly true of some Statutory Undertakers such as Railtrack and One railway, where response has been slow, although a detailed protocol agreement is currently under discussion with these companies.
- 3.14 Graffiti on Council owned buildings and facilities is removed or painted over as soon as possible, especially if it is offensive.
- 3.15 Existing funding is used to deal with problems in a regular programme of removal or over-painting. The number of incidents of graffiti reported in 2005/6 was 86.
- 3.16 A contractor has been appointed to carry out graffiti removal, with a budget of £15,500, paying for approximately 24 days work to clean up to 200 sites per year. By bringing the contractor in on a "day" basis reduces the need for individual quotes and "one-off" site visits and results in the Council having a more proactive approach to dealing with this issue.

Dog Fouling

- 3.17 This was previously covered under the Fouling of Land by Dogs Act 1996. The Council formally adopted this Act and signs were erected at various locations throughout the District. No enforcement action was taken under this Act.
- 3.18 The new Legislation replaces this Act and treats dog fouling in a similar fashion to that for litter etc. with potential penalties of on the spot fines.
- 3.19 Approximately 84 dog waste bins are sited around the District. The majority of dog walkers are responsible in their actions and do clear up after their animal's mess. However there are a number of locations, mainly "hidden" footpaths and some open spaces, where irresponsible owners are causing problems.
- 3.20 These problem areas have been monitored and a programme of "Dog Fouling Blitzes" was undertaken during July/August 2006. Contract Monitoring Officers, other Contracted Services staff and Serviceteam staff, have walked the target areas early in the morning to talk to dog owners and monitor the percentage carrying "dog bags". It was encouraging that currently over 95% of those dog walkers were already clearing up after their dogs. More work is planned on this issue, although it is clear that enforcement action on those who still do not clear up will be required.
- 3.21 Evidence is arising from discussions with the dog owners that the persistent "foulers" walk their dogs very late in the evening or very early in the morning, so as not to be seen. New approaches are being developed to pick up this issue and targeted leaflet drops will be carried out around the identified locations. It is clear that enforcement action will be necessary should these persistent offenders not respond to the education campaign.

Educational campaign

- 3.22 The education campaign to date has concentrated on rewriting leaflets into a recognisable pattern and badged under this campaign. A "credit card size" card has been produced with key contact numbers and has been distributed to all staff and put into many public places, as an easy means of enabling people to carry the information on how to report a problem. All the issues covered in the campaign will continue to be highlighted in regular items in Rochford District Matters and press coverage has been used, where possible, to keep the public informed.
- 3.23 The main objective of the campaign is to provide a long-term effect, rather than just "a quick fix" short-term solution.

Audience

- 3.24 The campaign has been targeted at the public. It is important that the public are seen to support the initiative and that the actions being implemented are in response to the issues identified by the public. The public in general has a responsibility to look after the environment and having the ability to report and

see action taken where reports are made, is important in encouraging ownership of the issues.

- 3.25 However, there are a number of the issues that require a more targeted approach: schools, owners of private land where the litter problem is identified, dog walkers in problem areas, graffiti offenders and people who abuse recycling bring bank sites. These are being tackled and processes are being put in place to speed up response, although it is clear that more enforcement action is required, if the public are to see that the Council is doing all it can to tackle the problems.
- 3.26 The voluntary sector has joined in the campaign, with three organisations carrying out specific work and a fourth is about to join in with another targeted clean up.

Methods

- 3.27 The campaign to date has moved forward in a systematic way, providing a sound platform for future work.
- The logo has acted as an Environmental identifier, allowing a wide range of issues tackled under the environment banner to fit into the Rochford campaign.
 - Articles in Rochford District Matters started in the Summer 2005, covering street scene issues such as dog fouling, littering and graffiti, with regular articles planned for future editions.
 - A series of advisory leaflets / posters about the individual issues have been produced and circulated. A credit card size card with reporting contact details has also been produced and circulated.
 - A structured campaign through schools, incorporating work with the Council's Arts Development Officer and the Recycling Officer, has built on the existing programme for recycling and litter.
 - The clean up of identified problem "hot spot" areas has demonstrated what can be achieved, but in some areas where the problem continues, despite the monitoring, it is clear that enforcement is required to stop repeated offences.
 - Signing at "hot spots" has identified that they are being monitored to discourage abuse, although without enforcement this has had limited success.
 - Press releases and photo opportunities have been used, especially where these have related to the voluntary sector.
 - Badging of the Serviceteam hit squad vehicles has clearly identified their role in this campaign and has assisted the contractor to work in partnership

with the Council.

Outcomes

- 3.28 Although targets were identified in the initial report to provide success criteria, the majority of these have grown rather than reduced. The method of measuring the effectiveness of the campaign has now initially been reassessed, as the initial parameters have changed. Numbers of reported “hot spots” have generally increased, as the awareness of how to report environmental issues has grown. This is a very positive sign that the public recognise what the Council is trying to achieve.
- 3.29 The success of the campaign to date can therefore be measured by the increase in the number of issues reported and also by the introduction of protocols such as graffiti and private land clearance. Greater awareness from members of the public and participation from volunteer groups such as churches, scout groups and Rivercare team, have all contributed to the initial success of the campaign.
- 3.30 The targets originally identified in the report of 7 July 2005, will need to be revised to provide detailed success criteria at a later date.

Timescales

3.31 The following timescale was set for the Environmental Campaign

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| • Developing the campaign in-house | June 2005 | Completed. |
| • Produce logo and headline | July 2005 | Completed. |
| • Start public education | August 2005 | Ongoing. |
| • Clean up of “hot spots” | September 2005 | Completed. |
| | March 2006 | Completed. |
| • Dog fouling blitz | July 2006 | Completed. |

The costed programme for this year’s work is included in Appendix A.

4 FUTURE CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Environmental Streetscene issues have a high profile with the public and with

Members. The investment that has taken place so far has demonstrated the Council's commitment to tackling the problems.

- 4.2 It is now timely to consider the future of this campaign, beyond March 2007. The development of the major contract specifications will provide an opportunity to consider whether some activities now being undertaken through the campaign, can be provided in the longer term through the new contracts.
- 4.3 Two related issues therefore arise. Firstly, whether to continue with the activities within the campaign into 2007/8, and if so, at what level. Secondly, the issue of enforcement, which is a key element of the legislation. This is work which is not generally undertaken by commercial contractors operating in these fields of work.
- 4.4 As has been explained, good momentum has been built up with the work so far but problems still remain to be resolved. It would seem sensible to consider extending the current campaign into 2007/8, leading up to the start of the new major contracts in April 2008. Members are therefore invited to consider a budget bid for 2007/8. A similar budget to 2005/6 and this year, (2006/7) would enable similar levels of activity as have been carried out to date.
- 4.5 The level of formal enforcement activity that can be achieved is dependent on the resources available. The current very occasional targeting of dog fouling areas has been undertaken within existing resources, diverting staff from other work. To undertake consistent and sustained enforcement would require additional staffing. Members are also invited to consider whether to include this in the 2007/8 budget process.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

Reputational Risk

- 5.1 Improving the quality of life by providing a clean and safe environment is one of the Council's key objectives. The public has indicated that littering and other problems impact on this quality, and through this targeted programme, the Council demonstrates it is tackling the issue.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Many of the problems covered under this campaign have a negative effect on people's perception of their environment. Some of the activities are criminal, e.g. graffiti and are being dealt with jointly with the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Officer and the Police, other authorities and statutory undertakers.
- 6.2.1 A poor environment provides a perception that an area is not looked after and will encourage anti-social behaviour and other criminal acts. Dealing with some of the environmental issues will contribute to reducing the fear of crime.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The environmental quality of an area is essential to the wellbeing of residents and businesses. By tackling “hot spot” the areas where the problems occur could be reduced, but at this stage the increase due to additional reporting should be seen as a positive sign of the increasing public participation.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An allocation of £40,000 was identified for 2005/06 to deal with these issues. The actual spend in 2005/06 was £39,956. A similar level of spend is envisaged in 2006/7.
- 8.2 Graffiti removal needs an ongoing commitment of £15,500, although other sources of funding will be sought in the meantime. The Education Campaign should be an ongoing commitment of £2,500. Costs for the three big clean ups, in conjunction with Serviceteam, were £14,000. Costs for weed clearance amounted to £2,500, with other clean up costs of £7,840. A similar budget will be required in 2007/08 if the level of activity currently undertaken is to continue.
- 8.3 Should Members wish to pursue the level of enforcement identified in item 4.5, then additional resources would be required for enforcement action to be taken. The current Contract Monitoring officers already have a full workload and would not be able to take on this additional responsibility. If this option were to be pursued, a budget of approximately £20,000 for staffing plus approximately £12,500 for a small vehicle and other equipment would be required, to employ an additional Officer on a full time basis. There would be an ongoing revenue implication in employing additional staff resources.
- 8.4 The voluntary sector has provided additional resources through their involvement in the campaign; four organisations have been or are about to get involved.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Council has an obligation to maintain the environment under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This duty is carried out through current contracts, but the additional funding enables a higher level of service to be provided.

10 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 As these issues affect Parishes, some have been contacted to provide local support to the campaign through their newsletters, and to encourage Parish staff to report issues to the District Council. Those not already contacted, will be contacted in the next few months as part of the ongoing education campaign.

11 RECOMMENDATION

11.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) To note the implementation of the Environmental Campaign to date and the increased public interest in these issues.
- (2) To consider a continuation of the campaign, as outlined in Appendix A, into 2007/8 with a budget bid of £40,000.
- (3) To consider a 2007/08 budget bid of £32,500 for an additional officer and vehicle to enable increased enforcement activity.

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Background Papers:-

None

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APPENDIX A

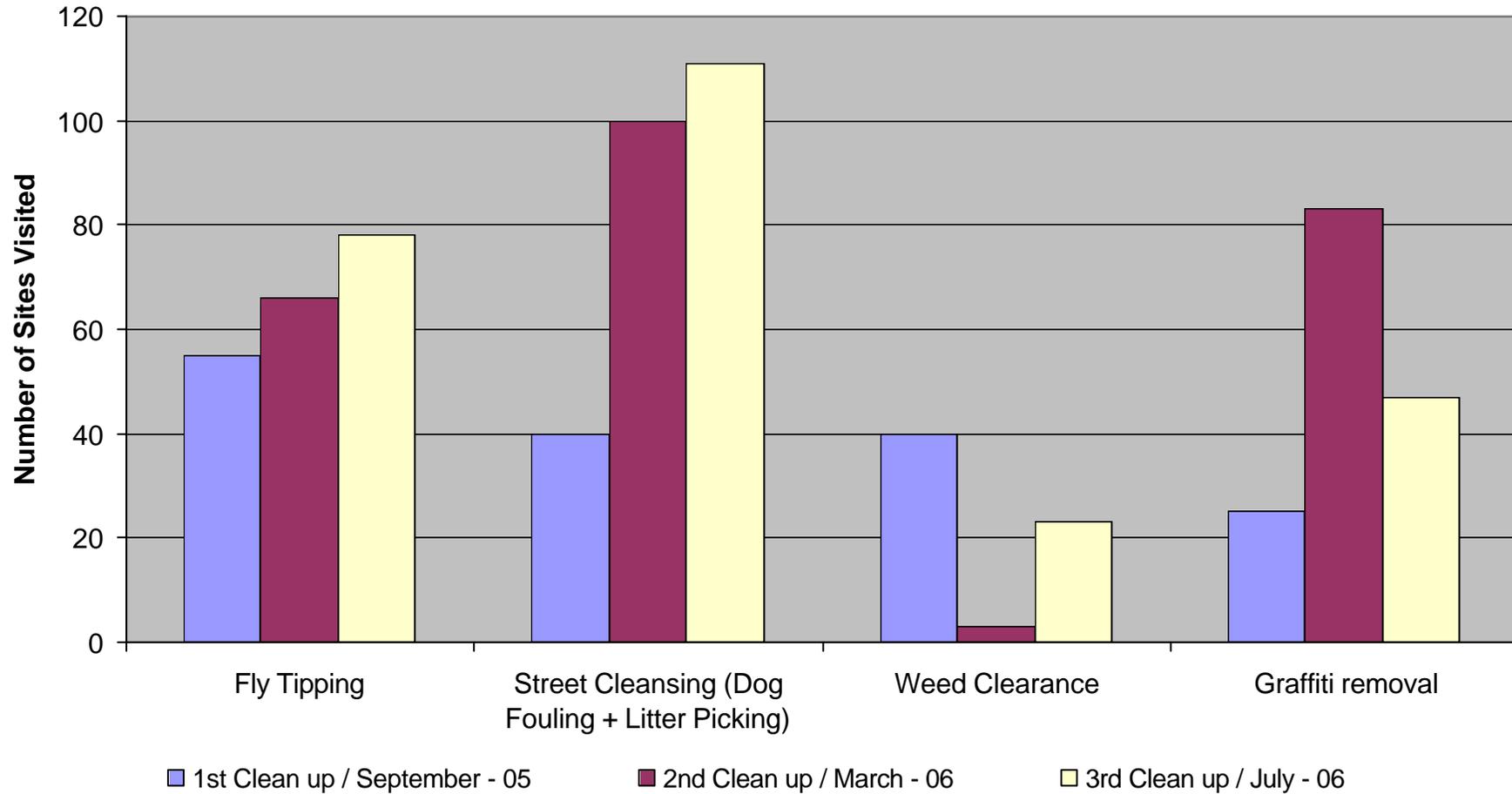
Environmental Campaign Annual Cost

Environmental Campaign	Original Budget 2005/06	2005/06	2006/07
Activities	Allocation (£)	Actual Spend (£)	Estimated Cost (£)
Programme of graffiti removal for the year	10,000.00	8,080.00	15,500.00
Clean up of "hot spots"	10,000.00	7,572.00	14,000.00
Other clean-up work	7,000.00	7,840.00	7,840.00
Weed Clearance	4,000.00	0.00	2,500.00
Signs for identifying "hot spot" monitoring	2,000.00	8,050.13	0.00
Education campaign	7,000.00	8,414.03	2,500.00
TOTAL	40,000.00	39,956.16	42,340.00

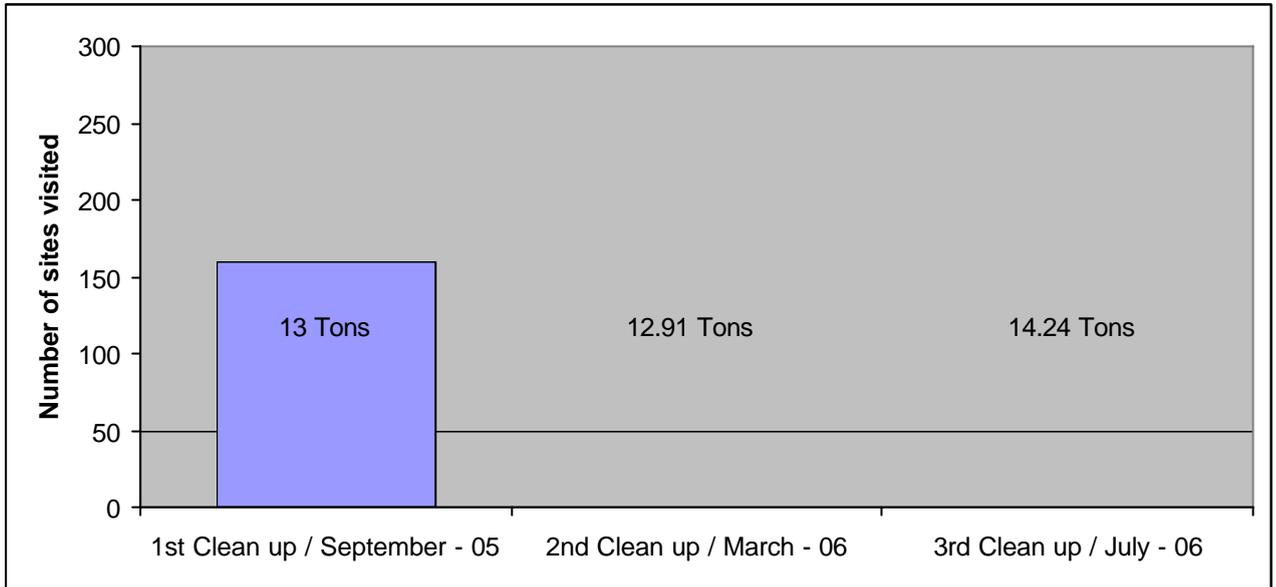
Categories per Clean-Up

Environmental Campaign			
Activity	1st Clean up / September - 05	2nd Clean up / March - 06	3rd Clean up / July - 06
Fly Tipping	55	66	78
Street Cleansing (Dog Fouling + Litter Picking)	40	100	111
Weed Clearance	40	3	23
Graffiti removal	25	83	47
TOTAL	160	252	259
TONNAGES	13	12.91	14.24

Categories per Clean-Up



Number of Sites Visited



Percentages of Clean-Ups on Types of Land

Environmental Campaign			
Type of Land	1st Clean up / September - 05	2nd Clean up / March - 06	3rd Clean up / July - 06
Private	10%	14%	17%
Council	12%	39%	43%
Highways	78%	47%	40%

