

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES – THE WAY FORWARD**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report seeks the endorsement of Members on the proposals to spend the additional monies identified in the budget for 2005/06, to deal with environmental issues that affect the street scene of the District.
- 1.2 Dealing with all the issues on the street scene is a large and varied task but this report seeks to provide the key areas where action will be taken.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Council is already providing resources to maintain and protect the environment. In addition, following the various public consultations and surveys, it is clear the public has some poor perceptions on issues that affect the street scene. These include litter, litter on private land, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, weeds in town centres, graffiti, and dog fouling.
- 2.2 The Council will need to agree a programme of new actions and in order to gain the maximum benefit from the additional money to deal with these issues, an Educational Campaign is proposed. This campaign should emphasise the positive feelings about cleanliness in the District and work to deal with target problem areas.
- 2.3 Members are reminded that new legislation relating to this issue, The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, comes into effect in stages in 2005 and 2006. The earlier sections include changes to littering, for instance smoking residues and chewing gum being defined as litter.

### **3 CURRENT STATUS ON THESE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

- 3.1 The problems being considered under this initiative do not necessarily affect the whole District. However, most of these problems are subject to “hot spots” where the various issues create a nuisance to residents and / or businesses.
- 3.2 Currently there are high levels of public satisfaction with the cleanliness in the District, both on Highways and in Open Spaces, as shown through various surveys.

- 3.3 A number of “hot spots” have been identified through the various reporting mechanisms that exist within the Council and it is planned to target these particular areas as part of the exercise. It is considered that dealing with the target areas will bring bigger benefits to the quality of the environment. The current list of hot spots is included as Appendix A. It is anticipated that as this report becomes more public then this list will grow.
- 3.4 A “Reporting Environmental Problems” link has been added to the front of the Council’s web site, to encourage people to report problems.

**Litter (Including Litter on Private Land)**

- 3.5 Litter on private land was an issue that particularly arose under the CPA inspection. Although the Council has powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to enter private land and deal with the problem, it is considered that efforts should be made to encourage the occupier to deal with the problem first, otherwise the burden will fall totally on the Council. This problem was discussed with the Chambers of Trade on 16 May and it was agreed that the representatives would take this up with their members and report back through the Chambers of Trade meetings. A Protocol similar to that agreed for dealing with graffiti on private buildings will be introduced. This will seek the occupiers’ approval for the Council to enter the land and deal with the problem, if necessary.
- 3.6 Litter generally is an issue particularly around schools and in other areas where there are gatherings of significant numbers of people. “Hidden” footways, service roads and other little used areas are often the type of locations where litter is an issue. Education and some targeted action on known hot spots is planned.
- 3.7 Schools will be targeted in terms of improving their environment. There is currently a programme of education related to recycling and littering, but this will be enhanced.

**Fly Tipping**

- 3.8 The Council deals with approximately 350 reports of fly tipping per year. Currently fly tips are dealt with by our own contractor and are collected within 24 hours, but it takes almost 13 days where the material is of a “special” type and needs to be collected by the County contractor. Continued action will be taken where there is an ongoing repeat problem of fly tipping. However, at the moment the system to clear sites is working well and therefore no additional resources are requested in this area.

**Abandoned Vehicles**

- 3.9 The number of abandoned vehicles has gone down in the last two years and is currently around 200 vehicles per year. There are now new Best Value Performance Indicators ( BVPIs) that require measurement of the time taken to deal with the report and then the time taken to remove the vehicle, once confirmed that it is abandoned. A protocol has been set up to monitor these two indicators.
- 3.10 A new link to the DVLA is also being set up that will enable Councils to access the DVLA records directly. However, this has to be through a dedicated phone line onto one computer for data protection reasons. This will help shorten the investigation period, as the registered keeper can be identified much more quickly. No new action is considered necessary in this area.

**Weeds on the Highway (Particularly Town Centres)**

- 3.11 The problem of weeds on the Highway has increased since the legislation reducing the toxicity of weed killers was introduced. A programme of spraying is carried out by County Highways three times a year, but this is no longer as effective. In town centres particularly, the presence of weeds in beds coming through the pavement and adjacent to buildings have an impact on the quality of the environment.
- 3.12 This will require a regular programme of weeding and clearance to be set up, especially during the growing season. It is proposed to carry out a thorough weeding in the main town centres once a month during the summer months.
- 3.13 It is proposed that this work should be done in consultation with Parish / Town Councils looking to bring mutual benefit to both parties.

**Graffiti**

- 3.14 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 Police action is well underway. However, there needs to be a strategy that will funnel the creative energy of these people into something that is creative rather than destructive.
- 3.15 A protocol has been introduced for dealing with graffiti on private buildings, whereby the Council seeks authority to clean from the owner /occupier. There is difficulty, however, in getting this agreement, especially where the occupier is not the owner and in many instances where this authority has been sought by writing to the property occupier,

there has been no reply. This was also taken up with the Chambers of Trade at the meeting on 16 May 2005 and the representatives agreed to contact their members to try and encourage them to participate.

- 3.16 Graffiti on Council owned buildings and facilities is removed or painted over as soon as possible, especially if it is offensive.
- 3.17 Existing funding is used to deal with problems in a regular programme of removal or over-painting. The number of incidents of graffiti reported over the past 5/6 months is approximately 25.
- 3.18 A contractor has been appointed who can carry out graffiti removal. The budget of £10,000 will pay for approximately 16 days' work, cleaning up to 80 sites per year. Bringing the contractor in on a "day" basis reduces the need for individual quotes and "one-off" site visits.

### **Dog Fouling**

- 3.19 This is currently 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 has been taken under this Act.
- 3.20 The new Legislation replaces this Act and treats dog fouling in a similar fashion to that for litter, etc.
- 3.21 Approximately 84 dog waste bins are sited around the District, with the majority of dog walkers responsible in their actions who do clear up after their animal's mess. There are, however, a number of locations, mainly "hidden" footpaths and some open spaces, where irresponsible owners are causing problems.
- 3.22 These problem areas will be highlighted, with signs making people aware that the Council will monitor and target these areas. Monitoring will be carried out by the Contract Monitoring Officers and other Contracted Services staff, as part of their routine duties.

### **Educational Campaign**

- 3.23 For any campaign to be effective, we need to identify the audience, the methods and the potential outcomes.
- 3.24 The main objective of the campaign is to provide a long term effect, rather than just spending money clearing up.

**Audience**

- 3.25 The audience for this campaign is generally the public. It is important that the public are seen to support the initiative and that the actions indicated are responding to the issues identified by the public. The public in general has a responsibility to look after the environment and to have the ability to report and see action where reports are made.
- 3.26 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.

**Methods**

- 3.27 The campaign will take the following approach to provide a sound platform to build, not just this year but also an ongoing approach to the problems.
- Developing a logo and slogan to highlight the issues and act as an “Environmental” identifier, allowing anything tackled under the environment banner to fit into this Rochford campaign. A “logo” is a useful device to put clear identity on a campaign and is especially useful in educational terms.
  - Articles in RDM starting in summer 2005.
  - A series of advisory leaflets / posters about the individual issues. These will include the information created through National Campaigns.
  - A structured campaign through schools, incorporating work with the Council’s Arts Development Officer and the Recycling Officer, building on the existing programme working in recycling and litter.
  - A clean up of identified problem “hot spot” areas to demonstrate what can be achieved and then monitor and follow up actions where necessary.
  - Signing at “hot spots” noting that they are being monitored to discourage abuse.
  - Working with the Chambers of Trade to get their members actively involved, especially with issues relating to private land.
  - Press releases and photo opportunities.
  - Badging of the Serviceteam hit squad vehicles to clearly identify their role in this campaign.

**Outcomes**

3.28 Targets will be allocated for each proposal in order to measure the effectiveness of the campaign. The potential for these lies in identifying the hot spot issues for each type of problem and developing problem specific targets that can be measured and reported on.

3.29 Targets will measure the reduction in a number of hotspots and will include:

- Number of litter “hot spots” – measure by reduction in number.

Note: general cleanliness is measured through BV199.

- Number of areas of litter on private land, currently 3 - measure by reduction in number.
- Number of incidences of graffiti – measure by reduction in number.
- Number of sites identified as regular dog fouling locations, currently 19 - measure by reduction in number.
- Number of sites identified as fly tip locations, currently 16 - measure by reduction in number.
- Recycling bring bank sites - measure by reduction in number of incidents of vandalism / fly tipping at the site.
- Abandoned vehicles – BVPIs will report on performance.

Through clean ups and Education the target reduction in number of areas in the first year should be as follows:

- Litter Hot spots – 80%
- Litter on private land - 100%
- Graffiti Removal – within one working day where offensive
- Graffiti removal – non offensive – 28 days
- Dog Fouling sites – 50%
- Fly tip locations – 50%
- Incidents at bring bank sites – 50%
- Abandoned vehicles – top quartile BVPI

### **Timescales**

3.30 The following timescale is set for this campaign

- Developing the campaign in-house                      June 2005
- Produce logo and headline                                  July 2005
- Start Public Education                                      August 2005
- Clean up of “hot spots”                                      August / September 2005

3.31 This initial clean-up will show the public what can be done and what levels of cleanliness can be achieved. These areas will then be monitored to see if the level of cleanliness is being maintained.

## **4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 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 can demonstrate it is tackling the issue. Otherwise, the Council's reputation may suffer.

## **5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 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, eg, graffiti, and are being dealt with jointly with the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Officer and the Police.

5.2 A poor environment provides a perception that an area is not looked after and may encourage anti-social behaviour and other criminal acts. The perception of the fear of crime is high and dealing with these issues can contribute to reducing the fear of crime.

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The environmental quality of an area is essential to the wellbeing of residents and businesses. By tackling “hot spots” the areas where the problems occur could be reduced.

## **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 An allocation of £40,000 has been identified for 2005/06 to deal with these issues. At this stage of the process the general spend is identified as follows:

▪ Programme of graffiti removal for the year	£10,000
▪ Initial Clean up of “hot spots”	£10,000
▪ Other clean –up work	£7,000
▪ Weed clearance	£4,000
▪ Signs for identifying “hot spot” monitoring	£2,000
▪ Education campaign	£7,000
▪ <b>Total</b>	<b>£40,000</b>

7.2 However, graffiti removal will need an ongoing commitment of £10,000, although other sources of funding will be sought in the meantime. The Education campaign should be an ongoing commitment of £2,000.

7.3 This campaign will be managed using existing staff resources within the Council.

7.4 Nothing in this proposal provides additional resources for any enforcement action, which would require additional staff resources if it were to be pursued. Whilst some enforcement can be carried out by existing staff, this is limited due to their current workload.

## **8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The Council has an obligation to maintain the environment under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This duty is carried out through current contracts, although this additional funding will provide the means to further carry out this duty and deal with target areas.

## **9 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 As these issues affect Parish Councils, they will be contacted to provide local support to the campaign through their newsletters and to encourage Parish staff to report issues to the District Council.

9.2 Consultation with Parish / Town Councils should be carried out on the procurement of the weeding element of this proposal.

## **10 RECOMMENDATION**

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

That the proposed campaign of action to improve the environment be endorsed.



Roger Crofts

Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

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**Background Papers:-**

None

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**APPENDIX A**

**HOT SPOTS**

**FLY-TIPPING**

**Great Waking**

Mucking Hall Road, Barrow Hall Road, Common Road

**Rochford**

Shopland Road, Brickfields Way, Millhead Way, Rochehall Way, Hall Road  
Laybys, Cherry Orchard Lane, Cherry Orchard Way, Ironwell Lane

**Canewdon**

Gardiners Lane

**Rawreth**

Carpenters Arms (Old Chelmsford Road), Chichester Loop (Old London Road)  
A1245 Laybys

**Hullbridge**

Beeches Road, Watery Lane

**All Recycling Sites**

**LITTER**

**Great Waking**

Morrins Close, Glebe Close

**Rochford**

Rochford Garden Way, Footpath Rochford Garden Way / Tylney Avenue,  
Somerset Avenue, The Drive, Middlemead, Rochehall Way, Millhead Way

**Hullbridge**

Footpath Keswick Avenue/Mayfield Avenue, Footpath Thorpedene  
Avenue/Broom Road, Rear of shops Ferry Road Junction of Wallace Close

**Rayleigh**

Rawreth Lane, Tendring Avenue, Bardfield Way, Grange Gardens , Trinity  
Road, Grove Road, Broad Oak Way, Brook Road

**LITTER ON PRIVATE LAND**

**Rayleigh**

Rear of Bellingham Lane shops, Rear of shops Websters Way, Rawreth Industrial Estate,

**DOG FOULING**

**Great Wakering**

Twyford Avenue, Mercer Avenue, Footpath Conway Avenue/High Street (By Butchers)

**Rochford**

Rocheway, Mornington Avenue, Rochford Garden Way

**Hawke**

Sunny Road

**Hullbridge**

Ferry Road, Burnham Road

**Rayleigh**

Footpath Langham Drive/Bardfield Way, Footpath Eastwood Road/Nevers Road, Leasway, The Gattens (Green Area), Warwick Road Junction with Clarence Road, Beech Road, Link Road, Footpath Elm Drive/London Hill, Footpath Tending Avenue / Tillingham Way (by play space)

**WEEDS**

**Rochford**

Back Lane, South Street, West Street, North Street, East Street, Old Ship Lane

**Hockley**

Footpath Brinkworth Close/Willow Drive, Footpath Orchard Avenue/Greensward Lane

**Rayleigh**

Bellingham Lane, Footpath Bardfield Way/Langham Drive

**DOG FOULING**

**Great Wakering**

Twyford Avenue, Mercer Avenue, Footpath Conway Avenue/High Street

**Rochford**

Rocheway, Mornington Avenue, Rochford Garden Way

**Hawkevell**

Sunny Road

**Hullbridge**

Ferry Road, Burnham Road

**Rayleigh**

Footpath Langham Drive/Bardfield Way, Footpath Eastwood Road / Nevern Road, Leasway, The Gattens (Green Area), Warwick Road Junction with Clarence Road, Beech Road, Link Road, Footpath Elm Drive/London Hill, Footpath Tendring Avenue / Tillingham Way (by play space)

**WEEDS**

**Rochford**

Back Lane, South Street, West Street, North Street, East Street, Old Ship Lane

**Hockley**

Footpath Brinkworth Close / Willow Drive, Footpath Orchard Avenue / Greensward Lane

**Rayleigh**

Bellingham Lane, Footpath Bardfield Way / Langham Drive