

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

27 MAY 2014

**UPDATE REPORT FROM
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
- DOG FOULING**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To update the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Executive in respect of additional recommendations made by the Environment Scrutiny Panel following previous investigations on the topic of dog fouling.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Environment Scrutiny Panel's recommendations, for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Executive, are as follows:
 - 1) That Middlesbrough Council adopts use of temporary warning signs and footpath stencils in persistent problem areas of dog fouling.
 - 2) That Community Councils are informed of the approach to be taken and requested to contribute towards the purchase costs of the warning signs for use in their area.

BACKGROUND

3. Members will be aware that that dog fouling is widely regarded as the most offensive type of litter on our streets and it is consistently raised as a public concern. Not only is it unsightly and unpleasant but it can also be dangerous to public health, particularly through the disease ¹toxocariasis.
4. The Environment Scrutiny Panel was previously informed that, although Keep Britain Tidy has recorded a reduction in overall levels of dog fouling nationally since 2001/02, it is still a significant cause of offence amongst the public. It continues to be a major issue in many of our towns and cities.

¹ Toxocariasis is a roundworm infection. It mainly affects children between 18 months and five years and can cause eye disorders, nausea, asthma and (in rare cases) seizures and fits.

5. While recognising in early 2013 that, based on relevant performance indicators, the streets of Middlesbrough were at their cleanest ever levels, the Environment Scrutiny Panel considered that dog fouling problems had worsened in some areas - indeed since that time, indications are that the number of dog fouling complaints received by the Council's Streetscene Services has risen in recent times.
6. As a result of the scrutiny panel's investigation, a final report was produced which made seven recommendations for consideration by The Executive. The panel's final report and recommendations were approved by The Executive on 16 July 2013. The recommendations are shown in the departmental Action Plan attached at **Appendix 1**.

UPDATED POSITION

7. Most recently, the Environment Scrutiny Panel heard that temporary signs are used by Stockton Council to address problems of dog fouling. The signs are bright yellow, three sided ('tri-signs') and are fixed to lamp posts in 'hot spot' areas, such as open spaces and grass verges. Each sign features the following three messages:
 - *ATTENTION - Dog fouling patrols are currently targeting this area.*
 - *ATTENTION - Please ensure you pick up after your dog.*
 - *ATTENTION - For further information, or to report an irresponsible dog owner, contact Environmental health on (01642).....*
8. The signs are used in conjunction with temporary pavement stencils, which last for around six weeks, depending on weather conditions. Pictures of the signs and an example of the stencil in use are shown at **Appendix 2**. A quantity of 50 signs costs £23.00 per sign, plus VAT.
9. The signs and stencils are used in problem areas in a 'blitz' campaign over two to four weeks. Associated action includes use of high-visibility, uniformed enforcement staff and animal collection/enforcement officers. These staff work shifts to cover from 6.30 am to 9.00pm, Monday to Friday, and from 9.00am to 5.00pm on Saturdays and Sundays. Staff also give out bags to dog owners at the same time.
10. Stockton Council advises that this targeted enforcement action has had mainly positive results with good feedback from both non dog owners and responsible dog owners. In particular, this approach has succeeded in getting the message across to the public that the authority is trying to do something - the tri signs in particular are useful in that regard. Evidence in the past has suggested that, although action was being taken, the public would claim that they never saw any evidence of this.

PROPOSED ACTION

11. The Environment Scrutiny Panel was interested to learn of the approach that has been taken to addressing dog fouling problem areas of Stockton Borough. However, given Middlesbrough Council's current budgetary position, it is unlikely that a resource-intensive campaign on dog fouling could be implemented in Middlesbrough. However, the scrutiny panel considers that the use of the temporary warning signs on lampposts could, in particular, be a relatively low-cost and effective way of taking action on dog fouling in hot spot area across the borough.

BACKGROUND AND REFERENCE MATERIAL

12. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 18 March and 29 April 2014.

COUNCILLOR BOB KERR

CHAIR OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

1 May 2013

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