

Report to: Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 14 July 2016

Lead Member / Officer: Lead Member Public Realm

Report Author: Head of Planning and Public Protection
Public Protection Manager

Title: Dog Fouling Strategy Update

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This is a report providing Members with an update on the progress made against the Council's dog fouling strategy.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.2 To update members on the progress against the Dog Fouling Strategy.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 That members consider the contents of the report, comment accordingly and support the excellent work undertaken by officers across services to tackle dog fouling in the County.

4. Report details

4.1 Dog fouling is a persistent source of complaints and the Council received 477 dog fouling related complaints recorded on CRM during the calendar year of 2015. This was down from 592 in 2014. This is a 19% decrease (see Appendix 1).

4.2 The Streetscene Team within Highways and Environmental Services work closely with Public Protection Officers and our Environmental Crime Consultants (Kingdom Security Ltd) to ensure dog fouling is addressed. Together we have reviewed and updated existing working practices to help tackle the issue of Dog Fouling.

4.3 Frontline staff now interact far more with dog owners. Staff routinely hand out the disposable bags to dog owners and issue advice on where the nearest bin is. This interaction with dog owners also allows the team to gather intelligence on persistent offenders which helps identify "hot spots" for the Kingdom enforcement officers to target.

4.4 The Streetscene team now sprays yellow chalk spray whenever they clean dog mess to help raise public awareness. This has been well received by the public.

- 4.5 Public Protection Managers, Kingdom enforcement officers and the Streetscene team now meet on a regular basis to exchange information on “hot spots” and to pass on any intelligence they have gathered about persistent offenders. This information includes times, dates and a description of the dogs which helps the Kingdom enforcement officers to target problem areas in a more effective way.
- 4.6 The number of requests from customers to the Streetscene team to clear dog mess is showing a downward trend and the target is for the team to deal with the mess the same day the request is received.

Dog fouling enforcement action

- 4.7 The Public Protection team operates in partnership with Kingdom Security Ltd for the enforcement of some aspects of environmental crime including dog fouling. This has existed since October 2012. The remit is to provide enforcement of offences relating to dog fouling, fly posting, graffiti, littering and smoking in enclosed spaces.
- 4.8 The Kingdom team consists of 6 enforcement officers (including a team leader) supported by a single administrative officer. This covers the whole county.
- 4.9 Officers are deployed six days every week currently between from 7am to 5 pm operating a two shift system. The hours of duty is extended as the hours of daylight increase. The hours of darkness make it difficult to get good evidence to take enforcement action. Dog fouling patrols occur every day as a priority and have done so since October 2012. Specific operations have taken place targeting problematic areas of environmental crime. A recent example is Operation Daybreak which took place between the 16th and 28th of May. This was a high profile operation between 06.00 and 22.00 every day, therefore including hours of the day where we consider most dog fouling takes place. Several dog owners were approached during the operation to ask whether they had ‘poo bags’ and to provide education and guidance. A total of 10 dog fouling fixed penalty notices were served and 266 for littering. Officers will now also be deployed on Sundays for a period of time.
- 4.10 We have identified a number of locations in the county that are ‘hot spots’. These are particularly problematic dog fouling locations. These are visited by officers on a daily basis. A list of the current hot spots can be seen in Appendix 2.
- 4.11 Officers also letter drop houses in the area where dog fouling occurs to let the local residents know that we are patrolling the area and also let any potential offenders know that we will take action if we catch them. Public Protection and Kingdom officers also routinely engage with businesses in the locality, schools and town and community councils.
- 4.12 Kingdom enforce the legislation predominantly through the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) that if remain unpaid beyond the period allowed will be referred to the Magistrates Court for prosecution for the commission of the original offence.

- 4.13 We have effectively targeted the dog fouling hot spots over recent months and have served a total of 45 FPNs for dog fouling in 2016 to date. We served more dog fouling FPNs during 2014/15 than any other Local Authority in Wales. We have 24 prosecution cases pending in court for dog owners who have not paid their FPNs.
- 4.14 Powers also exist within the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 to introduce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) to exclude dogs from certain land i.e. enclosed children's play grounds, school grounds, sports pitches, cemeteries etc. and also to require dog owners to put their dogs on leads in certain areas. This requires careful consideration and planning to ensure that only proportionate and evidence based controls are introduced. The process requires a public consultation before introducing such a PSPO and we are currently finalising our proposals to consult the public.
- 4.15 We have also recently purchased small/compact CCTV cameras which can be installed at certain hot spot locations to provide a deterrent to potential offenders or indeed record any offences taking place. Reflective (glow in the dark) temporary signs are placed in those locations informing any potential offender that we are monitoring the area for dog fouling offences and that CCTV is being utilised. These CCTV cameras are not part of the public space CCTV system. These cameras retain the information that can be downloaded and viewed at a later date.
- 4.16 We continue to work closely with the DCC press office to make best use of the media in getting messages out on dog fouling. This includes coverage on operations undertaken, health risks associated with dog fouling, prosecution cases undertaken etc.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1 The work undertaken as part of the dog fouling strategy directly contributes to the corporate priority of securing clean and tidy streets.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1 The costs are retained within service budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report

- 7.1 An EQIA is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1 Consultation has taken place with officers from Environmental Services, Kingdom Security Ltd and Planning and Public Protection.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 All costs within existing budgets.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 Kingdom do not carry out sufficient dog fouling patrols and FPNs are served without sufficient evidence. Those risks are addressed by robust management of Kingdom by Public Protection Managers. The arrangements between the Council and Kingdom have recently been subject to an internal audit. The report was generally very positive. The Lead Member for Public Realm and relevant Corporate Director are regularly updated on performance in this area of work.

11. Power to make the Decision

11.1 Article 6.3.4(b) details scrutiny's power with regards to performance monitoring and the delivery of policy objectives.

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