

Report to: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 25 November 2013

Lead Member: Lead Member for Public Realm

Report Author: Marketing Tourism and Events Officer (Coastal) and the Corporate Communications Team Leader

Title: Progress report on Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 This report is to inform members of the progress to date of the Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign following the soft launch of the campaign on the 18th February and previous reports submitted to SLT and Members.
- 1.2 Dog fouling is a persistent source of complaints for the Council. The issue has been raised in the local media with a regular call on the Council to address the issue. Dog fouling has also been highlighted in the residents' survey as one of the biggest issues that needs addressing. It has been identified that dog fouling is also an issue for community safety and a drain on corporate resources.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

Further to the report submitted in February 2013, Scrutiny requested an update on the campaign to date as this is a new and modern approach to marketing campaigns for the Council. This report will provide information about the campaign's progress to date and plans going forward over the coming months.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Scrutiny:

- 3.1 considers the report, which highlights the progress and the impact of the approach to addressing the dog fouling issue in the County; and
- 3.2 provide observations on the effectiveness of the strategy to date, the future length of the campaign and the availability of resources to support the delivery of the strategy in the long term.

4. Report details

This report advises Scrutiny of the current position of the campaign and seeks comments on considerations moving forward. It details the marketing activities that are currently taking place and ongoing plans. The report also highlights any issues so far and recommendations.

4.1 Activities to date:

The decision to deploy such a substantial and co-ordinated marketing approach, compared to what has been done before, uses the strengths of all the services involved to promote and achieve how the Council is listening and reacting to its communities. The Council has recognised the need to be more robust, co-ordinated and comprehensive in enforcing and educating about dog fouling issues in the County. The campaign has allowed the Council to

communicate how it is achieving key corporate priorities providing a clean environment across the County.

The strategic purpose of this new approach is to run a clearly branded multi-media campaign highlighting the following:

- To understand why this is a problem in Denbighshire.
- To raise the awareness of the dog fouling issues in Denbighshire.
- To educate people about the health dangers of dog fouling.
- To engage and consult with the local community and key partners to increase social responsibility to keep streets clean and reduce this anti-social form of behaviour.
- To reduce the number of incidents of dog fouling in the county.

To date, the following activities have taken place:

- Communication & marketing materials
- Enforcement
- Collaboration and community involvement

Please see further details in the attached appendices.

Over the last 6 months, the enforcement team has undertaken in the region of 500-600 visits to our towns to 'patrol' for dog fouling. This demonstrates that the Council is out there checking, advising dog owners of their responsibilities and deterring the irresponsible owners from allowing their dog to foul. We want to shift the focus onto this activity rather than the service of fixed penalty notices, which is, as we know, very limited as a measure of success.

The enforcement team has also done a week event on Rhyl High Street, where they had Kingdom officers handing out free dog bags, providing advice and receiving information from the public about hot spots in their community, the feedback from the community was excellent.

The team has also done some special operations in some hot spots including East Parade, Rhyl and Cae Ddol, Ruthin. This involved using mobile CCTV cameras.

Analysis of statistics from 18th Feb to 20th Oct: The campaign has been in place since February and has seen numerous press releases, Facebook comments, activities and feedback in full support of the activities taking place.

The impact of the campaign is still being monitored but to date we have seen a total of:

- 48 online reports filled in
- 86 respondents to the 1st online survey
- 473 dog fouling related web pages viewed. 220 views of 'Denbighshire says enough is enough', 114 views of 'Council and the police joins forces to tackle dog fouling' and 99 'You said we did' articles.
- 198 (excluded 85 calls due to the snow) 0800 calls
- 374 enquiries on the CRM Feb – Oct 13. In comparison to 185 in 2010, 192 in 2011 and 287 in 2012. Clearly this shows that the campaign is increasing people's awareness of the issue of dog fouling and that it is no longer acceptable in our communities. We predicted an increase in the number of dog fouling related enquiries due to the high profile marketing and enforcement campaign and these statistics support this. This will continue to increase over the winter months due to the darker evenings and owners thinking they can't be seen.
- 24 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for dog fouling since the 18th Feb. 1 in Llangollen, 3 in Prestatyn and 20 in Rhyl.

- Enforcement Operations have been done at East Parade, Marine Lake, Henllan, Brickfield Pond, Bodelwyddan and Llandegla and the response has been positive. The placement of signs is used alongside officer presence, letter dropping, harassing dog owners, issuing out waste bags, issuing the post cards with numbers to report incidents on, and of course tickets.
- Following significant investment over the past couple of years, the Council now has close on 1000 litter bins across the county, all of which accept bagged dog waste. This is additional to the dog bins we have placed in tourist areas. All the new bins carry signs indicating they take bagged dog waste and we are in the process of putting similar signs (stickers) on the old bins. 120 bins have been purchased since the campaign began.
- In the latest Keep Wales Tidy clean streets report dog fouling is shown to be at a similar level as recorded in 2007/08 but has actually shown a slight increase over last year.
- Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS) CI score from self-inspection for 2012/13 as reported to Keep Wales Tidy (KWT) and to the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) was 93.5%. The figure for 2011/12 was 92.1% and for 2010/11 was 92.8%.
- Overall our clean streets indicator is significantly higher than the all Wales average of 67.6 at 70.6. Please see appendix 6 for more information

Compared to the top 5 hot-spots in February, the top 5-hotspots have not changed other than Prestatyn moving from 4th to 2nd on the list. The top 5 hot spot areas are Rhyl, Prestatyn, Denbigh, Ruthin and Rhuddlan.

The statistics in the appendices clearly show an increase in resident interaction coinciding with increased marketing activities i.e. press releases, attending open days, adverts and so on. For example, when there is an increase in CRM activity, it relates to either a press release being issued, an advert in the local papers or attendance at a Council event/open day i.e. leisure open days. At these events, a stand was set up to raise the awareness of the campaign and the issues surrounding it. The stand included an interactive game to engage with young children about safely picking up dog mess, while also engaging with adults as to hot-spot areas within their communities. The children also told officers of hot-spot areas, particularly along walking routes to schools.

Feedback from residents is generally positive about the campaign. The few negative comments have been about the image that is used. It has been explained to residents that the image stimulates conversation, positive or negative, about the campaign and issue in our communities, therefore, raising awareness that it is not acceptable to allow dog fouling in the County.

The Council has been approached by surrounding counties, including community councils in Conwy, asking to use the image of the campaign as it is more effective than the one they currently use. Flintshire County Council has also asked where we got our lampost signs from to use the same format for their campaign. The use of the signs has been a big success and they have been used in many places to reinforce the prevention and reduction especially in Cae Ddol, Rhuddlan and a few other places. Councillors have requested them after realising that they can be placed immediately and are high profile. The banners are being used also.

Please see further details in the attached appendices.

4.2 Activities - Looking Forward: There are a number of supporting activities to the campaign that need to be planned and implemented. Please see further details in the attached appendices. These include:

- 4.2.1** Education Programme – this is being delivered by Youth Services by the end of November. This will include visiting schools with examples of the promotional material for them to take home, interactive games and so on. They will communicate the key messages of the campaign through schools and youth centres.
- 4.2.2** Consultation & Community Involvement and the delivery of the Anti-Dog Fouling Strategy – once the strategy has been printed, it will be mailed out to all City, Town and Community Councils to distribute widely in their areas.
- 4.2.3** Marketing Materials – it has been suggested that a reprint of the postcards and posters is done over the next couple of months to support the increase in activity expected in the winter months. These will be distributed via the enforcement teams.
- 4.3 Future Considerations:** The campaign is up and running but there needs to be consideration as to the longevity of the campaign and further resources available in supporting the delivery of this. The primary ongoing costs are the replacement of promotional material and 0800 number, which a budget has been allocated for within the original budget. Further consideration needs to be given to officer time and the 0800 number and how long this remains available.

5. Useful Background Information

Committee members may wish to refer to the previous report submitted to Scrutiny Committee: June 2012, April 2013 and Quarterly Briefings on environmental crime patrols and serving of Fixed Penalty Notices

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

Consideration of the issues highlighted in the report will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priority in a modern way, which is affordable and sustainable for the benefit of the local community, and without having a detrimental affect on the County's residents.

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

Full details of the cost of the campaign can be seen in the attached appendices. Overall, the Marketing of the campaign for design and print of materials etc has cost £8,599.52.

From the remaining budget of marketing and communications, recommendations have been made to continue to support the campaign with further materials.

After the budget has been spent for marketing and communications, planning and public protection and environment would be affected by ongoing costs of materials being produced and officer time in managing the campaign, enforcement and cleaning up hot-spot areas.

8. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not required for this report. This report provides a retrospective evaluation of the Council's performance to date of the anti-dog fouling campaign, and the decision to approve the report has no potential impact on people sharing protected characteristics.

9. What consultation has been carried out?

This report has been put together in full consultation with Head of Service (Communications, Marketing & Leisure), Head of Service (Planning & Public Protection) and Head of Service

(Highways and Environmental Services), members have been consulted, along with the Lead Member for Public Realm.

Consultation has taken place with Member Area Groups (MAGs) by the Community Engagement Manager, discussing the Anti-Dog Fouling Strategy. Feedback has now been received and a public friendly leaflet will be produced and available in key locations around the County to reinforce the campaign by the end of November.

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

Potential risks to the success and sustainability of the campaign is the support of the local community. It needs to be made clear that communities need to share the responsibility with the council in achieving our objectives. This will be achieved by getting local people & city, town and communities councils to support the campaign, to be our eyes and ears in the community and report problems correctly with relevant details of offenders. This would be achieved by continued effective consultation with MAG's, City, Town and Community Councils and so on.

11. Power to make the Decision

Article 6.3 of the Council's Constitution

12. Supporting Documents

- Appendix 1 & 2 - Communications and Marketing Activities, including collaboration and community involvement
- Appendix 3 - Statistics
- Appendix 4 - Financial Report for communication and marketing activities.
- Appendix 5 - Quarterly Briefing on environmental crime patrols and serving of Fixed Penalty Notices (1st Apr – 30th Sept 2013)
- Appendix 6 – Keep Wales Tidy LEAMS Report
- Appendix 7 – Clean Streets Statistics

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