



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 3 – KEEP NORTHAMPTON TIDY

15 JANUARY 2015

BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISITS

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its inaugural scoping meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that a number of site visits would take place. The purpose of the site visits was for a comparison to be made with other towns against that of Northampton.

2 SITE VISITS

2.1 WALKABOUT OF NORTHAMPTON

- 2.1.1 On Tuesday, 21 October 2014, between the hours of 8am and 9:30am, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel joined the regularly organised walkabout of Northampton.
- 2.1.2 Evidence of Street Drinkers was apparent, as was evidence of rough sleepers, such as cardboard, blankets, a shopping trolley containing rubbish and empty wine bottles. Drug detritus was also present. A shopping trolley was also noticed in the park by Victoria Promenade.
- 2.1.3 The refuse bins of a local restaurant were noted to be tidy with refuse sacks neatly stacked. Waste containers in one end of Fish Street were seen and it was felt they gave the area an untidy appearance. The removal of these bins is being investigated. The other end of Fish Street however, contained no bins. Waste bins along Dychurch Lane gave the area an untidy appearance.
- 2.1.4 Graffiti was evident on some buildings. Cigarette butts were seen along Kingswell Street. Rubbish was noticed under a tree in the town centre but this was scheduled to be collected later that day.

- 2.1.5 The mechanical sweeper was seen cleaning along Emporium Way.
- 2.1.6 The brick planter located outside a nightclub was commended but if an evergreen tree, such as conifer was planted in it; it would enhance the area. The tyre planters in Victoria Gardens were admired; giving the area a sense of community pride.
- 2.1.7 St Johns station passage was seen as very clean and tidy.
- 2.1.8 Attached at Appendix A are photographs taken along the walkabout with detailed comments regarding the findings.

2.2 PETERBOROUGH

- 2.2.1 On Tuesday, 28 October 2014, between the hours of 11:30am and 12:30pm, representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Peterborough. It was noted that Peterborough has a big night-time economy, similar to the scale of Northampton's.
- 2.2.2 On driving into Peterborough littering was noticed along one of the main routes into the city centre. The multi storey car park next to the Market Hall was observed as clean and tidy. An operator was seen cleaning the stair wells.
- 2.2.3 The toilets were very clean; there is a charge of 20p to use the toilets.
- 2.2.4 The market area was perceived as very clean.
- 2.2.5 Within the city centre, lots of cigarette butts were noted within the town centre and the main walkway from the market to the city centre. Tree wells were used as ashtrays. Graffiti was also visible. Flyposting was seen on the telephone boxes.
- 2.2.6 A large number of pigeons were seen as were signs asking that the pigeons are not fed.
- 2.2.7 There appeared to be a problem with chewing gum on the pavements; the Scrutiny Panel noticed a great deal of chewing gum along the main walkway from the market the town centre.
- 2.2.8 A number of bus shelters and alley ways appeared to be used as toilets.

- 2.2.9 The Scrutiny Panel noted a lack of litter bins in the city centre. Some of the bins were old and liquid had seeped out of the bottom.
- 2.2.10 There was a strong smell of drains in the town centre but it was felt that this could have been due to the highways work that was taking place.
- 2.2.11 Attached at Appendix B are photographs taken during the visit to the city centre with comments regarding the findings.

2.3 MARKET HARBOROUGH

- 2.3.1 On Tuesday, 28 October 2014, between the hours of 1:45pm and 3:15pm, representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Market Harborough. Market Harborough is a small market town; its night-time economy is of a much smaller scale to that of Northampton or Peterborough. It comprises mainly restaurants and places to eat rather than late night music venues.
- 2.3.2 The car park located to the indoor market was very clean; no litter was observed. The litter bins were old and were well used with no spillages visible.
- 2.3.3 The shop frontages were very clean and tidy.
- 2.3.4 The alleyways were clean as was the town centre as a whole. Minimal litter was visible, for example a broken strip light was seen in an alley way outside a shop. A rat was seen in the river bed that ran through the town.
- 2.3.5 One toilet block was noted as very clean and well maintained. The toilets located near to the market had not been recently cleaned and the bins were overflowing in the cubicles and the floor required a clean.
- 2.3.6 Clear no drinking alcohol in public places signage was noted.
- 2.3.7 Flyposting was seen on one telephone box and just one dirty doorway observed.
- 2.3.8 Attached at Appendix B are photographs taken during the visit to the town and comments regarding the findings.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The key findings from the site visits:

Northampton

- 3.1.1 St Johns station passage was observed as very clean and tidy.
- 3.1.2 Evidence of street drinkers and rough sleepers was apparent.

- 3.1.3 Refuse bins outside a restaurant were very tidy, with sacks neatly stacked.
- 3.1.4 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased to note that investigations are taking place regarding the removal of big waste bins outside commercial properties in the town centre.
- 3.1.5 The Scrutiny Panel felt that the planting of foliage in brick planters would enhance an area. For example, the tyre planters in Victoria Gardens were admired; giving the area a sense of community pride.

Peterborough

- 3.1.6 Peterborough has a big night-time economy, of a similar scale to that of Northampton. The city centre was not very clean, with litter and graffiti visible during the site visit.
- 3.1.7 The Scrutiny Panel observed the problem with pigeons, agreeing that the signage “Please do not feed the pigeons” was very useful.
- 3.1.8 The toilets were very clean. There is a charge of twenty pence to use the toilets.

Market Harborough

- 3.1.9 Market Harborough is smaller than Northampton and is a market town. It has a small night-time economy comprising mainly restaurants and eateries.
- 3.1.10 The town centre was very clean with minimal littering.
- 3.1.11 Public toilets were of varying standards; one was noted as very clean and well maintained whereas another appeared not to have been cleaned for some hours.
- 3.1.12 Telephone boxes appear to attract flyposting.
- 3.1.13 There was clear signage regarding the prohibition of drinking alcohol in public places.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the findings from the site visits informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

Brief Author: Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Tony Ansell, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3 – Keep Northampton Tidy

Date: 4 November 2014