

# **NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**



### **SCRUTINY PANEL 3 – KEEP NORTHAMPTON TIDY**

#### **CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS**

**RESPONSE: Head of Environmental Services covering Cherwell and  
South Northants**

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review:

- To undertake a review regarding implementing a 'Keep Northampton Tidy' campaign with an accent on preserving wildlife and encouraging children (and adults) to take an interest in their surroundings, to include Community Clean Ups and 'Northampton in Bloom.'
- A review of the problem of littering and fly-tipping, particularly in un-adopted roads and the gateways into the town.
- To explore opportunities to enhance the gateways into the town.

The expected outcomes of this Scrutiny Review are:

- To substantially raise people's awareness and appreciation of keeping Northampton tidy and their role in this
- To continue to get community groups involved in keeping Northampton tidy
- To ensure that existing limited resources are utilised fully to raising people's awareness and appreciation of keeping Northampton tidy and their role in this
- To identify areas that have a detrimental effect on the image of the town
- To work with other Agencies to minimise fly-tipping and littering and discourage this taking place, as well as enhancing the gateways into the town

## CORE QUESTIONS:

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

1. In your opinion, how could people's awareness and their roles in keeping Northampton tidy be raised? There are a number of ways people's awareness could be raised from one off publicity drives to more sustained campaigns. In Cherwell District Council area Neighbourhood blitz events are used. In these areas week long events covering around 1500 properties take place, residents are made aware through leaflets and additional street cleansing resources are used to bring up the area to the highest standards. Residents are engaged to try and take pride in their area so that standards do not slip. There are things such as free bulky waste collections in those areas for that week to encourage residents to remove things such as old sofas or white goods. Sometimes these items which may be sitting in their front gardens damaging the overall appeal of an area. Besides Neighbourhood blitz events Cherwell District Council use a cartoon character Major Sparkle to encourage young people to keep areas clean. We have a set of flip charts which we can present at primary schools.
2. Northampton Borough Council engages Community Groups in keeping Northampton tidy, Community clean ups (and the use of tools such as Kangaroo Run) and Northampton in Bloom could the engagement process be enhanced and how? There are no easy answers. It requires sustained engagement to keep in touch with Community groups and keep up their level of enthusiasm
3. In terms of tidiness and cleanliness, do you feel there are any areas within Northampton that have a detrimental effect on the borough? Please provide further details. Don't have enough knowledge of Northampton although coming from Towcester some of the dual carriageways can be scruffy at times. Cleaning such roads is tricky and sometimes requires the use of traffic management to close lanes off so that litter picking can be carried out safely. This can make cleaning such roads more expensive.
4. Please provide details of how you feel work with other Agencies could take place to minimise fly-tipping and littering and discourage this taking place, as well as enhancing the gateways into the town. Working with groups such as Chamber of Commerce and other businesses which have an interest in keeping areas such as the town centre tidy. The provision of cigarette litter

bins outside restaurants and licenced premises can help. Working with businesses so that they keep their waste contained and don't put their waste out too early for collection

5. How effective do you feel issues for street cleansing, cleanliness and enforcement are dealt with on main roads and highways; such as reaction time, outcomes and customer satisfaction?

Some of the reaction times seem slow compared to others. For example removing weeds on the highways seems a reasonable time, 5 days for litter picking requests seems long. In South Northants or Cherwell, the areas I cover ,a request for litter picking would usually be carried out by the end of the next working day.

But generally the response times look ok

For example at the Borough Council:

**Customer satisfaction** is measured by an annual survey carried out by Enterprise which is done on a basis similar to the Place Survey methodology

**Outcomes** – the contract is performance measured against specific contract indicators

**Reaction times** – these are governed by the specification as laid out in the attached table

The following are contractual standards for response to various types of service request

<b>STREETS &amp; GROUNDS - SERVICE REQUESTS / COMPLAINTS</b>		
REASON FOR SERVICE REQUEST		NORTHAMPTON SLAs
Litter picking or street sweeping request	---	5 working days
Weeds on highways	---	5 working days
Shrub/hedge concerns	---	5 working days
Grass cutting request	---	5 working days
Missed area grass cutting	---	5 working days

Encroachment of trees	---	30 days
Tree branches fallen	Urgent or non-urgent	24 hours
Tree complaints	---	30 working days
Dog litter bins	---	24 hours
Dead animals	---	24 hours
Environmental cleansing complaints	---	3 working days
Graffiti removal - Offensive	---	24 hours
Graffiti removal - Non-offensive	---	16 working days
Self-service graffiti removal - Offensive	---	24 hours
Self-service graffiti removal - Non-offensive	---	16 working days
Fly-tipping request	---	24 hours
Self-service fly tipping request	---	24 hours
Open spaces complaint	---	10 working days

The NBC policy for **response time** in respect to service requests for enforcement is normally within three working days.

6. Please provide details of your experiences of the main routes into the town centre, both by vehicle and on foot, in terms of cleanliness and tidiness. I come into Northampton about once a month for meetings with the County Council or the NWP. Generally I approach the centre by walking down Gold Street. Generally the road is litter free. However chewing gum looks to be an issue.

7. Do you have further information or comments regarding Keep Northampton Tidy or other campaigns which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?

The effectiveness of the Street Cleansing team is always key. The team must be committed to keep areas clean, work flexibly, clean the areas which need cleaning and not have a work programme which is solely based on cleaning frequencies. The quality of staff is important and staff need encouragement so that they know their work is seen to be of great importance.

If the team is effective then efforts through education and enforcement to stop litter and fly tipping occurring are also important. Publicity for successful prosecutions, issuing of fixed penalty notices help get the message to residents that littering and fly tipping will not be tolerated.

South Northants has different littering issues due to the district being very rural and only having two small urban centres. However the other area I cover, Cherwell District Council with three urban centres two of which have 7 day/week shopping some of the issues are similar to those experienced by Northampton Borough Council. However both Councils have a strategy for keeping the district clean by having an effective Street Cleansing team and using education and enforcement as well to keep the districts clean.