

# OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TO CABINET 15 JULY 2015

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – KEEP NORTHAMPTON TIDY
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**Agenda Status: PUBLIC**

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Review – Keep Northampton Tidy.
- 1.2 Members of Cabinet have been issued with a copy of the full report. All Overview and Scrutiny review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of this report can be located:  
[www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny) - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:

### **Keep Northampton Tidy**

- 2.1.1 Investigate the wider use of the successful NBC Report It App., such as the inclusion of a facility to report tree issues, and used as a channel to request and co-ordinate community action such as litter picks. Consider extended to include NCC issues within the borough.
- 2.1.3 All Councillors are sent details of the Report It App., how it works and details of the Report It App. are included in the Induction Pack for all Councillors.
- 2.1.4 A Usage Log for the Report It App. is produced on an annual basis.

- 2.1.5 Officers, such as Neighbourhood Wardens, are charged to use adhesive stickers over illegal fly-posts advertising events indicating cancellation of the event in appropriate cases and removing outdated fly-posts.
- 2.1.6 Officers from Planning Services rigorously pursues perpetrators to illegal advertising/flyposting with a view to prosecution. The Scrutiny Panel recognises legislative weaknesses regarding flyposting and asks that Cabinet lobbies MPs for a change in legislation to make it easier to prosecute in respect of this issue.
- 2.1.7 Funding of £2,000 is made available for:
- i. Officers to be charged with disseminating portable ashtrays in the town centre.
  - ii. "Do not feed the pigeons" signs to be erected in various locations in the town centre.

The provision of chewing gum boards is investigated on a cost benefit basis.

- 2.1.8 To enhance an area, empty brick or similar highway planters in situ in the town centre are, either filled with various foliage, removed or topped with a hard surface.
- 2.1.9 Officers are instructed to contact supermarkets highlighting the problem of abandoned shopping trolleys in the town and encouraged to participate in a trolley collection schemes.
- 2.1.10 Through the Planning Conditions, supermarkets and similar shops are required to have mechanisms installed to prevent trolleys being removed from site.
- 2.1.11 All Councillors are provided with details of the Shop Front Cleaning Orders (Community Protection Notices) and Street Litter Control Notices Legislation, the guidance to this Legislation when it becomes available and other relevant Legislation.
- 2.1.12 All relevant Agencies are encouraged to come together at budget planning time, with the aim of making a contribution to the cleanliness and community safety of the town.
- 2.1.13 Cabinet considers the gating of jetties at night in the town centre that are currently subject to anti-social behaviour.

### **Keep Northampton Tidy Campaign**

- 2.1.14 Information about resources available is published on the Council's website.
- 2.1.15 In recognising their success, Cabinet explores the effectiveness of Kangaroo Runs.
- 2.1.16 Additional funding of £5,000 per year is allocated for five schemes with Junior Wardens and education activities.

- 2.1.17 The viability of running a National Citizen Scheme (NCS) to attract mid-late teenagers involvement is investigated.
- 2.1.18 Community Clean Ups are co-ordinated so that they supplement the cleansing regime of the Environmental Services contract.
- 2.1.19 Campaigns, such as Community Clean Ups, are publicised both on the Council's webpage and by the organisers of the Community clean ups.
- 2.1.20 Community (Parish) Enhancement Teams are encouraged to undertake more work within the town.

### **Gateways into the town**

- 2.1.21 Where possible, co-ordinated working between the Local Authorities and the Highways Agency regarding major highway closures to enable litter picking to take place during closure periods.
- 2.1.22 Where practical, the Local Authority and the Highways Agency arranges anti-littering campaigns at service stations.
- 2.1.23 Post April 2015, the Highways Agency is contacted to ask that it reviews its grass cutting schedule to include amenity cuts, in addition to safety/visibility cuts and litter picking schedules, along the A45 throughout the borough; and that MPs are contacted in this respect.
- 2.1.24 Planning Services, Northampton Borough Council, together with the Highways Agency, explores improvements to gateways including signage, such as "Welcome to Northampton" signs to be erected on the entrance to Northampton on the A45 at Billing and at Junction 15 (M1).
- 2.1.25 The Highways Agency is asked to de-clutter signage, in particular around Junction 15(M1).

### **Purple Flag Accreditation**

- 2.1.26 A time limited Action Plan in respect of the 30 criteria of the Purple Flag Accreditation is produced; with the aim of exploring the feasibility of entering an application for Purple Flag Accreditation for Northampton town centre.

## **3. Background and Issues**

- 3.1 The purpose of the review was
- 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.
- 3.2 Following approval of its work programme for 2014/2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting in April 2014 commissioned Scrutiny Panel 3 to

undertake the review – Keep Northampton Tidy. An in-depth review commenced in May 2014 and concluded in March 2015.

- 3.3 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Tony Ansell (Chair); Councillor Sivaramen Subbarayan (Deputy Chair); Councillors Penny Flavell, Mick Ford, Phil Larratt, Matt Lynch, Dennis Meredith and Winston Strachan. Vanessa Kelly, Executive Officer, Northamptonshire Waste Partnership, was co-opted to the review.
- 3.4 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority 2 – invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods (creating an attractive, clean and safe environment.)
- 3.5 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:
- Background data such as:
    - The National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group – Fly-tipping Framework: A National Framework for England for tackling fly-tipping
    - Relevant Planning and Environmental Legislation
    - Performance data and statistics regarding fly-tipping
  - Relevant background reports
  - Best practice data, such as Local Authorities and campaigns elsewhere
  - Desktop research
  - Evidence from expert internal witnesses:
    - Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Enterprise
    - Director for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
    - Cabinet Member for Community Engagement
    - Cabinet Member for Environmental Services
    - Corporate Communications Unit, NBC
    - Neighbourhood Wardens and Environmental Health Manager, NBC
  - Evidence from expert external witnesses
    - Northampton BID
    - Relevant National organisations, such as Keep Britain Tidy
    - Environment Agency
    - The Canal & River Trust
    - Highways Authority, NCC
    - Highways Agency
    - Network Rail
    - Northants Police
    - Parish Councils
    - Relevant Service Directors – Daventry District Council, South Northants and Wellingborough Council
  - Various site visits

3.6 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

3.7 Evidence gathered highlighted that there were  $\frac{3}{4}$  million fly-tipping incidents reported in England last year.

### **Keep Northampton Tidy**

3.8 The Keep Britain Tidy Survey 2012/2013 highlighted that the greatest improvement is in detritus and staining. One of the most visible manifestations of poor local environment is graffiti; with just 3% of the places surveyed having an unacceptable level of graffiti. Nevertheless, there has not been a significant improvement in the number of places meeting the required standard regarding littering and an increase in the number of places having fast food litter.

3.9 The Scrutiny Panel noted that Northampton Borough Council has taken successful prosecutions regarding littering. However, it was realised that prosecutions have become more difficult by the recent control of evidence gathering, for example, use of CCTV – surveillance criteria has been tightened up. Previously, Senior Officers had the power to authorise officers to use covert surveillance but this is now not possible, a request must be put through the courts. An application for CCTV covert surveillance is currently pending.

3.10 The Scrutiny Panel was concerned about the amount of fly-tipping that is seen in alleyways. It realised that the removal of fly-tipping on public land is the responsibility of the Local Authority. Should the Local Authority decide to remove fly-tipping from private land it can, but this has financial implications.

3.11 The Highways Agency has launched a national Littering Strategy to investigate how other Agencies deal with littering. The Northampton Waste Partnership is working on an Anti-Littering Campaign.

3.12 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted that cigarette butts can take up to two years to bio grade and plastic bottles and glass indefinitely. It supported the dissemination of portable ashtrays.

3.13 The Scrutiny Panel was concerned that the last day of the school term can be a problem as often some of the school leavers will have parties in parks, leaving a lot of litter.

3.1.4 In receiving background data, the Scrutiny Panel was pleased to note that the missed bins performance indicator was doing very well.

3.15 The Scrutiny Panel observed problems with chewing gum around the town. Similar problems were also seen during a site visit to another town.

3.16 The importance and value of the Report it app. was noted. By October 2014, 983 individuals have used the Apple platform which has been in existence for over year. 270 have accessed the Android app. which was released in April 2014. The Scrutiny Panel felt that all borough Councillors should be made aware of the app,

and how it works. The Scrutiny Panel was pleased that the “Report It” app. was evolving but felt that the use of the app. could be widened further, such as the inclusion of a facility to report tree issues, such as over-hanging trees and used as a channel to request and co-ordinate community action such as litter picks.

- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased that investigations are taking place regarding the removal of big waste bins outside commercial properties in the town centre.
- 3.19 Fly-posting is a form of littering and can sometimes be perceived as dangerous to drivers by distracting them. The Scrutiny Panel conveyed its concerns about fly-post advertising, noting previous campaigns whereby adhesive stickers saying “event cancelled” had been placed over illegal flyposting worked very well.
- 3.20 The Scrutiny Panel observed the problem with pigeons, agreeing the signage “*Please do not feed the pigeons*” that was seen in Peterborough was very useful.
- 3.21 Street Drinkers are a difficult client group to work with due to their chaotic lifestyles and complex needs. It is therefore important to have good partnership working in place in order to address a wide range of issues. Northampton has established a multi-Agency approach, in order to effectively utilise available interventions and enforcement tools.
- The Scrutiny Panel highlighted that Street Drinkers do not make the town look attractive, and create littering such as empty bottles and cans. There is a need to look at how the multi-Agency approach to Street Drinkers is working. There is a need to look at the town as a whole. As part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee role, in meeting their responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, a bi annual report from the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is provided.
- 3.22 Evidence received highlighted the problem of abandoned shopping trolleys. The Scrutiny Panel felt it would be useful for supermarkets in the town to be contacted to emphasise this problem to them.
- 3.23 The Shop Front Cleaning Orders (Community Protection Notices) and Street Litter Control Notices has only recently become legislation. Guidance on the legislation is awaited. The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the importance of this new legislation and felt it was important that all Members should receive details of it.

## **Keep Northampton Tidy - Campaigns**

- 3.24 The evidence received highlighted the need for a range of methods to be used to raise people's awareness and their roles in keeping Northampton tidy. Campaigns such as posters, press releases, use of social media and the media would be useful. It was noted that Campaigns that engage participants and give them some ownership have worked well previously; for example, children designing an anti-littering poster with the winning design being used on the poster. The Scrutiny Panel felt that additional funding for Junior Wardens and education activities would be useful in helping keep Northampton tidy.
- 3.25 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised the importance of engaging with the community. Evidence received suggested that people are less likely to litter if they feel a sense of pride in and responsibility for their area.
- 3.26 The Scrutiny Panel noted the effectiveness of Kangaroo Runs. However, funding of the initiative can be an issue as some areas of the town suffer from fly-tipping more than others. It would be useful for a budget to be made available for initiatives such as Kangaroo Runs. Each Kangaroo Run costs around £750.
- 3.27 The Scrutiny Panel felt that more work is needed regarding streamlining Community Clean Ups so that they are co-ordinated to supplement the cleansing regime of the contract. The Scrutiny Panel also considered that there is potential to publicise campaigns, such as Community Clean Ups.
- 3.28 The Scrutiny Panel agreed that education is a key issue in solving littering problems.
- 3.29 Littering campaigns at service stations would be useful.
- 3.30 Desktop research undertaken noted that Braintree District Council has carried out a number of programmes aiming to make the environment cleaner and greener; including anti-littering messages to a variety of target audience. "Love Essex – Anti-Littering Campaign" ran throughout June and July 2014 and was supported by Keep Britain Tidy. The Campaign comprised various roadshows and school visits; the aim of which was to spread the word to communities.

## **Gateways into the town**

- 3.31 The Scrutiny Panel accentuated the need to improve the gateways into the town, in particular the A45. It felt that the grass cutting scheduled needed enhancing but the Scrutiny Panel realised that the Highways Agency currently undertakes grass cutting in the interests of safety/visibility rather than for amenity. There is also a need to work with the Highways Agency regarding litter picking schedules on the main routes into the town. In its evidence, the Highways Agency confirmed that

post April 2015 the grass cutting schedule may be able to be reviewed in this respect.

- 3.32 The Scrutiny Panel noted that Network Rail has a response time set of 20 days for all service requests made via its helpline 08457 11 41 41. It will get to cases and assess degree of work required and determine what is required to remove and make good any issues. Network Rail then plans the works within its teams to rectify the issues. Anything deemed offensive to the public is removed as soon as possible.
- 3.33 The Scrutiny Panel stressed the need for joined up working, such as during motorway closures, it would be useful for litter picking to take place. It was acknowledged that this is not always convenient as road works usually take place during night-time hours. The fly-tipping guidance produced by the National Fly-tipping Prevention Group is a useful model on collaborative working.
- 3.34 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised the need for a “Welcome to Northampton” sign. It was acknowledged that a request had been submitted to the Highways Agency for the erection of the signs but installation costs were high. Extra finance made available for gateways and signage, such as “Welcome to Northampton” would be useful.
- 3.35 Evidence gathered detailed that over the last year Northamptonshire Highways has operated a county-wide sign de-cluttering scheme. This scheme looks to remove redundant signs and posts from the highway network. Over the last year in Northampton Borough a number of different sign types and post have been removed.

### **Purple Flag Accreditation**

- 3.36 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that Purple Flag Accreditation can raise the profile of a town centre. It acknowledged that accreditation is dependent upon 30 key factors and street cleansing is only a small part of this. The cleanliness of the centres is assessed under the well-being section of the criteria. There are costs for towns and cities to apply to be accredited with the Purple Flag. Costs vary dependent upon the population. Costs for Local Authorities with a population of over 200,000 are £3,000 and £1,000 for a 12 months light touch fee to maintain the standard. It was realised that it could take time for towns and cities to achieve the 30 criteria of the Purple Flag Accreditation.

## **4. Options**

- 4.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

## **5. Implications (including financial implications)**

### **5.1 Policy**



5.1.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council's policy framework through its work programme.

5.1.2 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to keep Northampton tidy. Cabinet's response will need to consider these issues in detail.

## **5.2 Resources and Risk**

5.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

## **5.3 Legal**

5.3.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

## **5.4 Equality**

5.4.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

## **5.5 Consultees (Internal and External)**

5.5.1 The Committee consulted and took evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.5 of this report.

## **6. Background Papers**

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee report – Keep Northampton Tidy (March 2015)
- Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 23 March 2015

**Report Author and Title:** Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Telephone and Email:** 0300 330 7000, email: [tiff@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:tiff@northampton.gov.uk)