



Report of the Cabinet Member for Community Services

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 15th October 2024

Street Scene – Cleansing Operations

Purpose	To brief/update the Scrutiny Committee on Cleansing Operations relating to the Street Scene
Content	This document is a summary of the current procedures in place to deal with Cleansing Operations relating to the Street Scene.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided and give views
Lead Councillor	Councillor Cyril Anderson (Cabinet Member for Community Services)
Lead Officer	Tracey McNulty (Head of Cultural Services, Parks and Cleansing) Jeremy Davies (Group Leader Parks and Cleansing)
Report Author	Jeremy Davies (Group Leader Parks and Cleansing) Stuart Willingale (Team Leader Cleansing Strategy)
Legal Officer	Adrian Jeremiah
Finance Officer	Peter Keys
Access to Services Officer	N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 The responsibility to remove litter, detritus and fly tipping from most public areas, including the adopted highway (i.e. carriageways, footways and verges maintained at public expense), green spaces and Council-owned beaches, rests with the Cleansing Service within Cultural Services, Parks and Cleansing. The adopted highway covers approximately 1100km of carriageway and 1500km of footway/footpaths.

The Housing and Education (schools) Departments are individually responsible for the maintenance and removal of litter and waste on land they own and to which the public have access. Litter and waste on private land and non-adopted land is the responsibility of the occupier(s) and/or the owner(s).

1.2 There are several statutory instruments relating directly to the control of litter. These include:

- **The Environmental Protection Act 1990.** This places a duty on Local Authorities (and other relevant bodies) to ensure that land to which they are responsible is kept clean and free from litter and refuse so far as is practicable.
- **The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.**
- **Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 (as amended).**
- **Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse 2007 (CoPLAR).**

1.3 In four of the six Council corporate priorities are of relevance. They also contribute to the national **Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.**

- **Safeguarding people from harm** – To ensure all public areas are safe and kept clean/free from litter to prevent physical/biological harm.
- **Transforming our Economy and Infrastructure** – To help ensure Swansea maintains a clean and attractive environment thus encouraging and sustaining the local economy.
- **Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity** – Tackling and reducing litter has a direct impact on the enhancement and growth of plant and animal species.
- **Transformation and future council development** - Sustainable Cleansing services that are fit for the future through continual service improvement.

1.4 The functions and activities of the Cleansing Service have a direct impact on the quality of life, perceptions of Swansea and the local areas where people live. These have both social and economic consequences.

2. Cleansing Operations relating to the Street Scene

2.1 *Litter Picking and Litter Bin Emptying* - In terms of general manual street cleaning, the Cleansing Service has a team of Operatives picking litter, emptying litter bins, as well as clearing fly tipped waste, removal of sharps (needles and other drug paraphernalia), dog waste, human waste, leaf litter, and other deep cleansing activities such as weed removal (the range of works undertaken is not exhaustive).

Residential areas are usually visited by these Cleansing Teams on a fortnightly cycle, with busier areas visited more frequently. The City Centre and other areas of high footfall (such as busier shopping areas, destination beaches etc) are cleansed daily, including at weekends.

- 2.2 *Mechanical Sweeping* – Cleansing operates Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) and compact mechanical brush vehicles (MBV) to sweep adopted pedestrian areas and carriageways. The focus of this sweeping ensures pedestrianised areas are kept safe and presentable, together with the removal of general detritus (including grit, stones, mud, leaf litter, other vegetation, litter/waste etc) from carriageways, which also assists in reducing the risk of flooding and road traffic accidents.

Cleansing also operates specialist compact sweepers ('Hako's') with a variety of attachments which can be used for weed, moss and sand removal. Ideally weed removal is undertaken after growth has died back following weed spraying (weed spraying of all adopted highways is managed by the Highways Department).

The Service is trialling electric MBVs in the City Centre.

- 2.3 *Fly Tipping Removal and Associated Deterrents* – Cleansing has a dedicated Fly Tipping Team which focuses both on reported fly tipping incidents and monitoring known areas of repeated fly tipping ('Hotspots'). Removal of fly tipping from private land, common land (unless immediately adjacent to the carriageway), and other areas not under the responsibility of the Council, lies with the relevant owner/controller of that land.

During recent years the Fly Tipping Team has successfully worked in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy to 'design out' several problematic fly tipping hotspot areas. Where appropriate, preventative measures, such as physical barriers and bespoke signage/banners, are also employed to deter fly tipping.

Examples of the bespoke signage used in practice may be found at **Appendix A**.

The Fly Tipping Team works closely with Waste Enforcement Officers. All reported fly tipped waste is searched for evidence. Any evidence found is photographed and forwarded to Waste. They will consider further enforcement action (fixed penalty notice, prosecution etc.) against the alleged offender(s) as they see fit.

- 2.4 *Power Washing and Graffiti Removal* – Cleansing undertakes deep cleanse of areas such as multi-storey car park stairwells, City Centre pedestrianised areas, and locations where regular antisocial behaviour is known, to remove spillages, staining, bird droppings, urine, faeces and ingrained grime and dirt resulting in discolouration.

Graffiti and flyposting on Council owned/controlled surfaces are removed, with priority given to offensive graffiti. The Graffiti Team also prioritise the removal of graffiti daubed on politically sensitive structures such as the Cenotaph and other War Memorials and where political tensions could arise if left unchecked.

The Graffiti Team also remove graffiti from private buildings/structures etc. when requested to do so with the owner's permission and payment of the relevant fee. Where the owner is not prepared to provide permission or pay for removal (particularly in cases where the graffiti is offensive), then the

Community Safety Co-ordinator will work with the Police towards a positive outcome.

- 2.5 *Leaf fall* – Additional funding has been provided for increased resources for the removal of leaf fall through the autumn. This is delivered through prioritising the cleansing of areas of leaf fall on an overtime basis to significantly reduce the risk of flooding. Flooding hotspots provided by Highways on a RAG basis determine priority sweeping.

3. Improvement Initiatives

- 3.1 *Litter and Dog Bin Renewals* – The Council has invested in replacing all damaged dog and litter bins with multipurpose bins (MPBs) for both litter and dog waste. This process has also encompassed a critical re-evaluation of the need for multiple bins at the same location and the exact location of the replacement MPBs. This work continues (now in Phase 2) with full Ward Member engagement.

Bin misuse is an increasing problem where irresponsible individuals and/or businesses look to dispose of their household and/or commercial waste by using public MPBs and/or fly tipping adjacent to them. Those MPBs affected are monitored and appropriate signage employed ('Use this Bin Properly or Lose It') to discourage such behaviour. The continual emptying of MPBs due to misuse is not sustainable and occasionally they are removed following full consultation with Ward Members.

- 3.2 *Litter Bin Sensors* – The Cleansing Team have also participated in pilot trials using bin fill level sensors in MPBs to monitor the required emptying frequencies using a simple RAG software application. There have been some issues surrounding network coverage (via 'Gateways') in some areas but initial benefits are encouraging. It is anticipated that the technology will prove particularly useful for remote locations and with seasonal demand (e.g. Gower) where unnecessary visits can be reduced and efficiency savings realised.
- 3.3 *Cleansing Ward Operative Teams (CWOT)* – The Council has resourced additional Cleansing Teams to visit each Ward on a regular basis undertaking works identified by the Ward Member(s) often following reports by their constituents.

The type of work carried out is wide-ranging and includes (but is not limited to):

- Weed/moss removal and cutbacks of overhanging vegetation.
- Edging of footways and strimming.
- Lane clearance.
- Litter and fly tipping removal (generally in areas of unknown ownership).
- Cleaning of road signs, bins and bus stops.
- Clearance of leaf litter, mud and general detritus.

The CWOTs have been well-received by both Ward Members and the public alike. They regularly receive direct praise and thanks for the work they undertake.

Appendix B provides examples of 'before' and 'after' photos along with a selection of comments/messages of thanks received from Ward Members.

4. Performance

4.1 *Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS)* - The key findings from the 2024/25 report for Swansea compiled by Keep Wales Tidy (KWT) indicates that:

- 86.6% of the streets surveyed in Swansea were deemed acceptable at grade B grade or above. (B grade is defined as '*Predominantly free of litter and refuse apart from some small items*')
- Dog fouling was found on 5.2% of street surveyed, the lowest level since the annual surveys began (2007/8).
- Food and drinks packaging was found on three quarters of all streets surveyed.
- Wet wipes were found on 11.7% of streets, the lowest level since the annual surveys began (2007/8).
- 19 litter bins were recorded during the survey. No bins were greater than 75% full or had evidence of misuse.

The 86.6% figure is lower than 2023/24 (92.7%). However, this is generally consistent with other Local Authorities which KWT surveyed. Whilst the surveys are not an exact science KWT state the reasoning for this drop is unclear but alluded that resource issues may have played some part in this. Urban Local Authorities have generally shown lower scores than rural Councils largely due to increased footfall and associated challenges that cities present.

The proposed introduction of a *Deposit Return Scheme* for single use drinks receptacles by the Welsh Government in 2027 should help to reduce the amount of this type of litter seen on our streets.

5. Future Challenges & Opportunities

5.1 *Weekend Overtime Working* - The Cleansing Service currently provides a basic service at weekends (and bank holidays) within the City Centre and other defined shopping/high footfall areas (e.g. Morriston, Gorseinon, Mumbles etc). This work is essential especially within the City Centre core to ensure the public realm is kept clean and safe for pedestrians and other road users. Working shifts are shorter than the normal working week, is achieved on a volunteer basis and paid as overtime at enhanced rates.

In recent years attracting volunteers on a weekly basis has become increasingly challenging as a minimum number of Operatives are needed for an effective weekend service. In some instances, Agency workers (that are currently covering during the working week) have covered any shortfall when required.

Despite the known resource challenges facing Local Authorities and difficulties around recruitment and terms and conditions, we remain positive and committed to service improvements and finding solutions, aided by a positive dialogue with Trade Union colleagues.

- 5.2 *Kerbside Waste Collections* – There have also been well documented resource issues within this service area over the last 6 months that have had an impact on cleansing operations. We continue to work very closely with our colleagues in Waste to support their delivery and adjust our operations to mitigate the issues.
- 5.3 *Chapter 8 Work* – This work covers litter picking, and other activities carried out on carriageways where there are no pavements on one or both sides. Such roads include many of those on Gower and dual carriageways. Increased resource is required to ensure that Operatives are fully trained and that safe systems of work are in place to undertake the work. This work takes longer to complete and is generally programmed but is carried out on a less frequent basis. Cleansing is currently considering options to improve the way in which we service these roads including the removal of weeds and general detritus that gathers around traffic islands, roundabouts etc.
- 5.4 *Swansea, A Student City* – The annual influx of new students presents localised challenges for several departments within the Council including the Cleansing Service. Whilst education, engagement and partnership arrangements with the Universities goes a long way towards reducing the amount of litter and fly tipping in student areas, it is a perennial issue that we are acutely aware of and work very hard to mitigate.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report other than those set out in the body of the report.

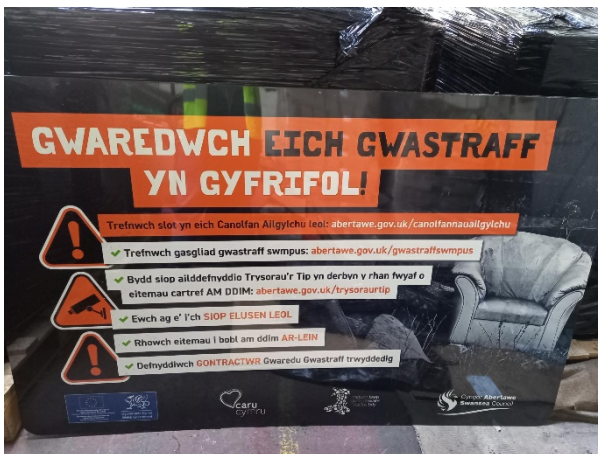
7. Finance Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report other than those set out in the body of the report.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Examples of the bespoke signage used in practice.



Appendix B – CWOT Report providing examples of 'before' and 'after' photos along with a selection of comments/messages of thanks received from Ward Members.