



Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement and Infrastructure Management

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 September 2021

Litter and Community Cleansing

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| Purpose | To provide a briefing to the Scrutiny Programme Committee relating to Litter and Community Cleansing. |
| Content | This report sets out the functions, standards and operational activities of the Cleansing Section within Waste, Parks and Cleansing. |
| Councillors are being asked to | Consider the report and to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give their views; and • Make recommendations to Cabinet Member as necessary. |
| Lead Councillor(s) | Councillor Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement and Infrastructure Management |
| Lead Officer(s) | Chris Howell, Head of Waste Management, Parks and Cleansing |
| Report Author | Stuart Willingale, Team Leader (Cleansing Strategy) |
| Legal Officer | Debbie Smith |
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1. General Description

- 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 Waste, Parks and Cleansing. The adopted highway covers approximately 1100km of carriageway and 1500km of footway/footpaths.

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

Litter is a daily problem that is tackled through the activities of the Cleansing Service and, to a much lesser degree, by volunteers that generally work in conjunction with Keep Wales Tidy with support provided by the Local Authority (i.e. to remove and dispose of any waste collected)

2. Why We Do This

2.1 There are a number of 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 for which they are responsible is kept clean and free from litter so far as is practicable. It also provides for Authorised Officers of the Council to issue fixed penalty notices on anyone who commits an offence by dropping litter in a public place.

The Act does not provide a comprehensive definition of what constitutes litter, but cleansing contracts commonly assume the inclusion of materials connected to eating, drinking and smoking. A broad definition of litter and management guidance is provided in the Welsh Government's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse 2007 (CoPLAR):

'Litter is most commonly assumed to include materials, often associated with smoking, eating and drinking, that are improperly discarded and left by members of the public or are spilt during business operations as well as waste management operations.'

- **The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.** This extended the offence of littering to specifically include the dropping of discarded cigarette ends, cigars, chewing gum and other similar products.
- **Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 (as amended).** This makes it an offence for anyone in control of a dog who fails to pick up waste after his or her dog (subject to certain exemptions).
- **Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse 2007 (CoPLAR).** The CoPLAR guidance summarises the expectations on organisations who have a responsibility to manage litter, as well as outlining the required standards and practical approaches to management. The guide recognises that a range of factors contribute to the accumulation of litter. Generally, the levels of pedestrian and vehicular use are

key contributing factors, and those areas or with the greatest intensity of use will require most frequent and greatest intensities of management to ensure that such locations are clean and free from litter.

2.2 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.

2.3 The main consequences of the Council failing to fulfil its statutory duties are:

- Damage to property and/or injury to people/animals;
- Claims for personal and/or property injury/loss;
- Negative impact on the health and safety and quality of life for residents;
- Detrimental effect on the reputation, future prosperity and investment for Swansea.

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.

3. **Management and Support**

3.1 The Cleansing Service mainly consists of Cleansing Operatives that are public facing operational staff. They are supported and directed by a small group of Managers (Group Leader, Team Leaders and Operational Area Managers), Working Supervisors

and Administration staff.

The service can be broken down into the following teams:

3.2 **Cleansing Operations**

This area consists of a Team Leader, 3 x Operational Area Managers (that have overall responsibility for three defined geographical areas in Swansea – North, West and Central), Working Supervisors and Cleansing Operatives.

The team is responsible for cleansing public areas (adopted highways, beaches etc.) of litter, waste and other general detritus including leaves. Cleansing Operatives also empty litter and dog bins on a proactive and reactive basis and cleanse the majority of public conveniences. The team use Mechanical Brush Vehicles (MBVs) to sweep the carriageways and footways. Currently the team has 3 large (LGV) MBVs and 8 compact MBVs. Temporary seasonal workers support the team during the summer months to help cope with the increase in demand/footfall in prestige areas e.g. beaches, Mumbles etc.

3.3 **Cleansing Strategy**

This area consists of a Team Leader, an Operational Area Manager (NEAT, Fly Tipping and Projects), Working Supervisors, Cleansing Operatives and a graffiti removal service. It also has a small permanent Project Team.

The fly tipping teams are responsible for the removal of fly tipping from the adopted highway and searching the waste for evidence. Any evidence retrieved is passed to the Environmental Enforcement Team for further action.

The area also considers medium and long-term issues and supports Cleansing Operations on a daily basis. The graffiti removal service routinely deals with the removal of graffiti (tags) and fly posters from public areas. It also provides a service to private individuals to remove graffiti from private premises. Cleansing Strategy also facilitates project work (usually via external/internal funding) and supports Welsh Government funded schemes such as Caru Cymru.

The Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team (NEAT) supports Social Services Clients (Service Users) in various project works (access/litter clearance work etc.). At the start of the lockdown Social Services withdrew the NEATs and the Cleansing Service is waiting for them to resume once it is completely safe to do so.

4. Stakeholders

4.1 Cleansing works closely with both internal service areas and external partners. The following lists some of the main stakeholders (the list is not exhaustive):

- Elected Members (Councillors)
- Public
- Parks
- Waste Management; Waste Collection; Waste Enforcement
- Housing
- Corporate Property (Estates)
- Highways and Transportation
- Cultural Services
- City Centre Management Team
- Pollution Control and Private Sector Housing
- Community Safety
- Emergency Services
- Natural Resources Wales
- Welsh Government
- Community Councils
- Business Improvement District (BID) and City Centre Traders
- Keep Wales Tidy (KWT)
- Volunteer Groups and Individuals

5. Finance

5.1 The Cleansing section receives an annual budget of ~£4.8 million to deliver the service. There are income targets for a limited number of Service Level Agreements and receives additional funds for ad-hoc requests for the service (e.g. the use of MBVs to sweep litter and general detritus from defined areas such as car parks).

5.2 This year 2021/22 Cleansing received some extra funding to:

- Continue with targeted project work by creating a new Cleansing Traineeship;
- Create a new Rapid Response Bin Team (RRBT) and explore technological service improvements;
- Dedicated Cleansing Team to target hedge bottoms or similar where litter and general detritus becomes trapped;

6. Current Performance and Trends

- 6.1 The Department's Flare (Civica) database shows the number of service requests received during the last three financial years. These figures include those service requests reported to the Council's Contact centre either by phone, via the website, email or otherwise (e.g. personal visit). Service requests reported predominantly relate to litter and waste related matters such as litter on the highway, sharps/syringes, fly tipping, dog fouling, bins etc.

| Year | Total No. of Service Requests | % within Target Response Time |
|---------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2018/19 | 9259 | 94 |
| 2019/20 | 8906 | 94 |
| 2020/21 | 9309 | 66** |

** The reduction in target response time during 2020/21 can largely be attributed to the introduction of the Covid-19 lockdown in which significant changes were imposed on the Cleansing Service. Non-essential cleansing work stopped and many Cleansing Operatives assigned to different roles to support other services. There were also restrictions to the maximum number of staff that could operate safely within Council vehicles. Additionally, back office support staff were adjusting to new ways of working (e.g. from home etc.) and accessing the systems.

Many of the service requests received related to the emptying of bins and whilst there was no response indicated on some, it is reasonable to assume that they were responded to within target given that we had Cleansing Teams emptying bins continually during the first lockdown it being considered an essential service.

It is interesting to note that the number of service requests received during 2020/21 was similar to previous years and was, in fact, slightly higher during the pandemic.

6.2 The Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS)

LEAMS validation surveys provide a 'snapshot' of litter and other local environmental quality issues across Wales and allows KWT to track trends over time and highlight the areas that are in the most need for intervention. Each Local Authority in Wales inspects its own area and records their results. KWT independently carry out the same process for all the LA areas in Wales.

During the survey the quality of the local environment is measured by recording the:

- Street cleanliness grade based on how much litter and dog fouling is present;
- Types and sources of litter present; and
- Amount of graffiti, vandalism, fly-posting, dog fouling, weeds, detritus and chewing gum staining visible.

Independent national figures are then calculated by KWT based on:

- A Cleanliness Indicator; and
- The average percentage of streets reaching an acceptable standard of cleanliness.

Following the pandemic, the latest results produced are for 2018/19. The table below shows the results for Swansea Council and those of comparable Welsh Local Authorities in terms of population, geographical area and density.

| Local Authority | Cleanliness Indicator Score | % of Streets Graded B* and above |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Cardiff | 67.3 | 96 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 65.9 | 93.8 |
| Newport | 64 | 89.6 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 66.3 | 95.5 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taff | 66.7 | 97.6 |
| Swansea | 67.1 | 96.4 |

(* Grade B is defined as 'Predominantly free of litter and refuse apart from some small items')

KWT did not conduct any surveys in 2020 due to the pandemic.

7. Notable Management Practices/Achievements

There have been some notable changes within the service. Continual Service Improvement demands that the service is subject to constant review in order to maximise efficiency and ensure that best practise is utilised where practicable. These included:

- **Cleansing Restructure** – this has created two distinct Cleansing service areas (**Cleansing Operations** and **Cleansing Strategy**) and introduced an extra tier of supervision (Working Supervisor). Early indications are that this has greatly improved the ability of Cleansing Operatives, Managers and Working Supervisors to focus more effectively on their individual work areas, delegating where necessary, for the betterment of the Team and

service area as a whole. Notably, the process was cost-neutral;

- Provision of dedicated fly tipping teams to respond more effectively to reports of larger incidents and target known hotspots including measures to design out recurrence where appropriate/practicable. All fly tipped material is separated into recyclable (e.g. wood, metal, glass etc.) and non-recyclable waste. This has reduced the amount of waste going to landfill and contributed to an increase in recycling targets;
- Introduction of litter picking in two bags to separate recyclables (plastics/glass/metal cans and tins) on the go. This has reduced the amount of waste going to landfill and contributed to an increase in recycling targets;
- Participation in Wales' first recycling on the go initiative in partnership with Hubbub to increase awareness and encourage personal responsibility to recycle within in the City Centre (Swansea in the Loop campaign with reskinning of existing litter bins to facilitate recycling);
- Facilitating volunteer litter picks where appropriate in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy *et al* – establishment of litter picking hubs at Council-owned libraries and other premises where individuals and groups can sign out litter picking equipment. Volunteers are advised to recycle using the two-bag system as above. The collection of the waste/recyclables is arranged with Cleansing (*note: This arrangement was stopped during most of 2020 and some of 2021 due to the pandemic. It is slowly returning back to normal*);
- Recruitment of Project Teams since September 2020: Deep clean in areas of leaf fall, supported by MBVs during autumn by brushing out from corners, behind utility boxes, between parked cars etc. Clearance of fly tipping from land of unknown ownership if visible from prominent public areas, remove detritus (soil/leaves) build up at pedestrian islands, crossing points, bus shelters etc., removal of excessive weed growth which won't break down after spraying and periodic City Centre deep cleans. (*note: The Project Teams will generally seek to avoid pulling up live weeds to prevent damage to the highway. Weed removal is generally limited to those areas which have previously had spray treatment and larger weeds where treatment has shown to be ineffectual*);

Appendix 1

- Investment in resource to address trapped litter in hedgerows to encourage nesting and support wildlife habitat protection in targeted areas;
- Resource redeployment and shift pattern changes to accommodate increased footfall and tackle litter on beaches. Handing out of bags to the public and engaging to encourage litter removal and recycling;
- Lead on the *'Don't be a Tosser'* litter campaign designed to educate and encourage the public to dispose of their litter/waste responsibly;
- Bin your Gum campaign in partnership with Swansea BID to encourage the public to bin their chewing gum responsibly;
- Removing/relocating litter bins which are continually abused/misused by individuals filling them with household waste resulting in bins overflowing and the potential for litter on the highway etc. Introduction of reduced aperture bins to prevent abuse/misuse by household waste (*note: Ward Members will be advised/informed prior to any bins being removed/relocated in their area*);
- Replacing dog waste bins with litter bins as smaller capacity dog bins often overflow. Consider removal of dog bins if sited adjacent or in close proximity to a litter bin but ensuring bespoke bilingual stickers are applied to litter bins to show they can accommodate dog waste. Replacing with a litter bin also has the benefit for those dog owners that currently have an aversion to lifting the lid on the dog bins and simply leave the bag on top (*note: Ward Members will be advised/informed prior to any bins being replaced in their area*);
- Provision of additional temporary litter bins and BBQ bins (with signage *'Please dispose of your BBQ responsibly'*) in high footfall/beach locations during high season;
- Provision of a dedicated Rapid Response Bin Team (RRBT) to respond quickly to reports of overflowing bins negating the need to redirect crews working in other areas. They will also ensure existing bins are functional, fit for purpose and repair or renew and clean them where required and as resources allow;
- Consideration is being given to install sensors in remote, outlying litterbins (initially) as a trial. The sensors will send a signal indicating when a bin is full and requires emptying;

- In-house Enforcement training for Managers and Working Supervisors allowing them to become authorised to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to anyone they witness dropping litter or failing to pick up their dog's waste;
- Centralisation of all Cleansing service requests received (phone/email/web form) to ensure that the enquiries are logged with the correct information and assigned to the most appropriate Officer/Team to action;
- Support and contribution to national litter campaigns run by external partners such as Keep Wales Tidy (e.g. KWT Spring Clean and autumnal Beach Clean), Surfers Against Sewage etc;
- Trial use of Electric Leaf Blowers within the City Centre core area to help minimise noise disturbance to local residents early in the morning. The service has since purchased additional equipment following positive feedback from the trial;
- Use of trained Cleansing Operatives to undertake focused weed spraying in the City Centre to assist Highways;
- Commissioning of two 'Hako' MBV vehicles that, in addition to their sweeping capabilities, also have the capacity to scrub and clean paving slabs in pedestrianised areas without damaging or undermining the paviers, and remove weeds where necessary;
- Development of a Cleansing Traineeship Programme in which 10 trainees spent time in all areas of Waste Management during their training period. This was supported by the Trainees completing a WAMITAB (waste and recycling) qualification in association with Gower College.

8. Work During the Pandemic

During the pandemic, the Cleansing service faced some difficult challenges. However, through careful and considered management, following national and local legislation/guidance, the service and statutory requirements were maintained throughout in order to keep the staff and public safe. The following lists some of the main achievements:

- Staff levels of approximately 40% (minimum) were maintained throughout;
- The service continued to carry out its statutory duties as

appropriate and tackle a range of issues throughout the pandemic e.g. responding to anti-social behavioural problems such as the litter/waste left at Langland Beach;

- Responding to operational restrictions and continual change in a positive and pragmatic way (e.g. no. of staff allowed in a vehicle) by continually reviewing and updating departmental and site-specific Risk Assessments, altering work schedules and allowing Cleansing Operatives to start their rounds from home where appropriate to do so;
- Assisting other Departments in fulfilling their statutory duties or otherwise e.g. Cleansing Operatives routinely assisted the Waste Collection crews to continue with their operations to minimise the potential for waste to accumulate in the streets;
- Daily meetings on Teams by the Senior Cleansing Leadership Team to discuss ongoing issues/updates regarding the pandemic and cascade information and instruction to the Cleansing Operatives/Teams;

9. Future Challenges & Opportunities

9.1 The main challenges for the service in relation to this report are:

- The need to ensure continuity of service against a backdrop of potential future resource pressures;
- Increasing demand and expectations from stakeholders;
- Growing responsibility and expectation for non-adopted council assets as part of an Council asset management approach to responsibility;
- Increasing challenges due to climate change (e.g. incidents of flash flooding and the need to minimise the amount of leaf litter and general detritus on the adopted highway so far as possible);
- Consideration is being given to Cleansing Operatives routinely clearing the top of surface water road gullies as part of their weekly/bi-weekly cleansing schedule.

10. Risks

10.1 The main risks to the Cleansing service:

- Covid-19 is still with us and likely to become endemic within the population. Continued restrictions and limitations in Council vehicular use;
- Whilst some additional funding has recently been provided and is to be welcomed, there is currently a national

shortage of qualified drivers and labour to enable delivery on some of the aspirations;

- With the rapid changes in new infrastructure and development occurring within the City Centre, Mumbles etc. Cleansing expectations could outstrip that which can reasonably be delivered. As more residents and visitors are attracted to these areas it will inevitably have a direct impact on Cleansing as the service will be required to maintain the public realm in these locations to an acceptable standard;
- Medium-term budget pressures may result in significant implications for the service once the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic start to be realised. This will not be confined to Swansea Council but will be country wide the likelihood being that it will become harder to secure resources and manage expectations.

11. Assessment

- 11.1 The Cleansing service delivers a frontline service critical in keeping the streets and open spaces clean and free from litter/waste so far as is practicable. The work the service carries out on a daily basis plays a crucial role in contributing to people's overall health and general well-being, attracting investment, creation of jobs and economic prosperity.

The service is committed to Continual Service Improvement and strives to follow good practice where possible. It participates in national inspection surveys (LEAMS etc.) and scores very highly when assessed with comparable Local Authorities in Wales.

Cleansing regularly receives positive feedback from the public and is generally well-received and supported by Ward Members that understand and appreciate the importance of the work we do.

12. Legal Implications

- 12.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report other than those set out in paragraph 2.1 above.

13. Financial Implications

- 13.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

14. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 14.1 This is a status report and therefore an assessment is not required.