

3 June 2016

Environment Improvement Campaigns and Projects

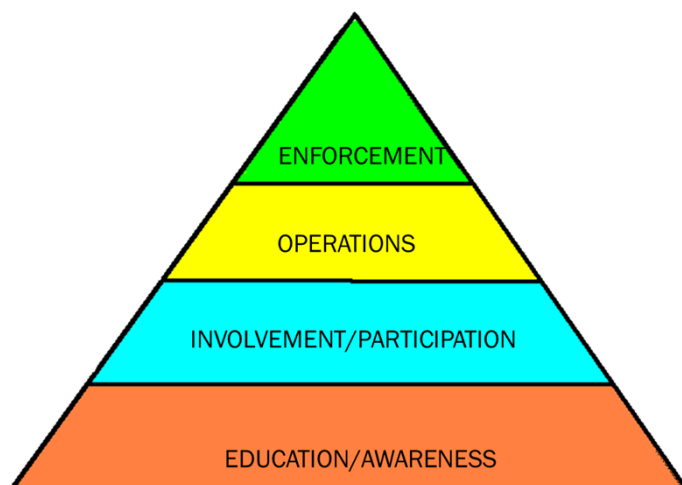
Report of Oliver Sherratt, Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members of the Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee with an update on the development and implementation of environmental improvement campaigns and projects.

Background

2. The local environment is crucially important to quality of life in our communities. Residents regularly report issues and concerns to the Council, Area Action Partnerships, Town and Parish Councils and elected Members on a wide range of matters from dog fouling and littering, to graffiti and fly-tipping. Not only do these matters impact on community safety and fear of crime, but they are also recognised as forms of anti-social behaviour, which the British Crime Survey consistently identifies that residents feel is a big or fairly big problem in their area.
3. Whilst the Council does deploy considerable resources through its clean and green teams in ensuring the County is clean and attractive as possible, it is recognised that behavioural change is the key to a more sustainable environment as well as lower costs. The civic pride approach in Durham, applied since Local Government Reorganisation (diagram below) utilises programmes of education/awareness and community involvement as a key foundation to its approach to environmental services. Operations and enforcement will always have a part to play, but their role is lessened, if this more holistic approach to the local environment is taken.



4. The Environment Partnership has developed a multi-agency thematic group “Pride in Our Communities” to oversee much of this work. This group, together with the

Councils Neighbourhood Protection service considers and selects the most appropriate campaigns, and ensures their delivery is monitored and evaluated. The common theme and overarching aims of many of these campaigns are not only to promote behavioural change for the minority that spoil our environment, but also to increase opportunities for people to become more involved in making a difference in their area.

Overview

5. Members of the Committee will receive a short presentation from the Neighbourhood Protection Manager and his team regarding some of the work that has been undertaken in the last twelve months, as well as have an opportunity to input to future priorities and issues.
6. The presentation will cover the following campaigns or projects have taken place in the past 12 months, are currently taking place or are currently being planned including:
 - a. Fly-tipping – Operation Stop It
 - b. Responsible Dog Ownership:
 - i. Green Dog Walkers Scheme.
 - ii. Mini Dog Fouling Campaigns.
 - iii. Microchipping
 - c. Litter
 - i. Big Spring Clean.
 - ii. Car Litter
 - d. Open space improvement
 - i. It's Your Neighbourhood.
 - ii. Northumbria & Britain in Bloom.
 - iii. Green Flag
 - iv. Beautiful Durham
 - e. School activities:
 - i. Education sessions.
 - ii. Junior Neighbourhood Watch.
 - iii. Tidy Ted
 - iv. Safety Carousels.

Flytipping - Operation Stop It

7. Flytipping is the most environmental issue reported to the Council. In November 2014 Operation 'Stop It' was established to tackle this in a multi-agency way and includes various DCC sections, Police, Environment Agency and Crimestoppers and it has 3 main aims:
 - a. to reduce the number of incidents
 - b. to target fly-tippers and;
 - c. educate householders and businesses to understand their responsibilities in making sure their waste is disposed of properly

Responsible Dog Ownership

8. **Green Dog Walkers Scheme (GDWs)** - this is a non-confrontational, friendly way for residents to change attitudes about dog fouling. To be part of the scheme, members of the general public sign a volunteer pledge to:
 - a. wear their GDWs badge as often as possible when walking their dog;
 - b. clean up after their dog and dispose of the bag in a bin at all times;
 - c. encourage other dog walkers to clean up after their dog; and
 - d. carry extra dog waste bags to distribute to other dog walkers if requested.
9. **Dog Microchipping** - A change in the law has led to it being compulsory for all dogs to be microchipped from 6th April 2016, as part of this change the Council has worked with Dogs Trust and Stray Aid to continue to provide free microchips for Durham residents throughout 2016. This has the aim to help improve responsibility and help reunite lost/stolen dogs and so reduce the number of strays.
10. **Mini Dog Fouling Campaigns** - these mini campaigns focus on smaller areas of the county that has a specific issue with dog fouling. The areas are usually selected by the Neighbourhood Wardens and tend to be areas where the problem has persisted despite routine engagement and enforcement activity.

Litter

11. **Big Spring Clean** has been running since 2010, this annual month long campaign aims to get community groups and individual residents involved in cleaning up their neighbourhood. It is organised by Litter Free Durham (a regional group set up as part of the Campaign to Protect Rural England's "Stop the Drop" campaign) and is delivered jointly by the group, Darlington Borough Council and Durham County Council. The three partners work together to promote the campaign and to provide support for people and groups wanting to take part in such an activity by either organising or supervising the event or by simply providing equipment and advice to groups that are capable of running their own event.

12. **Car Litter Campaign** has run every other year to tackle the litter thrown from vehicles which ends up in our towns/villages and the roads in between. The aims of the campaign was to raise awareness of the problem, encourage responsibility and reduce roadside litter.

Open Space Improvement

13. **It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN)** is a scheme run by the Royal Horticultural Society that aims to support and recognise community groups greening up and cleaning up their local neighbourhood. It is a non-competitive national scheme which recognises community participation, gardening achievement and environmental responsibility.
14. Groups entering their activities into the scheme are given an award based on the following achievement levels:
 - a. Level 1 – Establishing
 - b. Level 2 – Improving
 - c. Level 3 – Developing
 - d. Level 4 – Thriving
 - e. Level 5 – Outstanding
15. For 2015, Civic Pride has establish a county-wide community grant scheme that will encourage 15 new groups to undertake activities that will lead to an IYN award. The scheme will offer grants of up to £500 to groups who have not previously entered the scheme. The aims of the scheme are to:
 - a. improve green spaces with sustainable projects;
 - b. harness community spirit;
 - c. forge new links with proactive members of the community; and
 - d. provide the basis for a future entry into the national RHS In Bloom competition.
16. **Northumbria in Bloom/ Britain in Bloom** – The county has achieved considerable success in the Royal Horticultural Society led Northumbria-in-Bloom awards. Success requires a real partnership approach involving the community, business, the Council and other public bodies. Although the awards were initially focussed on horticultural achievement, there has been an increasing focussed placed on environmental responsibility and community participation.
17. The **Green Flag** award scheme is the national standard for parks and open spaces that recognises excellence and good practice in their management and development. To achieve Green flag status a site should contribute to its locality and provide facilities suited to the needs of the community. This community should look at the sites as a true asset and be actively involved in this management and development.

18. We have achieved 15 Green Flags and the delivery of these is a collective effort across Direct Services and importantly community participation.

School Education Activities

19. **Education Sessions** – Neighbourhood Protection and especially Civic Pride team engage with schools, youth groups and colleges to deliver a range of educational sessions addressing the four most reported environmental crimes. Such sessions are delivered using a variety of teaching methods including:
- a. story sack session for under 5's;
 - b. Tidy Ted and Scoop the Dog sessions for junior school children; and
 - c. an interactive DVD for older children.
20. The sessions are usually organised to coincide with a campaign or problem that is highlighted in an area. In addition, where the school or youth group is interested, Civic Pride will also organise a related activity for the children to participate in (e.g. litter picking, bulb planting, fence painting, etc).
21. **Junior Neighbourhood Watch** - this scheme is organised by Durham Constabulary and aims to engage with younger children. Spread over several weeks, the programme includes a range of sessions that encourage the children to take an interest in what is happening in their neighbourhoods and to generate an interest and awareness in their personal safety, their community and crime and disorder issues. Civic Pride deliver the envirocrime modules on the programme.
22. **Safety Carousels** - also organised by Durham Constabulary, these sessions take part on a single day and are aimed at older children. Their main focus is anti-social behaviour enforcement and consequences; weapons awareness; hate crime; arson and fire setting; internet safety/cyber bullying; alcohol awareness, support and enforcement; environmental issues such as litter and graffiti; resuscitation awareness; prison life. As with the Junior Neighbourhood Watch programme, Civic Pride deliver one of the modules.

Recommendations

23. Note the wide range of environmental campaigns aimed at promoting behavioural change and greater community involvement in their local environment.

Background Papers

Presentation to be issued.

Ian Hault, Neighbourhood Protection Manager ian.hault@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None

Staffing – It should be noted that coordination of the campaigns and projects are run by employees although there is a large community volunteer base who contribute to their local environment.

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – The campaigns contribute to the Altogether Safer agenda

Human Rights - None

Consultation - None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications – None