

10 October 2018



**Environment Improvement Campaigns and
Projects**

Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members of the Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a progress report on the development and implementation of environmental improvement campaigns and projects in the county.

Background

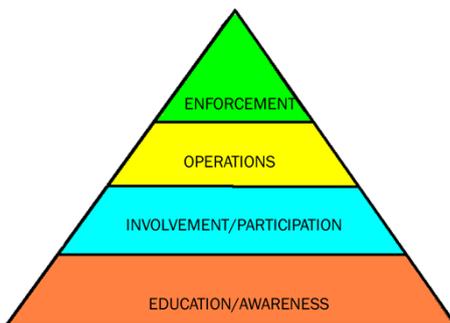
2. The local environment is crucially important to quality of life in our communities. Residents regularly report issues and concerns to the Council, Area Action Partnerships, Town and Parish Councils and elected Members on a wide range of matters from dog fouling and littering, to graffiti and fly-tipping. 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 resident's 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 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 that have taken place in the past 12 months, are currently taking place or are currently being planned to include:
 - a. The 'Pride in Durham' approach
 - b. Fly-tipping – Operation Stop It
 - c. Responsible Dog Ownership
 - d. Litter
 - e. Open space improvement
 - f. School activities

The 'Pride in Durham' approach

7. In Durham we take a holistic approach when tackling the key areas of concerns from our communities. This means that we invest on trying to change behaviours through education and involvement along with having good operations and tough enforcement. The diagram below depicts this approach.



Flytipping - Operation Stop It

8. Flytipping is the most reported environmental issue 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
9. Rural crime (including flytipping) has recently become a National Policing priority with the good practice in Durham and our partnership working being recognised nationally.

10. National Consultation has been completed for the introduction of a Fixed Penalty Notice for householder 'duty of care' which is expected later this year.

Responsible Dog Ownership

11. **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.
12. **Public space Protection Order** – in June 2017 an order was introduced to help combat dog related issues such as fouling & straying.
13. **Compulsory Microchipping** – The law changed April 2016 to make it compulsory to have your dog microchipped.

Litter

14. **Litter Strategy for England** – was published in 2017 and has 3 strands,
 - a. A clear message – national litter campaigning, education in schools and businesses feature.
 - b. Cleaning up the Country – Litter innovation fund, a focus on reducing litter on major roads,
 - c. Improved Enforcement – this includes new Litter FPN levels and new regulation around litter from vehicles
 - d. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england> for more information.
15. **Big Spring Clean** has been running since 2010, this annual campaign from February until May aims to get community groups and individual residents involved in cleaning up their neighbourhood. It is organised in partnership with 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.
16. Over the coming year a number of campaigns are planned that will dovetail to tackle litter including, you don't have to be a superhero, litter from vehicle, zero tolerance week and an eLearning package for offenders.

Open Space Improvement

17. **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.

18. Groups entering their activities into the scheme are given an award based on the following achievement levels from Level 1 – Establishing through to Level 5 – Outstanding
19. In 2015, Civic Pride establish a county-wide community grant scheme that encourages up to 15 new groups to undertake activities that will lead to an IYN award. The scheme offers grants of up to £500 to groups towards a project in their area. 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.
20. **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. 33% of the total number of entries in Northumbria in Bloom 2018 are from County Durham communities. Local Environmental Quality, general cleanliness and lack of litter / dog fouling / graffiti and detritus are one of the judging criteria.
21. 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.
22. We have achieved 12 Green Flags (the most of any North East Authority) and the delivery of these is a collective effort across Direct Services and importantly community participation, Lack of litter etc. and general cleanliness are judging criteria.
23. **Operation Spruce Up** was Launched in 2016, the scheme involves one town or village, from each of the 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), receiving a 'clean up' and 'green up' to make environmental improvements and foster civic pride. Since the scheme started, over 4,000 children and young people have got involved helping with planting, collecting litter, installing bird and bat boxes and designing posters to help promote responsible dog ownership and litter prevention. The work continues and is due to run until 2020. This work gained National Recognition in 2017/8 becoming the Keep Britain Tidy – Campaign of the Year and finalist in the 2018 LGC Awards.
24. **Celebrating our Environment** – it is important to recognise the wonderful work that happens throughout our communities. This is done at various levels and mediums including, Caring for Your Environment Awards, KBT Litter Hero's Awards, Environment Awards, Chester's Best, Beautiful Durham Awards etc.

School Education Activities

25. **Education Sessions** –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 infant junior school children; and
 - c. an interactive classroom session for young people aged between 7-11 and 12-16.
26. 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).
27. **Junior Ed Sessions** - 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.

Recommendations

28. That the Environment and Sustainable Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the wide range of environmental campaigns aimed at promoting behavioural change and greater community involvement in their local environment and comment on the presentation.

Background Papers

Presentation to be issued.

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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