

# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Community Scrutiny Committee 6th January 2022**

### **Litter Strategy**

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Sully – Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services**

**Report Author: Vicky Lowman - Specialist (Parking and Enforcement)**

#### **1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Local Authorities have duties and responsibilities to manage municipal waste arising in their area. Municipal waste in this context is an umbrella term used to describe waste collected by, or on behalf of, Somerset West and Taunton. This mostly comprises of waste and recycling arising from households (household waste) but also includes other waste streams such as fly-tipped waste, waste from litter and dog bins and street sweepings. The management of litter collected from the adopted highway and the Councils Parks and Open Spaces are the primary focus of the proposed Litter Strategy.
- 1.2 For Somerset West and Taunton reducing litter and the impact of litter is one of the largest areas of concern for residents, businesses and visitors living, working, and visiting the district.
- 1.3 Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) propose to take a zero-tolerance approach to littering. Litter management within SWT is robust and effective but has not previously been supported by a strategic framework. The 2022 Litter Strategy is intended to align our approach with the national picture and recent Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) guidance whilst taking into account the changing needs of our area.

#### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Executive approves and adopts the Somerset West and Taunton Litter Strategy with immediate effect. Appendix A to this report.
- 2.2 Executive authorises the Assistant Director for Commercial Services to carry out all actions necessary to implement the adopted strategy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services.

### **3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)**

- 3.1 Failure to adopt the new draft litter strategy may impact on the Council's approach to litter management and the cleanness of the district.

### **4 Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 Dealing with litter places a significant burden on the district council, with an annual cost to the local taxpayer which would be better spent improving other local services. Living in a littered environment makes people feel less safe in their communities, and less likely to venture out, which in turn, affects mental and physical health. It is in all our interests to tackle this problem, to make littering socially unacceptable, to make it easy for people to do the right thing and remove any possible excuse for anti-social behaviour.
- 4.2 Somerset West and Taunton is a Principal Litter Authority and has a duty to keep relevant land in the open air, to which the public have access, clear of litter and debris (as per the Environmental Protection Act 1990). Supplying Street Cleansing services through its partner iDverde currently costs the authority circa £1,058,201 per annum. This includes the clearance of litter.
- 4.3 The clearance of litter is an avoidable cost but to reduce this requires significant culture change alongside well designed and planned infrastructure and services to meet current and future needs. Changing culture is challenging and requires ongoing investment in education, engagement and, occasionally, enforcement. Given that much of our infrastructure is old and designed and planned for a different time, updating this to meet current and predicted need in the current economic environment will be a challenge and new and innovative ways to deal with this will be necessary.
- 4.4 Littering, and associated environmental offences blight our communities and impose avoidable costs on the public purse, drawing money away from priorities such as social care and education. Education and awareness measures will help to embed a culture which views littering as an undesirable act which creates an avoidable problem. However, to change behaviour effectively we also need to back up this social message with appropriate and proportionate enforcement.
- 4.5 Our draft strategy is written in accordance with the Government Litter Strategy for England, published in 2017 (HM Government Litter Strategy for England April 2017)
- 4.6 The draft litter strategy supports guidance issued by WRAP "Binrastructure – The right bin in the right place." We intend to apply best practice in education, enforcement, and infrastructure to deliver a substantial reduction in litter and

littering behaviour. Good infrastructure and clear expectations, supported by proportionate enforcement, helps reinforce social pressure to do the right thing.

4.7 A street litter and dog bin review has been completed as part of the strategy, mapping out the location, type, and collection schedules of all the street litter and dog bins across the district. From the review, the replacement of existing bins with 130 large recycling bins were required across the district, these bins have been purchased and the areas identified will be monitored 4 weeks prior and after the installation, in line with the WRAP guidance.

4.8 Once adopted, the SWT Litter Strategy will be reviewed periodically to ensure:

- It is in step with the changes to the environment which may increase levels and types of litter;
- Changes to relevant legislation are brought into the strategy;
- Enforcement action is reviewed to assess effectiveness of implementation together with new technology and innovation;
- We involve and empower the community to take ownership of their litter (and related behaviour).

4.9 The strategy aims to:

Make it easy to dispose of litter, provide the appropriate facilities in the right places, and collect litter in a timely fashion

Change the behaviour of people who feel it is acceptable to drop litter by sending clear messages.

- **Objective 1**

To have in place a litter prevention programme with effective procedures to ensure that litter problems do not build up and to achieve consistently acceptable levels of cleanliness as given in the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse.

- **Objective 2**

Promote the use of Community Protection Notices to deal with businesses or individuals whose behaviour is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality.

- **Objective 3**

To be proactive in addressing the causes of littering and undertake consultations with businesses and the public on how and why they litter to ensure we are responding appropriately.

- **Objective 4**

As a district in a beautiful location with Taunton as a Garden Town, we will create a public realm which looks cared for, with well-maintained street

furniture, clear informative anti-litter signage, landscaping features in good condition, and bins where they are needed, properly oriented, clean, and easily accessible to all users.

- **Objective 5**

To promote the understanding of cleansing schedules for emptying bins and the use of our customer systems to address extra collections that are necessary or fewer collections needed.

- **Objective 6**

To build a strong sense of community where people care about the locations they regularly use or visit: engaged citizens who feel empowered to share their ideas and get involved in positive processes to address litter problems.

- **Objective 7**

To have a set of enforcement and reward responses as part of the litter prevention programme which makes it clear that littering is a criminal offence.

- **Objective 8**

To have a plan for evaluating whether and how enforcement or rewards have worked.

4.10 Somerset West and Taunton are exploring the option of external litter enforcement scheme operated on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton Council by East Hampshire District Council (EHDC). This includes EHDC's enforcement of littering within Somerset and West and Taunton under a deed of delegation, but separate administration of the scheme for the district to include service of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), recovery of charges, management of bad debtors, and management of court hearings associated with non-payment. This is covered in a separate report in more detail.

4.11 Somerset West and Taunton Council would like to create a culture where it is unacceptable to drop litter. This means generating strong and lasting social reassurance against littering, making it socially unacceptable to drop litter. This requires education: from national or district-wide campaigns to constant reminders through messages and logos in all kinds of places. The messages may vary, aimed at raising public awareness or targeted at specific groups of people: children, young adults, drivers, consumers of food etc.

## **5 Links to Corporate Strategy**

5.1 Within the Environment and Economy framework the Council aim is to provide and maintain green open spaces and parks, enhanced public spaces, as well as additional opportunities to safely walk or cycle in order to encourage active and healthy lifestyles, delivering an enforcement service for littering will assist with upholding this priority.

5.2 Our Council's corporate priorities is to protect and enhance the environment of the area.

*'Improve recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste material that is not recycled through working with other Councils in the Somerset Waste Partnership'*

*'Provide and maintain green open spaces and parks, enhanced public spaces, as well as additional opportunities to safely walk or cycle in order to encourage active and healthy lifestyles'*

## **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

6.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

## **7 Legal Implications**

7.1 Somerset West and Taunton is a Principal Litter Authority and has a duty to comply with its legal duties as set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

7.2 Litter is controlled under the legislative framework of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which was amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. It is an offence to drop or leave litter and not pick it up. It applies to all land that is open to the air, including land covered with water and privately owned land. A person found guilty of dropping litter can be fined up to £2500 in a magistrate's court. Most offences can be dealt with through serving a Fixed Penalty Notice on the perpetrator by an authorised body such as a local authority or police force.

## **8 Climate and Sustainability Implications**

8.1 Litter in the streets and parks can clog stormwater drains which result in flooding after heavy rain. Litter and debris are thrown, blown, or washed into rivers, canals and the sea, where it finds its way into the food chain. Litter, in particular plastic, is harming our aquatic ecosystems and blights coastal communities and tourism. Litter is consumed by aquatic animals, damaging their health or they become entangled in it. Litter can smother habitats, resulting in pieces declining or disappearing.

8.2 An increase in recycling from the utilisation of recycling bins will reduce the carbon impact.

## **9 Equality and Diversity Implications**

9.1 It is considered that there are no equality issues raised within the Litter Strategy.

### **Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Audit and Governance Committee – Yes – 6 January 2022**
- **Executive – Yes - 10 January 2022**
- **Full Council – Yes 8 February 2022**

**Reporting Frequency: Once only**

## List of Appendices

Appendix A	Draft Litter Strategy
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