
LITTER REDUCTION AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE PROJECT

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To brief Scrutiny on the Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance project [the project] and seek members support. [A copy of the project initiation document is attached at **Appendix 1**].

Summary

2. The Litter and Grounds Maintenance project is being undertaken to explore ways of working across the borough to involve individuals, groups, businesses and visitors in improving the appearance of the borough by reducing the amount of litter and participating in appropriate grounds maintenance activities.
3. The project combines these two elements with clearly defined outcomes: firstly, to identify alternative ways of maintaining green and open spaces and secondly, to facilitate behaviour change within the borough to realise a reduction in the volume of litter and identify alternative means of collection.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Members endorse the activities within the project, and
 - (b) Encourage the involvement of all elected members to promote participation by residents and businesses in each ward.

Paul Wildsmith

Director: Neighbourhood Services and Resources

Background Papers

1. Project Initiation Document
2. Medium term financial Plan 2014/15 to 2019/2020

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Extension: 6085

S17 Crime and Disorder	The report does not impact directly on s17 Crime and Disorder; but the project outcomes may contribute to initiatives to combat anti-social behaviour and crime.
Health and Well Being	It is understood that a pleasant environment with accessible green spaces improves mental health and well-being. This project aims to increase community involvement and ownership of the local area and specific green open spaces.
Carbon Impact	There are no specific carbon impact implications in this report but the report does set out specific objectives in relation to sustainability.
Diversity	The report has no specific impacts on individuals but sets out an overall objective of fairness in relation to all that the Council does. Any changes will be appropriately assessed for impacts across the protected characteristics through an Equality Impact Assessment.
Wards Affected	All wards are included in the project scope. Some wards may be affected differently as the project develops and ideas are progressed.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	The report relates to a project to seek ways of delivering savings identified within the MTFP.
Key Decision	This is not an executive decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an executive decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report does not relate directly to the shared vision: One Darlington, Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	Efficiencies are being sought through the project to deliver savings identified within the MTFP.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance project has been developed against the backdrop of the continued financial demands faced by the Council. Changing the way in which the Council operates is integral to moving away from being a provider of services to a commissioner of services.
6. The project supports all three of the conditions of success for Darlington:
 - (a) **Building Stronger communities** - the project will develop community infrastructure solutions as an enabler of community 'ownership' and the possible transfer of assets to community responsibility and management.
 - (b) **Every public pound well spent, on the right things** – ensuring that the Council's financial planning as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) addresses the need for changing the way things are done.
 - (c) **Growing the economy** – ensuring the outward appearance of the borough encourages inward investment as well as being an attractive place for residents, businesses and visitors.
7. Initially there were two distinct projects but as they developed it was clearly appropriate to combine these two areas due to the critical crossovers and commonalities of products and activities, particularly around research, identification of Action Research Projects (ARP) to test out ideas and evaluation of these ARPs.
8. The task to reduce littering and seeking alternative ways of delivering grounds maintenance has led to an innovative approach to the project's management. We have taken the opportunity to include key partners in the project team from Groundwork Northeast and City of York Council together with three elected Members providing insight into the issues facing Ward Councillors. This provides a link to all Councillors who as community leaders are important to building community links and encouraging the involvement of residents.
9. The project scoping identified three strands to the project which will contribute to its' success-:
 - (a) Strand A – reducing the amount of litter dropped;
 - (b) Strand B – the public, communities and organisations being involved in looking after their own environment (both picking up litter and grounds maintenance); and
 - (c) Strand C – seeking solutions which avoid the Council having responsibility for the cost of grounds maintenance e.g. Levy Schemes

Should these three strands not realise the changes required, an alternative plan is being developed on how the services will look with reduced resources.
10. The timescales provided for the project enable a substantial amount of background work to be undertaken to ensure that we have as much information available on how best to achieve our objectives. The scope of the project life time runs over two years and involves three distinct phases.

- (a) Phase One: carrying out research, data gathering and identifying good practice to inform suggestions for ARPs.
 - (b) Phase Two: implementation of agreed Action Research Projects and evaluation of the pilot projects.
 - (c) Phase Three: Rollout and scaling up of projects identified to deliver change from ARP pilots.
11. **Phase One** is under way with all Members invited to get involved in gathering information about Open Spaces and Litter Hotspots in their Wards which will feed into determining where 'ideas' are tested as part of the Action Research Projects. To date 17 Wards have provided information with the majority relating to litter; the rural wards have had provided information relating to grounds maintenance and the work being undertaken by Parish Councils and community groups.
12. Extensive research of good practice elsewhere has drawn examples from a variety of locations across the UK, for example:-
- (a) Cardiff City Council – using Gumdrops (a large pink globe made of recycled materials) to reduce chewing gum litter;
 - (b) Stretford (Manchester) – visibility of dog fouling where parents sprayed dog mess with environmentally friendly fluorescent colours to highlight the issue which led to a reduction in dog mess;
 - (c) Braintree District Council – 'Green Heart of Essex' campaign to reduce fast food waste by bring local franchisees on board to reduce litter by employing litter pickers and increase enforcement (writing car registration numbers on McDonald's bags so litter can be traced back to its source via Police);
 - (d) London Borough of Lambeth – exploring new ways of managing their parks and open spaces with local community groups to adopt the spaces formally with support from the council.

These are just a few examples of what is happening across the UK to combat litter and change the way in which grounds maintenance is delivered.

13. In addition to the consideration of good practice and research information from outside the borough details of current activities undertaken by Street Scene to combat litter and promote community involvement have been gathered. An analysis of current activity across the borough is being undertaken to establish a benchmark for the project to be used in conjunction with information received from Members.

Action Research Projects

14. From the outset the project team needed to ensure that the many ideas for Action Research Projects (ARPs) put forward were suitable for the task in hand. A tool to analyse suggestions was developed to assess the EASE with which an idea could be tested and the BENEFIT it could potentially deliver. This EASE/BENEFIT analysis looked at costs associated with a project idea; the resources required e.g. staffing, community input or equipment and the benefit it would give to achieving project objectives.

15. A total of 33 suggestions were submitted for consideration as ARPs which were discussed by the Project Team to filter and group any similar issues. This resulted in 22 ideas which were subject to the high-level Ease/Benefit assessment; with 14 meeting the highest level of EASE and BENEFIT.
16. The individual ARPs are now being developed further with an identified lead for each and a timetable being drawn up to roll out each project. Thorough evaluation of the project will be undertaken and reported at the end of the process.

Communications:

17. Communications for the project are diverse. Work is being undertaken to ensure that all communications relating to the project are focused and relevant. To this end a branding is being developed using ideas from Keep Britain Tidy's existing campaign '*Love Where you Live*' which provides extensive resources to be used by the community as a whole.

Our membership of Keep Britain Tidy has been renewed to enable us to access this wide range of information, advice and research materials as well as good practice from across the UK.

Outcome of Consultation

18. There has been no formal consultation at this point in the project. Appropriate consultations will take place as the project progresses.

Equality Impact Assessment

19. Equality impact assessments will be carried out in line with the Council's agreed processes and the information required to inform decision-makers included in reports to relevant decision-making committees e.g. Cabinet and Council.