
LITTER AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE PROJECT UPDATE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Place Scrutiny Committee on work undertaken as part of the Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance project.

Summary

2. The Litter and Grounds Maintenance project continues to evolve, the main focus being on:
 - (a) Reducing the amount of litter dropped
 - (b) The public, communities and organisations being involved in looking after their own environment (both picking up litter and grounds maintenance).
3. As part of the MTFP there is a £600,000 savings target to be delivered by March 2017.
4. The project combines litter and grounds maintenance 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.
5. This report identifies areas of work undertaken or being undertaken within the Borough to achieve the agreed outcomes from the project.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Members note the progress made on the project
 - (b) Continue to encourage the involvement of all Elected Members to promote participation by residents and businesses in each Ward.

**Paul Wildsmith
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

Background Papers

There were no background papers used in the preparation of this report.

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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

7. The project has undertaken several work streams since the last report in June. The primary focus of the project has been on Litter Reduction and below is an update on the work to date.

Direction of Travel

8. Since the last report, work has been undertaken on the direction of travel for the project. The primary aim is to encourage more residents and businesses across the Borough to get involved in looking after their neighbourhood; with the aim of people dropping less litter, becoming more involved and operating Zero Tolerance to environmental crime.
9. There are three key areas of work:
 - (a) The adoption of the LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE campaign branding which will inform and educate; increase awareness; and enable the use of one off activities to promote the aims.
 - (b) Increased community involvement within neighbourhoods and estates with regard to keeping areas clean, tidy and maintained where appropriate.
 - (c) Local businesses will be encouraged in a positive way to clean the front of their shops (Love Where You Trade); rewarding those involved with an award similar to the Food Hygiene Rating approach.
10. This direction of travel will enable us to clearly identify the people we should be working with initially, the needs and aspirations of communities and businesses within the Borough and enable us to build capacity within different areas through facilitation and empowerment.

Engagement and Community Involvement

11. There has been work undertaken to increase the knowledge and understanding of key staff in relation to Behaviour Change. The importance of changing people's behaviour in respect of litter reduction is crucial to enabling a fruitful partnership between the Council and residents.
12. To ensure the most appropriate and meaningful outcomes can be achieved a set of Engagement Principles has been developed which clearly set out a way to manage expectations whilst facilitating individuals, groups and communities to work together to "Love where they live"
13. An Engagement Plan based on behaviour change methodology has been developed which will also contribute to the delivery of the wider Behaviour Change agenda for the Council.

14. To understand our communities better and how we can facilitate their involvement, work is being undertaken initially in Lascelles Ward and will be extended into Bank Top to find out what the community can do, is prepared to do and the support they need to be able to do it. An audit has been carried out in Lascelles working with Members, local community leaders, residents and local businesses to identify their key issues and concerns. The outcome of the work is to get people to take responsibility for their own neighbourhood, get actively involved and identify what support they need from the Council.
15. Activity on the ground has identified a range of themes which are beginning to emerge.
 - (a) There are different issues in need of addressing in different types of landscapes.
 - (b) There is an underlying confusion amongst residents about:-
 - (i) What is already done by the Council;
 - (ii) How it best to get things done by the Council;
 - (iii) How effective it is if things are reported to the Council;
 - (iv) What it is that they (residents) can do for themselves;
 - (v) If they think they need permission, rightly or wrongly to get out and do things for themselves;
 - (vi) How might they go about getting this permission?
16. This work to gather information and data is continuing and will result in an Action Plan for the area developed in partnership with residents and community leaders to facilitate activities in the Ward.
17. The intention once this work is completed in Lascelles and Bank Top is roll out to other areas across the Borough continuing to learn and develop in coming months.

Green Footprints Experiment

18. Keep Britain Tidy invited local authorities to complete an expression of interest in participating in the experiment and Darlington was chosen as one of the ¹four locations (all in the North of England).
19. The Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance Project (LGM) identified this as an additional opportunity to carry out some research with a nationally recognised partner. The experiment will provide useful insight into how Darlington residents/visitors respond to a “nudge” towards responsible litter disposal.
20. The experiment began in August and ends on 24 November 2014. The final report will be produced by Keep Britain Tidy for DEFRA in March 2015. It is anticipated that the data gathered during the experiment will be invaluable in understanding ways of changing the behaviour of residents, businesses and visitors to the Borough. The final report will be widely circulated when published.

¹ The Councils selected are Cheshire CC, Darlington BC, Hull City Council and Northumberland CC

Rethinking Parks Initiative

21. Groundwork North East has been successful in securing £80,000 from the Rethinking Parks programme.
22. Rethinking Parks is a nationwide project aimed at finding new ways of helping improve and add value to the way urban green spaces are managed. For Darlington, the initiative came about following a successful bid from the Rethinking Parks Partnership led by Groundwork North East and supported by DBC and Darlington Cares, to the Heritage Lottery Fund via the NESTA foundation. Despite the project drawing great interest nationally with well over 200 applications, the Darlington bid was one of only 11 successful organisations receiving an award. Having been successful, the award provides a valuable resource that enables the Rethinking Parks partnership to explore how we might work with the community to improve the many parks and green open spaces that together make the Borough an attractive and desirable place to live and work.
23. The project highlighted three parks in Darlington in which to trial the initiative; these are South Park, the Denes and North Park. These three parks have all received appreciable amounts of expenditure in recent years, funded from a variety of sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund that has helped deliver many improvements to both the fabric of the parks as well as ensuring peoples continued enjoyment of these important green spaces. For this reason the Rethinking Parks initiative has begun to explore new ways of working at these three locations in order to ensure these improvements are maintained and improved upon through these difficult times.
24. The key component of the initiative is to work with Darlington Cares, the organisation set up to help coordinate the way the business community works with the voluntary sector. By working though Darlington Cares, the business community will be able to work with the Friends groups on a variety of initiatives. The kind of support they may be able to bring to the Friends groups are identified below:
 - (a) Help for Friends groups in finding further funds to improve the parks.
 - (b) Help with putting on an exciting and invigorating events programme at the parks.
 - (c) Help with improving footpaths and access to the parks.
 - (d) Help with putting together a business plan towards running improved facilities in the parks, (e.g. help for South Park in bringing more custom to the café).
 - (e) Help with the promotional side of the parks, bringing more people to them and encouraging their use.
 - (f) Help with promoting the Friends groups and attracting more volunteers.

Demand Management

25. Work will start in the New Year analysing data that exists within the Council's systems to identify where the greatest level of demands are coming from and then look at ways of how this can be reduced and managed effectively.

Business Engagement

26. Work is currently underway on developing an action plan to work with local shops and businesses, particularly in secondary shopping areas, on getting involved to maintain and enhance their local area. It should be noted however that a number of businesses are extremely proactive and the aim of the work will be to develop and build on this.

Projected Savings

27. The project initially identified savings of £600,000 to be achieved from Street Scene and Grounds Maintenance services. The first two years' savings, 14/15 and 15/16, of £250,000 can be delivered through some of the recent service changes and reduction in some budget areas. However, the savings for 16/17 will still be extremely challenging and the aim of the project over the next 12 months will be to identify how they can be delivered.

Outcome of Consultation

28. Consultation is ongoing as part of the Litter and Grounds Maintenance Project, particularly through the community involvement strand, working with local Members, community leaders, groups and individuals.