

Appendix D



Cambridge City Litter Strategy Consultation Focus Group Discussion 27th July 2021

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Cambridge City Council is developing a Litter Strategy and Action Plan which will be informed by the staff and public consultation that ran from March to August 2021.

The consultation used a mixed methodology to engage with stakeholders including:

- A workshop with staff and contractors to understand operational needs and issues and develop options for future delivery.
- A city-wide survey to understand behaviours and opinions, and test options.
- **A stakeholder focus group using the survey to generate interest and identify participants.**

METHODOLOGY

Sixty six people responded positively to taking part in the focus group discussion which was conducted virtually via Zoom. The session took place on a weekday from 6pm to 7.30pm to accommodate people who had to work. Of those who showed an interest, 23 attended on the day representing the following areas:

- Cherry Hinton and Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook
- NW Cambridge (Eddington)
- Central Cambridge, Mawson Road
- St Ives Road
- Victoria Road
- Luard Road
- Central Cambridge
- Trumpington (personal) City Centre (for work)
- Queen Edith's
- North Newtown in a block of council flats off Hills Road
- 2 x Cambridge City Council staff
- 2 x Cambridge City Councillors

Introduction and Quiz

The Streets and Open Spaces Development Manager opened the discussion presenting a slide pack to set the scene and introduce the topics for discussion. As part of this an icebreaker quiz was used asking participants '*how a Strategy can help the service?*' which generated the following responses:

- Focus
- Concrete ideas
- A decent framework and taskforce
- Measurable gains
- An aim
- Objectives
- Consistency
- A joined up approach
- Research
- Provide direction on priorities - useful if there is lack of funding
- Action
- Identify resource
- Education
- Develop Policy

Following this, the main session was introduced using slide images of litter at Laundress Green and presenting three related topics for discussion:

- *What are the issues and reasons why this is a hotspot (using Laundress Green as an example)?*
- *What can the Council do to deal with these issues?*
- *What can we all do together to support this?*

This generated positive and balanced discussion and participation from all attendees both vocally and in the Chat function of Zoom. These have been sorted and captured as **themes** in the following section.

THEMES EMERGING FROM GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Working with Businesses

This came through strongly during the discussion as participants felt that commercial premises should take responsibility for the waste they produce through their outlets.

- Work with businesses about being a good citizen and steward of the town.
- Commercial outlets should be responsible for what they are producing in the first place.
- Work with shops and takeaways because this is a big part of the problem - consumerism and disposable culture.
- Can food outlets encourage their customers to recycle their waste?

Branded waste was seen as an option for identifying where waste had originated, then charging the business for the waste that is picked up and disposed of. The group felt that the council needs to 'be stronger with companies'.

- Can levies be raised on shops with branded disposable waste? Charge all local businesses a litter tax if their packaging is found discarded.
- How much can we enforce this; how can we follow the waste back to the supplier/business and where we can attribute waste to a premises we can enforce that. This is potentially a good initiative in terms of identifying where the waste comes from and has been successful with McDonalds.
- The University Arms on Parkers Piece have branded waste and clear it all away.
- Branded waste could also be used to reward a business where we don't find any of their branded items on the floor? "Name and Praise".

Businesses should **take ownership** and do more to clear up their own waste.

- I do think we need to do more with shops/supermarkets. Sainsbury's is a big source of litter on Cherry Hinton Brook but we have had great difficulty getting them to take real responsibility – even showing them that it is their stuff.
- Commercial premises are making money out of these sales, they should go round and make an effort to clear up. They should be seen to be proactive.
- Positive messaging is really good. Businesses should have signs up telling people to dispose of their litter properly – address at the point of sale.
- Corporations, institutions should do their own litter picking, should also come all the way up from hospitals, offices, schools. Contractors working on roads leave their rubbish and cones. Everyone should pick it up.
- Different companies can form groups to have different days, can decide when and what. All companies are expected to do something in the City because they are a company from that City – the city works together.
- I saw someone from McDonalds on Market Road doing a litter collection. Not sure how often this happens.
- Bruce Crescent bins have been removed because of the volume of waste from the shops and premises, but people are not paying attention, staff from some of the establishments are still dumping their cardboard on the pavement.

- We donated litter pick equipment to Coldham's Lane Sainsburys and they used them for a few months while there was an enthusiastic staff member - then it all stopped and the litter picks can't even be found.

And **disposable BBQ's** were seen as big issues due to the damage they do to grassy areas.

- Shops selling disposable BBQs should have a warning or reminder up not to use on grass/green spaces. The damage from BBQs is awful and takes many years to repair the grass. It takes 5 years for grass to repair.
- Ban the sale of disposable BBQ's.
- Barbeques need better enforcement - the grass is continuously vandalised. Please can we have a warden with the authority to issue fines on the spot on warm sunny days?

2. Education and Raising Awareness

Along with the working with businesses, the other main theme that emerged during the discussion was around raising awareness of the issues of littering and its impact. Educating at an early age was seen as important, working with schools, but also educating all residents, using campaigns and ongoing messaging.

- Agree that education and awareness raising is going to be vital – a lot of people seem to have lost that understanding. It's frustrating to see empty bins and litter on the floor – we need education, awareness raising, sensitisation to the environment. A lot of work needs to be done, people don't understand what it means and the impact. And it's depressing to see.
- It comes down to education, it's not the what but the why – if you can't bin it take it home. I trained my kids to take it home, you can 't just throw it on the ground. Take it back in the bag you brought it in.

Understanding the **impact** that litter has was seen as a useful tool in raising awareness and educating.

- Positive impact that the David Attenborough film has had on reducing plastic waste. If people saw the impact that litter was having on animals, with different messages for different audiences, the impact litter has on wildlife, people would take more responsibility if they saw and understood the impact.
- Consequences of littering especially on animals, wildlife and the environment, especially around children, as they can be more sensitive and aware around images. It doesn't have to be too graphic, but targeted imagery can have big impact.
- Face masks are a particular problem at the moment – had to rescue a swan with a face mask around its neck. A cow died from eating a plastic bag – cow's dying from litter on a poster/sign could bring it to people's attention.
- Jesus Green ditch is swamped with litter all the time and the moorhen chicks are suffocating in plastic bags.

Campaigns were seen as a critical component in education and raising awareness. Participants felt that big impact campaigns were needed but that ongoing messaging was also important to keep reminding people of the issues and how to address them.

- The Council could start with a really big publicity campaign – making bins really obvious (the next generation of cows could perhaps all be litter bins?!) and lots of

notices and publicity. Make it fun – choose a weekend when lots of people are going to be out and about. Some nice catchy slogans like ‘pick up after a picnic’, use the bin, make it simple.

- What would work for me is seeing the impact of what the clean area would be like – makes people feel happy and safe gives them pride in where they live so that they look after it. And the impact of lots of litter, its dirty, unhealthy, it's a danger for humans and animals. Good and the bad side by side. Seeing animals in pain from eating bad litter or stuck in litter. These images say it without using words. Cambridge loves its cows don't kill them off, use the plastic cows to tell people about other types of plastic.
- Have big impact signs and publicity at entrances to spaces like Laundress Green. Use big screens to raise awareness (young people notice screens more than static signage), show images of impact and damage, and what it looks like with no litter to show the difference.
- Any campaign needs to target all demographics using different styles of communication to reach everyone. We all learn and communicate in different ways. Work with an advertising agency to come up with something compelling and engaging.
- Big events are good but everyday reminders are key to changing habits.
- Have something different and noticeable – a mobile litter bus; an info kiosk in town at the weekend or pop up kiosks at different places; a litter bus on tour..... Wombles on wheels; branded litter picker cargo bikes.
- Install bags to put things in and take it away – information, education and aiding. Also put some pride into it all. Get a slogan. Nicer to live in a litter free place – be upbeat and not too finger wagging.
- There are seasonal issues around litter especially in the summer, so targetted messages should be used at the start of the summer. Litter is worse this year as more people are using the spaces. It would be really sensible to launch something quickly, now during the summer while it is all happening.
- Use national campaigns to piggyback onto like Keep Britain Tidy, Love Parks Week 23 July - 1 August, and World Rivers day in September.

Participants thought that **signage** was important, but that people ignore it after a while so it needs to be creative and impactful.

- As a simple fix quick big stickers on each of the bins in town and posters in town. THINK don't litter.....Pleasea picture of animal.
- Have QR Codes for information, give positive messages about the area and also mention litter. Can also provide a way of feeding back.
- Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook have put signs along Cherry Hinton Brook (funding from Cam Water and the River Care project); they don't have a huge effect but I think it would be worse without them. We made them fun, with a cartoon of a water vole and catchy slightly rude slogans about cigarette butts.

Working with **schools and universities** and educating young people was seen as a critical factor, so that good behaviour and habits are established early on and messages can be taken back to the home to instil in others.

- Are we teaching about litter in schools and taking the children on litter picks? I think it should be on the curriculum and have school litter pick days. Introduce school educational campaigns and measure the impact. In Japan they clean their own classrooms.

- Go into schools to have greatest impact, especially at junior level – they go home and tell the family what they did in school and can reinforce how bad dropping litter is. Since COVID link with schools has stopped but there is strength in getting a range of messages into schools. I agree totally about the importance of young children – they are the most enthusiastic on our litter picks and we have been into the primary school at Cherry Hinton and they were great. I'm sure I learnt to pick up litter when I was that age!
- Educational institutes have to take responsibility – the leisure centre area of Queen Edith at lunchtime is a problem – there are 4 or 5 bins not used and litter everywhere from Hills Road 6th form students. We have written to the Head to complain. Publicising could bring a sense of shame, put up photos on 5 consecutive days where litter has been left.
- University lawns are immaculate, they are looking after their own! Universities are often keen volunteers and are keen on being responsible. We need to get the establishment to help the community. Cambridge conservationists in the David Attenborough building, have a big push to play a more active role – there will be people who want to get in touch.
- Kings College allow people to sit on the lawn and every morning its strewn with litter even though there is a 1100l bin plus street bins. Needs a lot of education and get people to take pride about their area.
- Young people are concerned about the climate so use this message and get them to take responsibility this way.

3. Enforcement

The idea of having **litter wardens** came through strongly and was a popular option with participants.

- In some towns and cities they have litter wardens for dropping cigarettes and chewing gum – we don't need to be draconian but we do need to show people that we do mean business. I believe there are a few wardens – I've seen one on Jesus Green, but only once! I visited Stratford and they had two people permanently picking up litter.
- Litter wardens who are confident enough to ask people why they are dropping litter, reminding people to use the bins, raising awareness as well as enforcing? Could wear special tabards with a catchy slogan on the back to gain attention. Some people don't realise they are dropping litter or that it is an issue, just reminding them could have an effect. Penalties plus prompting. Educate people in hotspots, wardens could do this, come with a full bottle and leave with an empty bottle.
- We have parking enforcement why not litter enforcement officers, wardens could work in pairs if it's confrontational as challenging people about dropping litter can result in abuse. Often the reaction is that someone else is paid to do it.
- I would volunteer as a litter warden – to pick up litter but also to remind people where bins are and report once bins get full. You could also have a sign saying 'report this bin if its full' with text of phone number to inform the council that the bin is full.
- Barbeques need better enforcement – the grass is continuously vandalised. Please can we have a warden with the authority to issue fines on the spot on warm sunny days?

- We want to have fun but we also want to remind people of the consequences as well. Have a regular 'news item' of fines, how much people have been fined and why.
- Need a body of people to do enforcement. Employing people to do this adds to the costs. Voluntary wardens might need police protection.
- Response from staff – *currently we have 6 enforcement officers dealing with range from fly tipping to graffiti, littering and vehicle issues. Morning to afternoon and weekends in pairs. All monies collected can then be used on litter related campaigns.*

Some participants also thought that **CCTV** could play a part.

- CCTV can be used to identify littering.
- What about recording litter with mobile cameras like mobile speeding.

And one option for offenders was to make people who are caught littering do a litter pick for the day instead of receiving a fixed penalty notice.

4. Community Pride and Social Responsibility

Participants felt that everyone should contribute to addressing the issue of littering, with volunteering and community days seen as options and opportunities to encourage people to get involved.

- Instil community pride and respect – initiatives such as competitions, grassroots community pride projects and incentives such as best kept area, hanging baskets, competitions and challenges, etc.
- Some people feel it's not MY litter but they need to understand that it's OUR litter – we need to address it together.
- We should focus on what makes that area special to instil pride, and why we need to deal appropriately with the waste. We have a lot of history associated with most locations and some education about why they should protect the site may prove beneficial.
- Council does arrange community days for bulky waste in some areas which is very successful. Expand this, make it a fun day and community day with different services coming along.
- Volunteering is a good idea and there are already teams of volunteers in some areas which is good. Involve volunteers from colleges and schools. COVID-19 might have an impact on this. Council's website has a page for people who want to volunteer, and they get time credits back so get rewarded for volunteering. The council volunteers programme is organising an event for all the volunteer Friends Groups in early August – they might be able to discuss this issue and come up with more ideas?
- I pick up litter myself with my own bag and picker stick. Would be good to raise awareness of the Council scheme because people haven't heard of it. The Reeves Programme is great but this is not advertised enough.
- Can't rely on volunteers all the time, have to have infrastructure as well which is supplemented and complemented by volunteers.

5. Learning From and Working with Others

Participants were keen for the council to learn from other areas that had good examples of dealing with litter and waste. And also trial some of these in the City.

- We need to learn from others. Are there good examples of anti-litter campaigns from other councils with similar issues. I agree strongly that someone should look at good examples from other Councils, and other countries as suggested. Could the Council look into this?
- I believe that Monmouthshire Council has a good litter strategy.
- Japan is a great model – we can learn so much from them about this issue. They have zero litter.
- I worked in Canada and the premises were responsible for a litter pick on rota. All local businesses have a community day, devoted for different themes and issues, can we get that in the City? One of the themes could be litter and an organised litter pick.
- River Cam programme part of keep Britain Tidy does litter picks along all water courses as part of national great British Spring Clean plus autumn initiative. They have a Cambridge coordinator and can provide the equipment, would be good to make contact.
- Do we need to wait for the government before introducing a glass and plastic bottle recycling scheme? A trial scheme in the City would be great. Agree re. deposits on bottles/cans. They have this in NYC too, and it hugely reduces the number on the streets. Return initiatives are also useful as they have a monetary value, this can provide an incentive.
- Some of the conservation organisations based in the David Attenborough Building/Cambridge Conservation Institute in the centre of town work on plastics - could they be persuaded to help locally.
- Coop is recycling soft bags/plastics – could the council work with them?

6. Bins

There was some discussion around bin size and type, however this did not dominate the session.

- People want to use the bins but they are too small so they put the rubbish next to bin as they think this is acceptable. Bins should be bigger as people tend not to take their rubbish home.
- On hot sunny days and at known hotspots the bins need to be emptied much more often (every 2-3 hours?).
- Put signs up to educate about taking waste home, where the next bin is, and how to report overflowing bins.
- There are some new style bins on trial in the city centre which compress waste.
- We need to educate to reduce the amount and prevent litter in the first place, bigger bins are the wrong way of looking at it.
- Can't really do any more than what we have regarding recycling and general waste bins.
- Something bright – this is a bin, bigger bin, more bins but then need more staff to empty them. Make it easy to get rid of your litter.

7. Reporting Issues/Service Issues

Some participants reported difficulty in using the council reporting system and the complexity of the website. They had also observed issues with litter bin collections.

- There can be big delays in reporting litter that needs collecting and the actual collection. Street Clean largely do a really good job but I've often reported problems and then nothing has happened.
- Most of the information is on the Councils website but this is an impossible maze to find anything. One of our jobs is to report litter on Cherry Hinton Brooke and this is difficult to do. The other place of information is in the magazine 'Cambridge matters' but young people won't read that. It's important to make information more readily available.
- After the bins have been collected there is quite a lot of litter left around the bins. This litter is not picked up as 'it's not their job' they will empty the bin and leave the litter around it. This is disappointing and needs education of staff – the council needs to instil that they need to clear the area properly.
- Better reporting linked to ASB team and police which could build a picture of ASB and litter hotspots.

ACTIONS TO TAKE FORWARD

Using ideas from each theme, the following actions are suggested to take forward.

Working with Businesses

- Identify the main contributors of litter in the City and bring together for a focussed discussion on options to address litter issues, working together more closely with the council and communities. Areas for discussion should include:
 - Branded waste
 - Litter taxes and levies
 - Litter picks around business premises
 - Community clean up days – taking part and sponsoring
 - Point of sale education campaigns

Education and Raising Awareness

- Develop a communication plan to support delivery of the Litter Strategy which includes a launch and identifying seasonal campaigns to raise awareness. Campaigns should consider:
 - Using images that have the most impact.
 - Develop messaging and imagery for a variety of target audiences.
 - Consider trialling using big screens to demonstrate the issues and impact of littering; pop up or permanent information kiosks at hotspot locations; litter bus that travels to different locations (including schools) raising awareness.
 - Aligning to national campaign days to have most impact.
- Re-establish connections with schools and develop an education package that schools can use with pupils. Engage schools to take part in community clean up days.
- Research and review effective signage campaigns that could be introduced in the City.

- Consider including messaging on bins including how to report overflowing bins – QR Codes, text messaging, automated phonenumber.
- Identify university contacts to discuss and develop a joint approach to tackling litter and waste.

Enforcement

- Research and review Litter Warden models with a view to developing options to take forward, including options to incorporate volunteer wardens. Link into existing enforcement structure and resource.
- Establish a range of enforcement options to be included in the Strategy to include court fines, on the spot fines, verbal warnings and communal litter picks.
- Develop options for dealing with disposable BBQ issues, including enforcement and working with shops at the point of sale.

Community Pride and Social Responsibility

- Work with local communities to introduce community clean up days, sponsored by the business sector.
- Improve publicity and promotion of council litter picking volunteering opportunities – SOS Volunteers – with a view to introducing across the City. Work with community groups and CVS infrastructure organisations to promote this offer.

Learning from and Working with Others

- Review and follow up references of good practice generated during the focus group discussion.
- Develop pilot(s) to test new ways of working and collaboration.

Reporting, Servicing, Bins

- Use journey mapping to understand the process for reporting a litter or waste issue to ensure it is simple and straightforward for all audiences. This could be done working with residents who have participated in the focus group and want to take an active role.
- Review litter bin collection processes with the contractor to understand why litter is not cleared as part of the bin emptying process – how can this be addressed?
- Consider bin size, location and emptying frequency as part of the operational plan development.

CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

Participants were keen to continue to be part of the development process and provided consent to be contacted for future correspondence and consultations. This could develop into a '**citizens panel**' for the Streets and Open Spaces department to support codesign and development in the future.

NEXT STEPS

This report, along with the findings of the survey, are being used to prepare the Litter Strategy and Operation Plan which will be presented to Committee in late autumn for approval.

END



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