

REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	15 th August 2019	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	ALLISON THOMAS, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – SERVICE DELIVERY	OPEN
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SUBJECT:	Environmental Awareness and Local Community Action	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS01

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the Committee notes the outcomes of recent activities by the Council to raise environmental awareness and the lessons learned from these activities.
- 1.2. That the Committee approve the proposed community engagement activity for the next 12 months to build upon the progress made to date.

2. Purpose of the Report

- 2.1. To provide members with a summary of the environmental awareness activities delivered during spring 2019, to demonstrate how these activities link to the Councils' environmental priorities and to set out the Councils future aspirations for raising community engagement in environmental improvement.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1. In August 2018, E&DS approved the establishment of a Corporate Environmental Sustainability Group (CESG). The purpose of the Group is to develop and implement measures that demonstrably improve the Council's environmental performance and support the delivery of the Council's strategic environmental objectives through a collaborative corporate approach. The five key environmental themes of the CESG are staff travel, waste, water, energy and procurement.
- 3.2. In October 2018, Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the contents of the 2017 Litter Strategy for England and acknowledged the need highlighted for national improvements in education, enforcement and engagement to tackle litter and waste in the environment.
- 3.3. In January 2019, E&DS approved the creation of a Community Safety Enforcement Officer to help deal with environmental crime, such as littering, across South Derbyshire. Specifically the Committee determined that the new Officer should also have a brief to improve engagement with businesses in Swadlincote town centre; address town centre anti-social behaviour, improve maintenance of private land in

the town centre and maximise the engagement of volunteer resources to help improve the town centre.

- 3.4. During spring 2019 two environmental education and engagement activities were delivered to focus on improving public open spaces.

3.4.1. The **We're Watching You** campaign was delivered in some of the Districts parks to encourage responsible owners to pick up after their dog and to apply peer pressure to less responsible owners.

3.4.2. The **Great British Spring Clean** event was delivered to help enthusiastic members of our local communities come together to clear up litter.

- 3.5. The underlying concept of both activities was to test the local appetite and response to environmental awareness events and to understand what aspects of these campaigns were successful to assist with future event planning.

We're Watching You

- 3.6. The We're Watching You campaign was originally launched by the Keep Britain Tidy Group. It was driven by repeated feedback from communities across the UK that dog fouling was one of the most emotive topics affecting local communities. The campaign concept was based on research which showed that a minority of dog owners act irresponsibly when they think they're not being watched. The purpose of the campaign was therefore to look for an innovative way to tackle dog fouling while helping to make a positive change to people's behaviour.
- 3.7. The Tidy Britain Group have developed a set of glow in the dark signs which become highly visible during night-time hours. The signs selected for South Derbyshire featured a pair of watching eyes with a supporting positive reinforcement message – "9 out of 10 dog owners clean up after their dog. Are you the one who doesn't?".



- 3.8. Four popular areas of public open space were chosen to locate the signs. The areas were selected based on known locations of high footfall along with historical data about complaints of dog fouling incidents made to the District Council. A social media campaign was also developed to support the deployment of the signs.
- 3.9. The campaign began in late February 2019 and continued through into April 2019. As an educational and awareness raising campaign the primary impact was monitored based on social media traction. The Council also monitored complaints about dog fouling over the campaign period and incidents of dog fouling in the four areas of public open space. The four public open spaces chosen were Newall Park, Woodville Rec, footpaths around Pennine Way, Church Gresley and Sealey Way, Willington.

The Great British Spring Clean

- 3.10. In 2018 the Council organised two successful litter picking events in Swadlincote under the 'Swadlincote Heroes' strapline. This spring the event was organised to link in to the Great Britain Spring Clean (22 March – 23 April 2019).
- 3.11. The Great British Spring Clean is an event co-ordinated by Keep Britain Tidy to involve schools, businesses and communities in becoming actively engaged in clearing up litter. The event offers three levels of engagement – individuals can **pledge** to clean up on their own, to **join** an existing clean-up in their area or to **host** a clean-up.
- 3.12. The Council hosted a town centre spring clean on 2nd April. Support was also provided to a registered event in Castleton Park which consisted of providing litter collection equipment, waste collection bags and removal and disposal of the collected waste at the end of the event.

Results

- During the Great British Spring Clean 90 bags of litter were collected during the Castleton Park and Swadlincote spring cleans.
 - 50 volunteers supported the Castleton Park event and a further 8 came to the Swadlincote event including local staff from McDonald's and Stan's Pals supported by a number of SDDC employees. In total, volunteers contributed an estimated 145 hours voluntary work to improve the condition of their local communities.
- 3.13. Appendix 1 to this report provides a summary of the impacts of the We're Watching You Campaign.
- 64,268 residents saw our content on Facebook and Twitter and 3,806 actively engaged with this content.
 - The social media content generated significant demands for further information and in particular, interest about what people could do to make a difference. In response a [Frequently Asked Questions website on dog fouling](#) was published on the SDDC website.
 - The campaign content clearly enabled engaged residents to translate frustration into actions.
 - Complaints about dog fouling during the campaign period actually reduced by 35% compared to the same times of the year over the previous three years.

4. Learning Points and Future Actions

- 4.1. Relevant officers from different Council services met after both of the campaigns to review and identify lessons learned. The Great Britain Spring Clean showed that there is significant interest locally for engagement by local communities in keeping their communities clean. Some of the key learning points were;

- 4.2. Community litter collection events are most effectively held in the spring when litter is less obscured by vegetation growth;
- 4.3. Much of the litter collected was picked up on private land open to the public. Public land maintained by SDDC generally had low quantities of litter. Opportunities exist to work with owners of private land to help reduce litter volumes on their land;
- 4.4. Clear guidance needed to be provided to volunteers to ensure that recyclable litter was not contaminated with non-recyclable litter or other waste in order to maximise recycling rates;
- 4.5. It is crucial to maintain constructive contact with a core of volunteers throughout the year to keep them engaged. It is also desirable to recognise the efforts of volunteers immediately after future events, for example by providing food and refreshments. Town centre businesses may be willing to support this by offer their services and promoting their products;
- 4.6. Opportunities exist to link in and collaborate with other community litter collection groups operating within South Derbyshire.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The direct cost of the We're Watching You campaign signs was £2250. Other direct costs to support the Great British Spring Clean were estimated at approximately £500.
- 5.2. The staff hours estimated to facilitate the two campaigns were 100hours for We're Watching You and 150hours for the Great British Spring Clean.
- 5.3. There were no quantifiable direct savings realised as a result of the campaigns – for example there was no reduction in the frequency of routine street cleaning activity in the areas. However the reduction in complaints about dog fouling would have resulted in fewer than normal requests for reactive street cleaning services which would have freed up direct services staff for other environmental improvement activity.
- 5.4. The financial value of removing 90 bags of litter from our urban environment cannot be quantified, however it clearly has a material benefit both directly to the environment and more widely to the improved sense of community wellbeing.

6. Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

- 6.1. None.

Legal Implications

- 6.2. None.

Corporate Plan Implications

- 6.3. The proposals align with the 'Outcomes' Corporate Plan theme and in particular Action O3 "Enhance environmental standards"; the 'Place' Corporate Plan theme and in particular Action PL6 "Deliver services that keep the district clean and healthy".

Risk Impact

- 6.4. The proposals will have a beneficial mitigating action against the corporate risk of "Managing the environmental impact of incidents across the District".

7. Community Impact

Consultation

7.1. None.

Equality and Diversity Impact

7.2. None.

Social Value Impact

7.3. Beneficial.

Environmental Sustainability

7.4. Beneficial.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1. Both campaigns showed the potential to educate and engage residents of South Derbyshire in campaigns to positively influence their local environment and communities.
- 8.2. The Great British Spring Clean shows that significant numbers of residents are willing to directly give up their spare time for environmental improvement projects. A relatively small Council investment in time and consumables can help to co-ordinate and maximise this available asset with tangible results.
- 8.3. The We're Watching You campaign highlights how the residual frustration in local communities about dog fouling can be channelled into more positive energy. In particular it highlighted that awareness raising campaigns must be supported with robust and reactive social media content.

9. Background Papers

Environment and Development Services Committee, 16th August 2018,

Environment and Development Services Committee, 17th April 2019,

Appendix 1 – Social Media Campaign Summary We're Watching You

