

Minutes

Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee

28th September 2022 at 7.15pm



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Abbott	Yes	T McArdle	Yes
J Baugh	Apologies	Mrs J Pell	Yes
G Courtauld (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	Mrs J Sandum	Yes
A Hensman	Yes	Mrs L Walters	Apologies
Mrs M Cunningham (Chairman)	Yes		

11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There was one Interest declared:-

Councillor Mrs J Sandum declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5, 'Scrutiny Review into Litter Management – Second Evidence Gathering Session,' as she was a member of the Feering Litter Picking Volunteer Group.

12 **MINUTES**

DECISION: The Minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee held on 13th July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

13 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

14 **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO LITTER MANAGEMENT – SECOND EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION**

INFORMATION: The Chairman was pleased to welcome Councillor Christa Dobson, of Feering Parish Council, to the meeting. Councillor Dobson was in attendance to provide a presentation to the Committee which detailed the origin and experiences of the Feering Litter Picking Volunteer Group.

The full presentation slides are available to view on the Council's YouTube channel via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyaKkGhlooY>

The key points from the presentation were as follows:

- Following lockdown in 2020, Councillor Dobson, along with other residents, noticed a rise in fast food littering along the main roads of the village. In line with Keep Britain

Tidy's 'Autumn Clean' campaign, Councillor Dobson decided to discuss the idea of a community litter pick with the members of the Environmental Working Group at Feering Parish Council. The Parish Council then advertised the litter pick on social media, the event of which took place on 20th September 2020.

- Equipment for the litter pick, such as litter picker tools and high visibility jackets, were provided by the Council's Street Cleaning team. There was an unexpectedly large turnout for the event, with more volunteers in attendance than there was equipment available. However, the event was much enjoyed and many of the volunteers expressed an interest in making it a regular occurrence.
- A press release was issued by the Parish Council via social media about the success of the event and included a request for future volunteers. An article was also released within the local Parish Church magazine; the article highlighted the Green Heart Scheme and the areas in the Parish where littering was a key issue. In response, over 25 residents contacted the Parish Council and requested to volunteer.
- Although a positive development, the group's future litter picks were hindered to an extent by factors such as the start of a new Covid-19 lockdown in November 2020 and the need to adhere to social distancing measures, as well as the amount of equipment needed. There was also reluctance expressed by some volunteers to sign up to the Green Heart Scheme (as they felt that they were "signing their lives away"), as GDPR issues in respect of retaining their contact details.
- The litter picking volunteers complemented the work of the Parish Handyman, who collected litter along the outskirts of the village where it was not necessarily safe for volunteers to cover.
- Although there were some initial setbacks, the local community had gone on to benefit from the litter picks; for example, the hours for volunteering were flexible, and it allowed residents to meet new people and broaden their social circles. There was also an element of cross-working with litter pickers in neighbouring Coggeshall and Kelvedon. Furthermore, with the litter pickers covering residential areas, the Handyman was able to concentrate on clearing areas of land that were less accessible to residents, such as rural roads.
- In terms of the Council's involvement, temporary, yellow 'no littering' signs were previously provided along Inworth Road as a deterrent for car littering, which reportedly worked well. Indeed, once the signs were removed, rates of littering increased along the road again. Consideration was also being given towards the use of the 'Don't be a Tosser' campaign signs.
- It was felt that a 'Report Littering' campaign should be undertaken by the District Council to highlight both of the issue of littering and the consequences for those people who are caught (e.g. prosecutions such as fines).
- It was suggested that the District Council could produce information posters that could be displayed on Parish noticeboards about the issue of fly tipping along rural roads and the need to check that Waste Carriers were actually licensed to undertake waste clearances. Furthermore, it was felt that both Coggeshall Road and Inworth Road in Feering would benefit from a 'fly-tipping camera' or permanent signage.

- Cigarette butt littering was also a major issue in and around locations such as the train station in Kelvedon, with rates worsening after Covid. There also seemed to be a prevalent issue with littering amongst younger people and a lack of waste and/or recycling bins (e.g. around shops and parks). As such, it was felt that the Council could work with Parish Councils to consider these issues and how they might be managed more effectively (e.g. with use of the Council's neon green bins in wider areas across the District).
- The final slide regarded the littering issues along the A12 and A120 grass verges, which was mainly due to drivers throwing rubbish out of their vehicles onto the roads. It was asked whether the District Council could give consideration towards managing the areas in the District more effectively; for example, by making building sites responsible for picking up their own litter, working collaboratively with Essex Highways and/or National Highways to find a solution, or by clearing verges before they were trimmed.

Further to the presentation, Members raised several questions. In response, Councillor Dobson supplied the following information:

- The volunteer group had received an abundance of equipment from the District Council to assist them with clearing litter, which included litter pickers, bags, high visibility jackets and gloves; however, it was added that it would also be useful for the group to receive some litter picking 'hoops.'
- The litter picking team used the purple bags to collect the litter, the bags of which were then deposited next to, or as close as possible to, public bins. The bags would then be collected on a Monday by the Handyman and left at the central waste collection point for removal by the District Council. It was noted that some of the volunteers recycled wine bottles or other types of glass when they came across this type of litter. It was that this practice should remain the choice of the volunteer and not a requirement, due to health and safety issues associated with collecting this type of waste.
- In respect of litter from fast food restaurants, it was felt that the customers were the ones that needed to be targeted in respect of awareness around litter management.
- Unlike in the UK, littering from fast food establishments seemed to be far less of an issue in other countries e.g. Canada, which was likely due, in part, to the higher fines charged for such offences, but also a prevalent, 'anti-litter' culture.
- Councillor Dobson was able to facilitate the work of the litter picking volunteer group with the support of the District Council, through the supply of the necessary equipment, and by linking in with 'Keep Britain Tidy's' Autumn cleaning campaign (in lieu of the Spring clean in 2020, which was postponed due to Covid). The success of the group was mainly attributed to the willingness of volunteers to take part and give up their time on a regular basis to combat littering, as well as the involvement of the local Handyman.
- It was noted that many people now had dashcams in their vehicle which could be used to obtain evidence when identifying littering offenders.
- Permanent anti-littering signage would be useful to have around 'hotspot' areas the District, as this seemed to deter people from littering in the Inworth Road area. Heavier fines for littering would also be useful.

- It was agreed that a list of registered Waste Carriers could be displayed in local areas across the District (e.g. in Parish magazines) which would be useful in terms of helping residents to avoid using the services of 'rogue' Carriers, who were known to collect waste and then dispose of it illegally in the form of fly tipping.

In response to the information that was provided, the following questions and actions were raised:

- Councillor Abbott asked where it was that the purple sacks containing waste which were later collected by the Council, were taken (e.g. for recycling, to landfill, etc).
- Councillor Abbott raised a question around the possibility of the District Council developing a more co-ordinated approach to clearing litter along the A12 with Essex Highways.
- Councillor Abbott suggested that the Council could undertake some communications around issues relating to dog waste bags that were left on tree branches and in hedges along public rights of way routes throughout the District.
- Councillor Abbott asked if it would be possible to contact a member of National Highways and ask that they attend a future meeting of the Committee to talk about issues in relation to the A12. Councillor Abbott possessed the contact details of such an officer from Essex Highways and agreed to send the details to Governance Officers outside of the meeting.
- Councillor Courtauld agreed to explore whether Members' Councillor Community Grants could be used to help fund more litter picking equipment for Parishes within his Ward, such as litter pickers 'hoops.'
- Councillor Mrs Sandum raised a question around the possibility of the District Council requesting that the Governance increase littering fines, as it was felt that the current fines were not enough of a deterrent. It was added that it would also be useful if successful prosecutions within the District could be promoted locally, both to reassure people that littering was taken seriously and as a deterrent for would-be offenders.

At the end of the questions, the Chairman expressed her thanks on behalf of the Committee to Councillor Dobson for her presentation and the information provided.

Before concluding the meeting, the Chairman reminded Members that this meeting marked the second evidence gathering for the Scrutiny Review into Litter Management within the Braintree District. Given the short timescale for the Review, Members were urged to submit any recommendations or ideas they had for the Scrutiny Report to Governance Officers by e-mailing governance@braintree.gov.uk.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.30pm.

Councillor Mary Cunningham
(Chairman)