

Minutes

Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee

16th November 2022 at 7.15pm



Present

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

15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no Interests declared. It was however acknowledged that under Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny Review into Litter Management in the Braintree District - Third Evidence Gathering Session, Members would receive a presentation from Mr Justin Wrench, Head Teacher of Gt Bradfords Junior School, who was known to the Committee as he also a District Councillor.

16 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee held on 28th September 2022 were approved as a correct record.

17 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

18 **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO LITTER MANAGEMENT – THIRD EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION**

INFORMATION: The Chairman was pleased to welcome Levi White, Waste and Street Cleaning Manager, Steve Wilson, Operations Manager and Justin Wrench, Head Teacher of Great Bradfords Junior School to the meeting.

The Chairman invited Mr Wrench to introduce himself and inform the Committee about the litter management activities undertaken at Great Bradfords Junior School.

The key points from the presentation were as follows:

- For context, Members were advised that Great Bradfords Junior School was a large school of 360 children aged between 7 and 11years.

- As a school, it was believed that at the right age children should begin exploring important issues which would not only impact themselves but also the community and wider environment. The school's code of conduct was set around three important values which were; To be safe, To be kind, and To be responsible.
- Great Bradfords had set up a committee called the Global Green Team which comprised of 12 year 5 children aged between 9 and 10 years old who focused largely on eco and green improvements in the school. Part of their role was also to carry out regular litter picks across the school sites and had previously been supplied litter picking tools from Braintree District Council.
- The committee had also assisted in ensuring the planting of over 100 trees in 2020, the installation of solar panels to the school in 2021, and this year had secured the fitting over 350 LED lights across the school.
- It was reported that in year 4, the children followed a project entitled 'Who is responsible for our waste and Planet'. The focus of this was around the issue of litter and the impact this was having on the Planet. This included the children litter picking the entire school site, collecting data from this, and identifying issues of why litter was collecting in certain areas.
- It was noted that due to the school being situated at the bottom of an estate and within close proximity to the road, a large majority of litter was blown on to the school site from the road.
- One of the main issues the children had identified was that they only had access to single use bins that were not designed particularly well and wind would often blow the contents out of the bins and disperse litter around the school site.
- As part of the project the children use IT software to design their own bins. They had also recently invited the Chairman of the Council, Councillor Andrew Hensman and Councillor Mrs Wendy Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment to the school together who took part in a debate with the children around bins and litter.
- Mr Wrench informed Members that they were still awaiting some action regarding new and additional bins. He had recently received an update and unfortunately this fell outside the remit of Braintree District Council, and was a matter for Essex County Council and their funding, however it was reported that the Cabinet Member for Environment was currently negotiating with some large companies locally to source funding for some additional bins for all local schools.
- It was reported that in the recent past, a year 6 cohort had led a project on the use of single use plastics and their impact on the environment. The children were tasked with writing to local and multi-national companies along with the local MP who passed the information on to the Prime Minister at the time. Members were advised that the children had received a response from the Prime Minister and the project was passed on to the Minister for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- The project also culminated in a whole school litter pick over a series of 2 weeks which saw every child in the school go out and remove litter from the local community. Hi vis jackets and litter picking tools were loaned to the school from the District Council to assist with the initiative.

- There was a project evolving with the current year 6 cohort entitled 'What does it take to transform' which not only looked at the impact of climate change but also different biomes across the world and how these were being affected along with the impact of deforestation.
- Members were informed that the children were holding an exhibition next month which would include some artwork formed solely from litter and single use plastics which focused on the topics of the effects of climate change and deforestation. An invitation to attend the exhibition was extended to Members.

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

- With regards to what other schools were doing around the topic of litter and climate change, Mr Wrench explained that the majority of schools would have their own variations of eco councils and littering projects but could not confirm that this was the case for all schools.
- Mr Wrench explained in more detail the duties of the 12 children who made up the Global Green Team which included encouraging other children to participate in litter picks, going round to classrooms at lunchtimes ensuring teachers had switched off lights, interactive white boards, and projectors.
- Mr Wrench confirmed that they had not yet considered the option of whether any grants were available to assist with the issue of new and sorting bins but were keen to explore this further to see if any funding was available.
- It was reported that the trade waste for Great Bradfords School was managed by Braintree District Council, and they were currently looking at package options for waste management as it was noted that charges for schools food waste was quite significant.

The Chairman invited Levi White, Waste and Street Cleaning Manager and Steve Wilson, Operations Manager to make their presentation to the Committee.

The full presentation slides are available to view on the Council's website at the following link:

<https://braintree.cmis.uk.com/braintree/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1235/Committee/21/Default.aspx>

The key points from the presentation were as follows:

- Members were reminded that as the principle littering authority the District Council had a statutory authority under the Environmental Protection Act to maintain public highways and to clear litter from land in which they were directly responsible for.
- It was reported that the waste and street management structure consisted of Levi White, Waste and Street Cleaning Manager along with a supervisor, 25 operatives, and 2 highway rangers who worked on behalf of Essex County Council. They had a total of 15 vehicles.

- The Street cleaning service had a controllable budget of £1.25 million which was mainly split between staff and vehicles along with a proportion being delegated to the street cleansing agreement with the Parish Councils.
- The primary functions of the street cleansing service included staff patrolling the main Towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead, including the town centers, surrounding areas, and open spaces. Other duties involved District wide litter picking crews, an “A roads” team who patrolled major A roads and litter hotspots throughout the District.
- It was noted that whilst some of the Teams were labeled as the Braintree and Witham Teams, they were not limited to these areas and covered areas outside of this remit.
- Currently across the District the Street Cleaning Team were emptying a total of 1125 litter bins and the frequency of collection depended on a number of factors which included the area, footfall and usage. They also reviewed trends and complaints and in order to increase collections where necessary.
- In addition to the litter bins the street cleansing service were also responsible for 957 dog bins, again the frequency for these differed across the District based on the same variations as the litter bins.
- The street cleansing service also provided a rapid response team who were predominantly called out to clear fly tips in the District in almost all occasions within 1 working day.
- Members were informed that the street cleansing service work in partnership with a number of bodies including Parish Councils, Essex County Council Highways, national highways and voluntary groups across the District. Internally the Street Cleansing Team worked closely with Communications and Marketing who were the strategic lead on the campaigns delivered
- The Street Cleansing Team were also the main support for all litter campaigns rolled out across the District and were responsible for the set up and monitoring of the projects. It was reported that the team had carried out some research following a previous litter signage campaign and had recorded a 28% reduction in ground litter.
- Following the roll out of new bins installed in laybys along the A12 and A120, it was reported that there had been a reduction in ground litter in the laybys from 15% down to 7-8% and the team had seen an increase in the amount of litter being collected from the bins. These were monitored once a month and following the installation of the new bins, saw an increase on one route from around 250kg of litter from laybys, to 310kg collected.
- It was reported that the stretch of A12 that the Council were responsible for had a total of 49 bins installed at laybys, whereas the section of the A12 within Colchester City Council’s jurisdiction was serviced by 1 additional layby in comparison and only maintained 6 bins in total.
- The Street Cleansing Team were also considering a greater use of digital technology including CCTV and “litter cams”. “Litter Cams” were highly sensitive static cameras that could detect the smallest pieces of waste being thrown out of a vehicle. These had recently been trialed in Maidstone, however it was questioned whether these just moved the litter further along the highway.

- It was reported that the litter and dog bin routes throughout the District would be reviewed in 2024. It was also being considered to bring in a new policy enabling members of the public to put in requests for new and additional litter bins throughout the District.
- It was noted that one of the biggest challenges being faced was the cultural issue of the 'throw away' society and it was important to continue to educate people.

In response to questions asked by Members, the following Information and actions were raised:

- It was agreed to circulate to Members copies of the school children's project work to enable Members a greater understanding of the work the schools had carried out.
- Mr Wrench advised Members that should they have any follow up questions, Members were welcome to email him, and if Members were interested in visiting the school and meeting the children he would be happy to facilitate this.
- It was reported that one of the biggest challenges in litter prevention was on slip roads as these were difficult to signage and litter pick. Due to the fast travelling vehicles on these roads special permissions and traffic management were required to service these roads. The District Council were working to overcome this by gaining support from the collaborative partnerships that had been set up.
- It was considered that litter bins were not always clearly visible therefore the initiative to install bigger brighter bins would enable drivers to locate the bins easier and encourage usage. It was believed that the decrease of litter seen on the ground and increase of litter collected from the bins was an indication that this had been successful.
- Members were informed that part of the collaborative work being carried out along the A12 with other authorities presented the Councils the opportunity to align their communications and work together on the same initiatives to project a stronger and clearer message.
- Councillor Abbott advised he had been in contact with a representative of National Highways who had confirmed they undertook weekly inspections of litter along all major roads and reported this to the responsible authority. Councillor Abbott then sought clarity from officers to confirm whether any correspondence had been received from National Highways in respect to certain areas along the A12. Mr Wilson reported that he had also been in contact with National Highways regarding the same issue and had been advised that the Braintree District was one of the better areas along the A12 in comparison to areas under other local authorities and that they continued to work closely with National Highways.
- In response to a question raised, it was reported that the waste from litter bins could not be recycled due to issues around contamination and was therefore sent to landfill sites.
- In response to a question raised around fly posting and developers' signs on street lamps and road signs the following information was provided; generally Operations would be proactive in removing any unauthorised signage that had been posted

throughout the District, however enforcement was the responsibility of Planning under the Town and Country Planning Act and any enquires would need to be directed to them. Members of the public who report any unauthorised signage would do so via the Customer Services team who then notify both Planning and Operations at the same time for them to liaise internally.

- It was reported that there was an issue in Braintree in particular, with regards to graffiti. However, Members were advised that often much of the furniture subject to the graffiti, such as bus stops and BT boxes, were privately owned and therefore the Council were unable to intervene they did however endeavor to contact the owners to arrange for them to remove it. This was an ongoing issue which was difficult to prevent, and officers encouraged the support of local residents to help catch the perpetrators.
- Officers confirmed that they had contacted the Probation Service to enquire whether there was the option for offenders undertaking community service to work alongside the District Council to complete tasks such as litter picking and repainting graffiti but were yet to receive a response.
- It was confirmed that the collaborative partnership was in its infancy with the main group meeting each quarter and sub-groups meeting monthly.
- It was noted that previous litter sweeps along the A12 had been carried out at night whereby traffic management were booked in advance. There was one occasion where the litter pick team were able to piggyback behind a national highways contractor which was a much cheaper alternative for the District Council however this was at the discretion of the contractor.

At the end of the questions, the Chairman expressed her thanks on behalf of the Committee to Mr Wrench, Mr Wilson and Mr White for their presentations and the information provided.

Before concluding the meeting, the Chairman reminded Members that this was the final evidence gathering for the Scrutiny Review into Litter Management within the Braintree District and that a questionnaire had been circulated to Members to complete by 2nd December 2022. The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for 8th February 2023 where a draft report would be considered along with recommendations. It was also noted that an additional informal meeting would be scheduled to finalise the report and Members would be notified of this accordingly.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9.00pm.

Councillor Mary Cunningham
(Chairman)