

Directorate of the Urban Environment
Culture & Leisure

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All Members
Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

Sent By e-mail

Dear Member

Community Safety Scrutiny Committee 14 March 2013 – Issues Raised by Members

Further to the questions raised by Members at the above Committee please find attached a briefing sheet detailing the responses to each question.

In doing so I would like to apologise unreservedly for the delay in getting this response to committee Members. This was entirely due to an oversight on my part and should not have occurred.

If there is any further information that Members require having read this response then please do not hesitate to contact me and I will do what I can to assist.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duncan Lowndes".

Duncan Lowndes
Assistant Director Culture and Leisure

1. Street and Green Care Budgetary Cuts – Impact on Section 17 Duties

It is recognised that Council wide budgetary pressures will impact on most sections of the authority with Street and Green Care services required to make savings across a number of different service areas.

In introducing these savings, prior consideration has taken place to their impact on the Council's obligations under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, in particular those that contribute to seeking to reduce crime and disorder.

Work will continue to take place with community groups and local stakeholders to establish and where possible improve locations and / or features across the Borough identified as having a direct or indirect impact on acts of antisocial behaviour and / or crime.

This work impacts on a range of different areas through street cleansing and the removal of fly tipped material and offensive graffiti, appropriate and adequate street lighting, maintenance and/or removal of problematic shrubberies and vegetation, regular inspection of play equipment and future landscape and design features. The section is also seeking to increase the number of car parks across the Borough with the safer by design award.

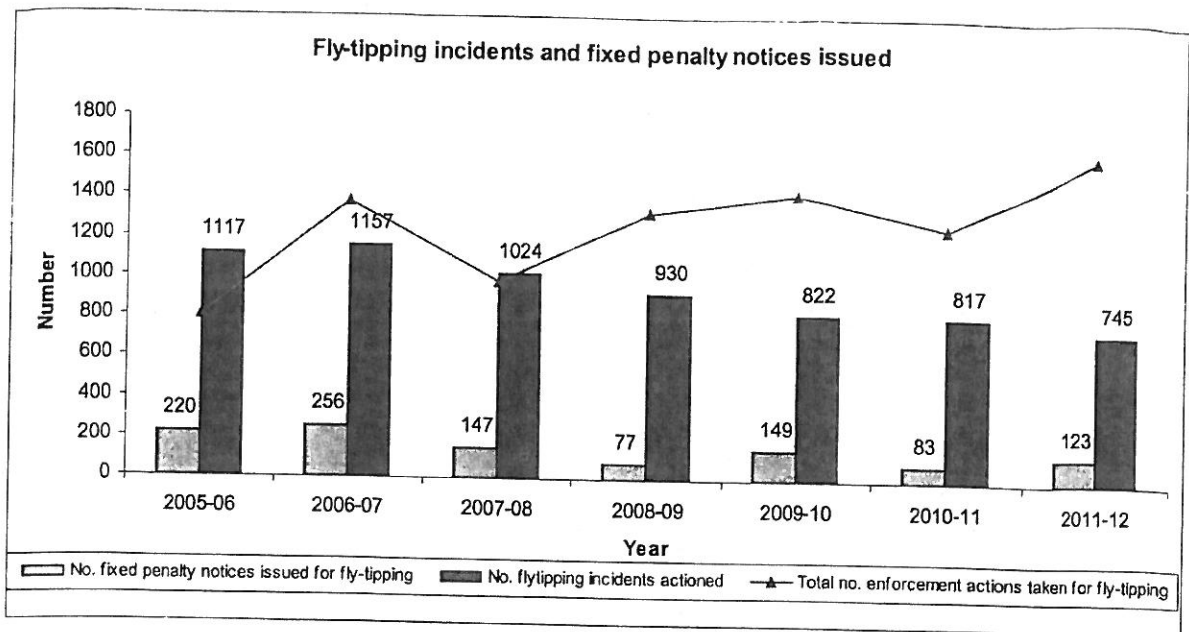
In order to protect the interests of the authority and its future reputation, a safe local environment is of paramount importance. As such the Committee can be assured that the Street and Green Care section will continue to support activities that are perceived to have an impact on crime and disorder on a risk management basis in consideration of existing and future service budgets.

2. Flycapture Statistics for 2011/12 – An e4xplanation

Dudley Council reports the number of reported incidents of fly tipping in the Borough each year to DEFRA through the Flycapture data base.

In accordance with previous statutory reporting of this information, both the number of reported incidents and environmental enforcement activity are recorded each year. The emphasis of the reporting matrix being to demonstrate that, where possible, councils are improving environmental standards overall by receiving less instances of reported fly tipping supported by increased instances of enforcement activity.

Data for 2011/12 confirmed that instances of fly tipping in the Borough are continuing to reduce in number. This is extremely encouraging and a trend that the Council seeks to continue by jointly working with local community groups, businesses and stakeholders, through educational programmes and targeting of known hot spot areas. The chart below highlights the steady reduction in the number of incidents of fly-tipping responded to in the Borough, 745 in 201/112. It also shows that the number of fixed penalty notices issued, at 123, remains proportionate to the number of incidents.



The red line on the above chart indicates the increased levels of enforcement activity in 2011/12 when compared to previous years, with over 1,500 enforcement actions completed. In addition to the 123 fixed penalty notices issued, over 700 investigations into fly tipping were carried out by the Waste Enforcement team, over 200 warning letters were sent out and 9 prosecutions were taken to court. The team also undertook over 450 duty of care inspections at businesses across the Borough. All business in the UK regardless of their size must comply with the 'Duty Of Care' provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, in that they must take reasonable measures to prevent the unauthorised deposit, treatment or disposal of their waste; duty of care visits by Enforcement Officers ensure compliance with this legislation. The Council is also empowered to undertake 'stop and searches' on vehicles that are seen to be carrying waste, such as scrap metal, building waste, tree cuttings and similar type waste. These stops are carried out in conjunction with the police and other agencies such as the DVLA, and 5 such joint operations were undertaken in 2011/12.

The Love your Community Campaign will further highlight the importance of community pride and the Council's determination to tackle the anti social behaviour of illegal fly tipping. It will also seek to support actions to further reduce instances of fly tipping and other material items that pose a risk to local people.

3. Counterfeit Goods – Query regarding Value of Goods Seized

The figure of £1.1m, which relates to the retail value of the goods seized by Trading Standards included such items as jeans, football shirts, ugg boots, divides and cigarettes.

However, the high value came from goods seized from an electronics warehouse in Birmingham and included such items as counterfeit ipads and rolex watches. This was an exceptional year, in a normal year Trading Standards would expect to seize goods to the value of £100,000 to £150,000.

4/5 Trading Standards – Position Regarding Black Country Collaborative Working

Following Wolverhampton City Council's withdrawal from the Trading Standards shared service project followed by Sandwell this option will not be proceeding. However, collaborative working will continue across the Black Country.

6. Performance of Street Lighting

The Council's Street Lighting service is currently introducing a central management system that will allow future control and monitoring of the Council's street lighting infrastructure. During April 2013, work will commence on the introduction of 11 base stations across the Borough. Once in place, work will progress to replace a number of telecells in lighting columns prior to the commencement of further activities to replace new lanterns across major trafficked routes and residential areas.

The project is expected to take approximately 30 months to complete and will allow the Council to manage its street lighting infrastructure more efficiently through reduced energy consumption in addition to opportunities for future dimming. The central management system will also identify outages without the need for night time monitoring or scouting,

Whilst the invest to save project will ensure that the Council is developing its infrastructure in line with new technology and industry best practice, there will be future opportunities to consider and revise lighting levels in known hot spot areas and those that may be subject to differing levels of crime and disorder.

Benchmarking information for 2011/12 confirmed that over the course of the year 99.43% of the Council's street lights were working as planned. Whilst this result was favourable when compared across the industry, the invest to save project will have a further positive impact on existing performance.

We aim to attend each outage within 5 working days of being reported throughout the year, the recent inclement weather did cause some delays, but this was over a relatively short period. We do undertake more reactive maintenance throughout the winter months as our street lamps burn for much longer periods. This is offset by a reduction in planned maintenance.

7. Potholes – Further clarification on Repairs

For potholes that are reported as 'dangerous' an Inspector goes out to site to confirm and a repair is actioned as soon as possible.

In other circumstances the Directorate has a structured approach to inspection and maintenance of the highway network, inspectors walk the streets on a daily basis, principal roads are inspected monthly, main roads every 3 months and estate roads twice per year. Priority of repairs is given to keep roads and footpaths as safe as possible.

8. Anti-social Behaviour in Parks – Healthy Towns Impact

Anecdotal evidence from Friends Groups, Park users, Police and on-site staff have stated that there has been a considerable reduction in anti-social behaviour in park sites which are offering the new Healthy Towns Package of activities.

Not only do increased numbers of visitors on-site act as a deterrent to nuisance, but the Rangers can focus attention on nuisance and either engage with the youngsters through sport and physical activity or call in the Police when necessary.

Crime data from the Police relating specifically to Netherton Park for the two highlighted years of 09/10, the year immediately prior to Healthy Towns starting, and 12/13 indicates 64 and 24 incidents reported respectively indicating a 62.5% reduction. For silver Jubilee Park the numbers are 51 and 18 respectively, a 65% reduction.

The local evaluation of the programme by Worcester University has focussed on the health impact of the project but has noted 'that the Healthy Hub improvements have resulted in increased park use and increased value placed on parks by those that use them'.