



SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT

DOG FOULING IN CHELTENHAM

MARCH 2014



1. INTRODUCTION

A review of dog fouling in Cheltenham was initiated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2013, the background to which was a question Councillor Penny Hall had raised at the Council meeting held in March 2013. This was in response to local residents, community organisations and some Parish Councils expressing concern with increasing dog fouling of streets and green spaces in the Borough.

- 1.1** Nationally dog fouling is a huge area of concern with the general public. In April 2011 there were approximately 10.5 million owned dogs in the UK and 39% of UK households own at least one dog. Although the vast majority of dog owners are responsible there are a small minority who allow their dogs to foul and do not take responsibility for this by clearing it up. As a consequence pavements, alleyways, parks, sports pitches and beaches can be blighted by dog mess, which is not only unpleasant but potentially dangerous, particularly to young children. Annually, local authorities spend millions of pounds each year on cleaning up dog mess and many communities are suffering the consequences of the minority of those irresponsible dog owners.
- 1.2** There is clearly a need for new and innovative approaches to tackle the problem and the Scrutiny Task Group were keen to explore them. Efforts to reduce dog fouling in Cheltenham are in accordance with the council's commitment to a clean and well maintained environment.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 Membership of the task group:

- Councillor Penny Hall (Chair)
- Councillor Nigel Britter
- Councillor Barbara Driver
- Councillor Jacky Fletcher
- Councillor Helena McCloskey
- Councillor Suzanne Williams

2.2 Terms of Reference agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Local residents and community organisations have expressed concern with increasing dog fouling of streets and green spaces.

The issues that this scrutiny topic aimed to consider were:

- Management of the dog bin collection services
- The "existing policy position on the provision of dog bins",
- Changes on actual numbers and sites of dog bins across Cheltenham over the last 3 years
- The role of the Community Protection Officers who work hard to engage with dog owners in prevention and investigation of actual incidents. Their workload is reported to be increasing.
 - Would provision of more bins free them up to take on other areas of their workload?
 - What are the cost implications?
- Risk assessments on Public Health and Safety which are impacted by dog fouling
- Provision of dog bins by Parish Councils /Community Associations.

3. METHOD OF APPROACH

The scrutiny task group (STG) met on 3 occasions and several site visits were also undertaken to Pittville Park and Beeches playing field, the Depot and to King George V playing field and Clyde

Crescent for the CBH Fido Fiestas. During their work the STG received some press coverage in the Gloucestershire Echo and this is to be found at Appendix 2.

3.1 The group contacted and spoke to a range of people, namely :

- Trevor Gladding – Community Protection Officer Team Leader, CBC
- Clive Evans – Community Protection Officer, CBC
- Duncan Turner-Community Protection Officer, CBC
- Brian Daughtrey-Community Protection Officer, CBC
- Adam Reynolds-Green Space Development Manager, CBC
- Scott Williams-Commissioning Client Officer Ubico
- Waste operatives, Ubico
- John Rees – Environmental Maintenance Manager, Ubico
- Rob Bell – Managing Director, Ubico
- Jane Harris-Senior Neighbourhood Housing Manager, Cheltenham Borough Homes
- Paul Tuckey-Safer Estates Manager, Cheltenham Borough Homes
- Sarah Farooqi-One Legal
- Councillor Roger Whyborn-Cabinet Member Sustainability
- Councillor Peter Jeffries-Cabinet Member Housing and Safety

3.2 We were supported in the review by the following officers:

- Jane Griffiths – Director of Commissioning: Sponsor for the task group
- Bev Thomas – Democratic Services Officer: Facilitator for the task group
- Sam Howe – Democratic Services Assistant: Facilitator for the task group

3.3 The task group reviewed a variety of evidence including:

- Verbal accounts of the work that community protection officers carry out
- Updates from the Environmental Maintenance Manager and the Managing Director, Ubico
- Questionnaires distributed amongst Residents' Associations, Community Groups and Parish Councils and to attendees of events attended by certain members of the STG
- Risk Assessments for the emptying of dog bins by bin emptying operatives
- Accompanying community protection officers and bin emptying operatives on patrol
- Visit to the Depot
- Research from other local councils

3.4 Members would like to thank everyone who attended the task group meetings and contributed to the review and also thank those officers who provided support to the work of the group. Particular thanks also go to those respondents of the questionnaire and those members of the public who we spoke to on our site visits.

4. OUR FINDINGS

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1.1 It was felt important to firstly clarify the roles and responsibilities of those mentioned in the report:

- **Ubico** is the local authority owned company which is commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council to provide environmental services. Servicing litter and dog bins therefore comes under its remit. Where incidences of dog fouling are reported crews are diverted to clear it up and this may be followed by jetwashing and mechanically sweeping the area concerned.
- **Community Protection Officers (CPOs)** are CBC employees who undertake high visibility foot patrols in problematic areas to deal with identified environmental issues appropriately, including giving suitable advice and possibly the issue of fixed penalty notices where offences take place. Their role is also seek to educate the public (including schools) about environmental crime and raise the profile of the issue e.g. education days/press campaigns.
- **The Green Space Development Team** are CBC employees and include Parks inspectors and rangers who work closely with the Community Protection team in Parks and Gardens in order to focus efforts to tackle particular problems, for example by distributing leaflets, erecting more signs. The team also host the “Paws in the Park” event which promotes responsible dog ownership.
- **Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH)** is the Council’s Arms Length Management Organisation with the responsibility for the maintenance and management of the Council’s housing stock. CBH have been promoting responsible dog ownership on their estates and clauses were included in tenancy agreements relating to dog ownership.
- **Cabinet Member Housing and Safety** has responsibility under his portfolio for the delivery of community safety and community development
- **Cabinet Member Sustainability** has responsibility under his portfolio for waste collection and parks development

4.2 The Extent of the problem

- 4.2.1** One of the highest sources of complaints by the public to local councillors (parish and borough) concern dog fouling but these complaints are not taken into account in the formal complaints the council receives. Between April 2012 and March 2013, 77 formal complaints were made to the CBC Environmental health team directly with one coming in to customer relations. Between April 2013 and December 2013, 7 complaints came into environmental health and one into customer relations.
- 4.2.2** Dog fouling is not only unpleasant it is dangerous presenting amenity and public health risks. The biggest threat to public health from dog faeces is toxocariasis which is an infection of the roundworm *toxocara canis*. The eggs of the parasite can be found in soil or sand contaminated with faeces and if swallowed, result in infection that lasts between six and 24 months. Symptoms include eye disorders including loss of sight, vague ache, dizziness, nausea, asthma and, in extremely rare cases, seizures/fits. Often the eggs are ingested when passed to the mouth by the hands, but this can also occur through contact with dogs or other inanimate objects including the wheels of toys and the soles of shoes. Infected soil samples are often found in childrens play areas and as a result, toxocariasis most commonly affects children between 18 months and five years. (Source Keep Britain Tidy).
- 4.2.3** Upon taking evidence from Adam Reynolds, the Green Space Development Manager, Members were concerned that recent guidance from government had suggested that whilst some children’s play areas were fenced in there was more play value in allowing children to access a wider space. Whilst it is recognised that fenced play areas are important, play designers should recognise the importance of encouraging children to play in natural environments which cannot always be achieved within defined fenced spaces. Funds were therefore shared more equally between

providing both types of experience for children, and focusing on achieving high play value at all times. Members were concerned that this approach could expose more children to dog fouling and its associated health risks. The unfenced play area on the Honeybourne Line was highlighted as an area where irresponsible dog owners let their dogs foul. Members were told that despite signs telling people not to take their dogs into childrens play areas there were sometimes dogs in these areas at night, although occurrences are thought to be rare and the rules are generally well observed by the majority of dog owners.

- 4.2.4** CPOS and Green Space team informed Members that the worst dog fouling offences took place in the early morning or at dusk and the problem was particularly prevalent during the winter months as in the summer walkers have more opportunity to walk into open fields rather than the streets and alleyways. Lanes and alleyways were generally worse than playing fields themselves as a dog generally fouled within 5 minutes of going out for a walk and often on the approach to a green space. Ubico informed members that due to the length of some alleyways, servicing bins would be considerably more costly. In addition dog bins were earth anchored rather than cemented and therefore difficult to site in alleyways where there were particular problems. Whilst it is clear that it was only the minority who were irresponsible, if one considered that a dog is typically walked 2-3 times along the same route each day, dog fouling can have quite a significant impact. There were specific tensions in green spaces, an example of which is King George V playing field where the footballers have to sweep the pitch of dog fouling in order to use it.
- 4.2.5** Subsequent to the publication of this report for overview and scrutiny further evidence was brought to the Chair's attention by the Customer and Support Services Manager, CBC, indicating that the problem of dog fouling was not just an issue for the football club who hire King George V playing field but was also widespread at The Beeches, Naunton Park, Whaddon Rec and the Burrows. The football clubs feel they are paying a substantial amount of money for the use of the pitches and are asking the council to take some action to try and reduce this problem.
- 4.2.6** Members also noted that there was a particular issue with professional dog walkers as they take many dogs out at a time and could not possibly watch all the dogs.
- 4.2.7** Members heard from both Ubico and the Green Space team that dog bins were no longer distinguished apart from litter bins, and that both could be used to deposit bagged dog foul. The Green Space Team report that evidence from sites suggests that most people are aware of this although a few people still associate a red bin with dog waste and brown and green with litter. The green space team felt that the majority of dog owners were responsible and picked up after their dogs, those that did not were simply inconsiderate and further bins in parks were unlikely to change their behaviour. Members believed that this lack of awareness would benefit from a notice of some kind as this could also prevent those owners filling bags with dog waste and throwing them into hedgerows or other peoples back gardens. The outer wards, rather than the centre of town, were the worst areas for clearing up dog waste. Evidence has also suggested that despite the council withdrawing free dog bags several years ago, people were purchasing and using their own which were now very widely available for as little as £1 for 200 bags.
- 4.2.8** Members also learned about the contributions users can make in terms of enforcement. The example of Springfield Park was given where the Friends of the Park had played a key role in shaping the landscape of the park, and by generating greater use and interest in the space, littering and dog fouling has subsequently decreased.

4.3 Legislation and Enforcement

- 4.3.1** Members received a briefing note from One Legal informing them about dog fouling legislation which is reproduced in this report as follows :

- 4.3.2** The Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 (CNEA) gives local authorities the opportunity to introduce dog control orders. By introducing orders a local authority can seek to control to control dogs, control dog fouling and restrict access on to land by dogs.
- 4.3.3** In 2006 Cheltenham Borough Council introduced a number of dog control orders in Cheltenham. In respect of dog fouling the Council introduced an order that made it an offence for a person who is in charge of a dog to fail, without reasonable excuse, to pick up faeces deposited by their dog. The order applies (subject to some exceptions) to all land in the borough of Cheltenham that is open to the air and to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access with or without payment.
- 4.3.4** The introduction of dog control orders under CNEA means that the authority can, as an alternative to prosecution, offer a fixed penalty to a person who has committed an offence under the order.
- 4.3.5** Fixed penalties are an alternative to prosecution. If the authority is satisfied that an offence has been committed, it has the option to offer an offender a fixed penalty. Fixed penalties can be issued by authorised officers of the Council and by persons not employed by the council such as PCSOs.
- 4.3.6** Local authorities have been given discretion, within a set range, to set at local level the level of their fixed penalty notices. A local authority can also apply a discount in respect of early payment of the fixed penalty. The range for fixed penalty notices for offences under dog control orders is £50-£80. Cheltenham Borough Council set the level of the fixed penalty for offences under the dog control orders at £80 and set a discounted rate for early payment of £50.
- 4.3.7** Once a fixed penalty has been issued the Council can not prosecute for the alleged offence if the fixed penalty is paid within the period set for payment. If payment is not received or an offender refuses to accept a fixed penalty the Council can prosecute. The Council is not required to offer a fixed penalty as an alternative to prosecution. The Council can go straight to prosecution in appropriate circumstances i.e. the person is a persistent offender. The Council will consider its own enforcement strategy when considering what action if any to take.
- 4.3.8** A prosecution is issued through the local Magistrates' Court. The penalty to be provided in relation to any offence in a dog control order is, on summary conviction, a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.
- 4.3.9** The Community Protection team informed the STG that between 1 January 2012 and 1 June 2013 three penalty notices had been issued in the Borough. One penalty notice had been paid in Charlton Kings, one penalty notice had been issued in Whaddon but false details had been given and one penalty notice had been issued in the town centre which resulted in the person being taken to court. This person received a £200 penalty from the court. A fixed penalty cost £80. A Fixed Penalty notice (FPN) was issued in Charlton Kings in September 2013 and was paid in full.
- 4.3.10** Representatives from Cheltenham Borough Homes informed Members of the STG that the Safer Estates Team had successfully gained injunctions against a couple of tenants in the Hesters Way area regarding dog fouling. To achieve this, the Neighbourhood warden had worked closely with the Safer Estates Team collecting evidence. There were clauses in tenancy agreements relating to dog ownership and as such breaches could lead to legal action. Dog fouling was a particular issue in communal gardens of blocks of flats. CBH try to resolve this informally first by visiting the tenant; warning issues are then issued but then legal remedies are available for CBH to pursue should there be no other support needs to consider. Four people have had successful injunction action taken against them in the last 18 months as a result of failing to control their dog. Action could only be taken against tenants on CBH land (i.e. enclosed land within a housing block not open land for public use) or where it was affecting its housing management function. If the party

concerned then breached the injunction it would be in contempt of court and could face fines, further warning, or possible imprisonment.

4.3.11 Information received from Gloucester City Council showed that 1 FPN had been issued in 2012/13 but a number of proactive projects that tackled dog fouling were initiated and tri-signs were erected in those areas where repeat complaints are received. 4 FPNs had been issued in Cotswold district in 2012-13.

4.3.12 Members were informed that in addition to enforcement, CPOs hold education days, undertake educational school visits and erect signs where there are particular problem areas in an attempt to deter offenders. The officers use stencil markers to demonstrate to dog owners that their actions are being monitored and they distribute leaflets and speak with dog owners. CPOs go on patrol around problem hotspots where time allows and there are now "PACT" (Partners and Communities Together) volunteers that act as the eyes and ears in the community.

4.4 Policy concerning dog bin collection and evidence taken from Ubico regarding management of the service

4.4.1 The STG were provided with the following information from the Council's waste policy :

4.4.2 The council aims to provide adequate coverage of litter receptacles across the town, and despite tight budgetary constraints, to empty and maintain the bins on a regular basis and to do this without favour to parished or non-parished areas.

4.4.3 Litter bins are provided in many areas e.g. at bus stops, road crossings, outside schools and generally areas which have a higher degree of footfall, to encourage the responsible disposal of litter. The litter bins are emptied on a regular basis based on usage. These bins are not provided for the disposal of domestic waste and this should be presented in the relevant refuse bin on collection day. Litter bins are serviced and replaced where necessary. Customer requests for new litter bins at locations without one are appraised, and if judged to be beneficial, a new litter bin would be installed.

4.4.4 Essentially the location and type of bins, and the regime for servicing them is determined by officers on the basis of need, and of best matching needs to resources, though within the overarching policies for street cleaning. From time to time it will be necessary to install new bins, or remove or relocate them. For examples, bins are often located near takeaway and other food stores, but not in residential streets unless they have particular features.

4.4.5 From time to time Community Groups and Parish Councils may request new litter bins (or dog bins) or the like, and may offer to pay for them. Very often the 'sponsoring group' is able and willing to pay for the bin, but not to pay for its servicing. There are two issues, and their financial resolution is not always identical.

a) If in the view of officers the provision of a bin at the selected location is "nice to have" or "useful to have" rather than "necessary to provide adequate coverage" the Borough will not normally pay for the servicing of it, so it can only be installed if the group requesting it can fund its emptying and servicing. The ongoing cost of providing a bin varies according to location, so each is dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

b) Officers may agree that the bin is needed, but may not have the budget to install it. This can sometime be overcome by the group or Parish Council paying for the installation and other non-recurring costs. This action might well be carried out in conjunction with the removal of a less useful bin elsewhere, or alternatively by re-locating an existing bin.



Site visit to Pittville Park with Ubico representatives

4.4.6 Ubico provided the following further information to the STG :

- All bins are serviced on average three times per week including weekends throughout the summer period in all major parks and town centre locations.
- It has been estimated that there have been 12 new dog bins installed in parks over the past three years.
- Dog bins are usually red in colour with general waste bins for litter etc being green or black, however all the litter bins, irrespective of colour, will contain dog waste
- Dog bins are regularly serviced and all waste is returned to the depot and placed in skips which are then sent to landfill as mixed waste. Members undertook a visit to the depot and learned that 4-6 tonnes of dog waste is collected each week which accounted for 6/8 skips of mixed waste. Operatives are advised on tetanus and Hepatitis B vaccinations and also receive audiometric and breathing tests. The Cabinet Member Sustainability informed Members that the cost of transfer and haulage of the waste from dog bins is £5630 per annum. There is currently no cost for final disposal.



Site visit photos: red dog bin at Pittville Park and skip at the Depot

- Environmental management services do not have the resources to go around collecting dog faeces from open green space– in practice dog deposits are usually dispersed when mowing teams cut the grass. Members were informed that in certain communal areas dog fouling is such that the crews are unable to mow. If crews do mow over areas with significant dog fouling this spreads the risk to a much wider area and in addition the vehicle and mowing equipment then has to be thoroughly disinfected. Operatives were often concentrating so much on operating a piece of machinery safely that they found it hard to see dog faeces in the grass. There were guards on the machinery to stop anything flying in the face of operatives. Operatives wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) but Members recognised that nevertheless this must be very unpleasant for them.
- Members received information on the risk assessments that Ubico uses on a day to day basis. These risk assessments related to the disposal of mixed waste and there were separate risk assessments for grass cutting. The purpose of the risk assessment was to identify hazards and to identify a risk rating. There were protocols in place to try to reduce the level of risk which included the use of PPE. Members were informed that employees are required to go through the risk assessments with their manager on an annual basis.
- Hot spots for dog fouling are Hester’s Way Park, Winston Churchill Memorial Gardens, Jenner Gardens, Benhall open space and Hatherley Park.
- When the waste management team receive notification of dog faeces on footpaths or pavements they immediately send a crew to clear it up and this may be followed by jetwashing and mechanically sweeping the area concerned. This is a costly operation as crews are often diverted from other responsibilities; up to 2 hours can be lost in the day for this purpose at a cost of approximately £200-£300 per incident.
- There were 496 bins in the borough in alleys, gardens, parks and on grass verges, of which 192 were dog bins. There were a further 470 bins on hard standing. Dog bins were serviced on average 3 times a week including weekends and were taken to the depot and placed in mixed waste skips. Ubico was sceptical as to whether more bins would alleviate the problem of dog fouling. The Cabinet Member Sustainability informed members that it costs £300 to £320 to install a litter bin and £380 to £400 to install a dog waste bin. All bin locations were plotted and this information was held by Ubico and was shared with members. The cost of emptying street litter bins is included in the total cost of street cleaning. It would be difficult to accurately separate these costs and the answer could only be a rough estimate. The annual cost of cleaning parks and green open spaces, emptying litter bins in those areas and emptying all dog waste bins is £129,000 per annum. The policy was to allow community groups to pay for the installation and servicing of additional bins and this would be a realistic fee but no requests had come forward as yet. Tewkesbury Borough Council have a similar policy in that when requests for dog bins are made by parish councils, the borough council sources the bin and installs it in an agreed location. The cost of the bin and installation are charged to the parish as are the cost of any repairs or replacement. The bin emptying service is provided by the borough council at no cost to the parish.

4.5 The Questionnaire and its findings

- 4.5.1** The STG was of the view that the opinions expressed by representatives of the community were vital to evaluating the situation. Therefore, to establish public perception about dog fouling in Cheltenham, at its first meeting the STG asked for a survey to be carried out. The survey, consisting of 10 questions, was distributed around local residents associations, parish councils and community groups. These representative groups cover the majority of Cheltenham. Attendees at two Cheltenham Borough Homes dog shows, “Fido Fiestas”, were also asked their views on how dog fouling should be combated. In total, 34 completed questionnaires were

received .The questionnaire can be found as appendix 3 to this report.



Attendance at CBH Fido Fiesta

- 4.5.2** The questionnaire asked a number of questions relating to how often they received complaints about dog fouling and what their organisation does about it. There were also asked how they thought dog fouling should be tackled and whether they were aware of the work of Community Protection Officers (CPOs).
- 4.5.3** When asked how often the respondent's organisation received complaints about dog fouling, a range of responses were received. Some organisations said they regularly received complaints about dog fouling issues and others said they never received any complaints. Many community groups suggested that this was an issue that regularly came up at their meetings. Representatives from the police said that dog fouling was an issue they received a lot of complaints about when they attended parish council meetings.
- 4.5.4** The questionnaire asked what action their organisation takes to tackle dog fouling. A lot of respondents said that they inform the council or CPOs. Some community groups suggested they put notices up to warn against dog fouling and other organisations clear up dog mess. Some organisations also publish articles about the problems of dog fouling in their literature or on their website. Local residents at dog shows said that they may be willing to tell someone to pick up after their dog, but that it very much depended on the person in question. The majority of respondents said that they were aware of the laws surrounding dog fouling.
- 4.5.5** The questionnaire asked respondents how they thought resources should be allocated to tackle dog fouling. The provision of bins was the most popular answer, followed by money being spent on publicity and education. Interestingly, fixed penalty notices was the least popular option even though the majority of respondents felt that dog fouling offenders should be named and shamed in the press if they are first convicted in an open court. In a similar regard to these results, when asked what should be done to encourage good dog ownership, a lot of respondents thought that money should be spent on education and publicity. Some respondents suggested that there should be 'good dog ownership classes'. Many respondents suggested that the council should tackle dog fouling through a mixture of patrols, fixed penalty notices and publicity and educational campaigns.

4.5.6 Respondents to the questionnaire were asked whether they knew about the work of Community Protection Officers and only a few respondents said that they did. Equally, only a few respondents were aware of the Partnerships and Communities Together (PACT) initiative.

4.5.7 Overall, the questionnaire gathered a range of different views from a number of different respondents. There is not one clear view on how dog tackling should be managed, however a lot of groups believe that resources should be best spent on publicity and education rather than on enforcement – although many believe this has its place. The results of the questionnaire would suggest that the work of CPOs is not prominent enough and this may be down to cuts in the services, equally the work of Partnerships and Communities Together could be more highly publicised, although its work may become more known with time as the PACT becomes operational in more areas.

4.6 Current Promotion of Responsible Dog Ownership

4.6.1 Members recognised that catching dog fouling offenders was very much about being in the right place at the right time and noted that only a relatively low number of Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued by Community Protection Officers. It was important however that the council continued to raise and increase awareness about the penalties associated with dog fouling and that enforcement action was taken against offenders. Whilst press releases were apparently released (the STG had received conflicting information as to whether this actually happened) the fact that FPNs were not issued very often, meant that they had little impact. In addition to the provision of a satisfactory bin service and increasing the number of FPNs issued, the group felt that education of offenders in terms of promoting responsible dog ownership was of paramount importance.

RECOMMENDATION 1 : Ensure press releases are issued to provide information about the council's efforts to tackle dog fouling and successful enforcement action. These should include the level of fine each offender is ordered to pay and whether additional costs were incurred.



Evidence of Dog fouling on a site visit



The majority of dog owners are responsible

Members learned from Ubico, the Green Space Development Manager and the CPOs that there was a perception among the public that dog waste could not be disposed of in a normal litter bin and as a result there was a perception that there were insufficient designated dog bins. It was important therefore to highlight to the public that normal litter bins could be used to dispose of bagged dog faeces and if a bin was not accessible then the bagged dog waste should be taken home and disposed of responsibly.

- 4.6.2** Members learnt of initiatives introduced in neighbouring districts where bin stickers had been designed and produced to highlight that bagged dog waste could be disposed of using standard public litter bins. Sponsoring of bins could also fund the operating costs of bins. In return sponsors would receive a number of benefits including relevant messaging and logo placement on the bins. All sponsoring partners should be relevant with declared interest in dogs and/or wider community and the messaging should be professional, appropriate and respectful of the surrounding environment. Members had seen in the press that a vet from Bishop's Cleeve has teamed up with the parish council to start providing dog bins in the village by sponsoring four dog bins for £400 in a bid to stop fouling problems.



Example of stickered bin, Loch Ness

RECOMMENDATION 2 :Introduce bin stickers to highlight that bagged dog waste could be disposed of using standard public litter bins / investigate sponsorship opportunities of bins

- 4.6.3** The Community Protection Team had advised members that providing visible and prompt responses to concerns raised about dog fouling in a specific area could be undertaken by means of :

- use of dog floor stencils-Members thought that spray painting stencils onto pavements/paths at strategic locations was a creative method of communication to convey anti-fouling messages in specific locations and that this should be expanded.
- blue spray circling- Members were informed by a CPO that one thing that was regularly done in worst affected areas where possible was to circle the dog faeces in blue spray then a week later spray subsequent fouling yellow to gauge the new fouling against the old. This method seemed to be proving successful in back alleyways, although a small minority of the public objected to painting on the pathways



RECOMMENDATION 3: Increase the use of dog floor stencils /blue spray circling

4.6.4 Members learned from CBH that it had installed dog bag dispensers in estates which were particularly badly affected by dog fouling. These are free and filled and paid for by CBH and the Neighbourhood wardens monitor these. Feedback received to date was that the bags were being used. CBH was looking to roll the pilot out to other blocks which were known hotspots. CBH has done this via funding from the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and this was clearly having an impact. Members heard from the Cabinet Member Sustainability that when free dog bags were introduced in the borough, it was not intended to be a provision for all time. The cost of dog bags was increasing at a time of great financial stringency. Also increasing environmental awareness meant that CBC was faced with either continuing with the regime as it was in 2010 - namely bags which were not fully biodegradable, rather they were designed to disintegrate over time - or to go to a fully biodegradable bag, which would have been even more expensive. It was therefore decided to cease provision of dog bags, placing the onus of responsibility for their provision with the dog owner. The Cabinet Member believed that given the lapse of time since free dog bags were withdrawn, it cannot be evidenced that withdrawal of free dog bags has led to

increased dog fouling. Members suggested that consideration should be given to reintroducing free dog waste bags in targeted hot spot areas (as undertaken by CBH) and officers should investigate opportunities for funding to facilitate this.

RECOMMENDATION 4 : Investigate funding streams or sponsorship to reintroduce free dog waste bags in targeted hot spot areas

- 4.6.5 Whilst the STG was informed by CPOs that campaigns were being undertaken they felt there was little evidence of this around the town and thus there had been very little publicity. Members believed that advertising deterrents should be used to urge careless owners to clean up after dogs and educate people that dog fouling is socially unacceptable. This was a non confrontational way to change attitudes about dog fouling and make people think about their actions.

RECOMMENDATION 5 : Initiate hard-hitting anti-dog fouling campaigns

- 4.6.6 It was felt that the Council's web pages relating to dog ownership issues including fouling should be improved. The online reporting system is not really used to report incidences of dog fouling. In the view of the STG it needs to be redesigned to provide an easily accessible means of reporting. This reporting system did provide the public with an anonymous means of informing the council of offenders with details of what time they are operating. It would be for the council to decide whether to act upon it.
- 4.6.7 Members suggested that social media could be used, particularly Twitter and Facebook to spread any publicity campaigns to as many local residents as possible. Such campaigns could be humorous to persuade offenders. A member of the STG had informed the group of a fun educational video produced by Wakefield Council called "pooper scooper"
<http://youtu.be/5h7Oah7VMzQ>.



CBH Poster to tenants

RECOMMENDATION 6 : Provide better information on website/use social media to get the anti-dog fouling message across

- 4.6.8 Members were only too aware that dog fouling was an emotive issue of concern to many groups. They were aware that where possible CPOs attended community and parish council meetings. This provided the community with an opportunity to give information and feedback to council staff and find out what steps have been taken to tackle problems in area. In the summer members of the STG attended some of the "Fido Fiestas" organised by Cheltenham Borough Homes and it is

this kind of event that can also provide members of the public with information and raise awareness of what dog related anti-social behaviour and welfare issues are. Paws in the Park is a CBC organised event which is also used as a means to encourage responsible dog ownership.

RECOMMENDATION 7 : Continue to encourage and attend community organised events

4.6.9 The STG recognised the good work that CPOs undertake in schools to educate children, the “dog owners of tomorrow” about the issue of dog fouling. Children should be made aware that on their walk to school or when they play in the park they can be exposed to dog fouling which is potentially dangerous. As they get older some children take on the role of walking the family dog, so by educating them they can be better equipped by taking bags with them to pick up after their dog.

CPOs had organised a poster competition in some local schools last year and winning posters had been displayed in the park local to the schools but they had been very quickly vandalised so had very little impact. Ubico had offered at meetings of the STG to sponsor a future poster competition and Members believed that an effective poster should highlight the health hazards associated with dog fouling and be more “harder hitting”. Members also thought that consideration should also be given to targeting the competition at secondary schools where a more “professional poster” was likely to be produced. It was also suggested that CCP or the Rock could be involved in this.

The STG believes that continuing the proactive work done in schools should continue and children themselves should play a role in directly suggesting ways of encouraging responsible dog ownership.

RECOMMENDATION 8 : Introduce a regular programme of visits and work by Community Protection Officers in schools

4.6.10 Members learned from witnesses and from research undertaken of other authorities that where possible the council should use intelligence from the community to target resources to catch persistent dog fouling offenders. The group recognised that encouraging individual members of the public to report offenders was not a simple task. You may feel safe telling someone you know that they should not allow their dog to foul but if you do not know the person it is important not to confront them if you think that your personal safety may be at risk. Community protection officers are empowered and trained to deal with offenders so if a member of the public did not feel comfortable in this role then contact should be made with a CPO. If given an approximate 2 hour slot by the public as to when the dog fouling was occurring, CPOs could go and monitor the area. People were habitual and intelligence led enforcement would greatly improve the situation.

4.6.11 Members learned that through the PACT initiative in operation along the Honeybourne line, the council has already sought to develop community groups to act as the “eyes and ears” of the community working with the council to catch offenders and clean and maintain local streets and parks. In return for the community’s help the council promises to activate the appropriate action as quickly as possible and feedback to the group on its response so they are kept aware of what they are doing.

4.6.12 Similarly Members heard from CBH that neighbourhood wardens were an integral part of their service and represented the “eyes and ears” of CBH. Members noted the activities CBH and believed there should be more joined up working on this, CBH were for example working with junior wardens in school with a focus on dog fouling.

4.6.13 Members also learned of a new scheme in Gloucester and Stroud called “Paws on Patrol” which is working well in encouraging dog owners to report anti social behaviour and pick up any dog

fouling they see which has been left or if they see it occurring.

RECOMMENDATION 9 : Encourage public involvement in tackling dog fouling/Build on the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) initiative

RECOMMENDATION 10 : Trial a Multi-agency approach-undertake some joint patrols with CPOs and PCSOs to demonstrate positive cross service support for the exercise; work together with Cheltenham Borough Homes on this issue

4.6.14 Members considered whether mobile CCTV could be used as a highly visible deterrent to be positioned at various locations providing visual and technical support to staff on the ground. A prime example where mobile CCTV could be deployed would be an area of Pittville Park where local residents had clearly been collecting up dog faeces from their garden in carrier bags and depositing at the gates of the park. On their site visit to Pittville Park Members of the STG were horrified by the dumping of approximately 6 bags of dog waste inside the park and were informed that this was a regular occurrence. This was an extremely harmful activity which must be stopped.

CBH had informed the group that CCTV was being installed in certain council owned properties for the purposes of monitoring any antisocial behaviour issues which may include dog fouling in the communal area.

RECOMMENDATION 11 : Investigate opportunities to use mobile CCTV in dog fouling hotspot areas ; Improve signage along with targeted enforcement in hotspot areas

4.6.15 Community Protection Officers are, in the view of the STG, the “Unsung Heroes” of the Council. Their role is diverse and each CPO covers a wide area in the borough, which has now been increased as 2 CPOS have been seconded to the licensing team and 1 to environmental health. The STG recognised the pressure they were working under and the nature of their very diverse role. There was a lack of public knowledge about the very good work being undertaken by CPOs, as shown by the questionnaire.

Members suggested publicising their work in the form of “A day in the life of a CPO”. If additional resource was given to the team and/or CPOs were not diverted to duties elsewhere in the division, more progress could be made in tackling dog fouling in terms of having the resource to adopt new and innovative approaches to tackle the problem as well as to carry out enforcement duties including targeted patrols. When the STG asked about the cuts in the number of CPOs the Cabinet Member Housing and Safety explained that the Council still had 5.5 officers. One of them has been seconded to fill a much needed vacancy and was covering low level environmental crime and environmental protection issues. The Cabinet Members suggested that some of the work they were covering would be work they would have done anyway. 1.5 CPO's have been moved into licensing and will undertake all the licensing work they already have in their job description.

RECOMMENDATION 12 :Ensure the Community Protection Team has the resources to fulfil its duties in this area including seeking external sources of funding

RECOMMENDATION 13 : Publicise the good work Community Protection Officers undertake across the borough



Site visit to the Beeches Playing Field, Charlton Kings with a Community Protection Officer and representatives from Ubico

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Members of the Dog fouling scrutiny task group are aware of the current strategic commissioning project on public protection. As commissioning is very much outcomes based the STG felt it pertinent to present its overarching recommendations in those terms.

5.2 OUTCOMES:

- Protect and enhance Cheltenham's environmental quality and heritage-educate and raise awareness about the importance of reducing dog fouling.

5.3 DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS :

- 1. Ensure press releases are issued to provide information about the council's efforts to tackle dog fouling and successful enforcement action. These should include the level of fine each offender is ordered to pay and whether additional costs were incurred.**
- 2. Introduce bin stickers to highlight that bagged dog waste could be disposed of using standard public litter bins / investigate sponsorship opportunities of bins**
- 3. Increase the use of dog floor stencils /blue spray circling**
- 4. Investigate funding streams or sponsorship to reintroduce free dog waste bags in targeted hot spot areas**
- 5. Initiate hard-hitting anti-dog fouling campaigns**
- 6. Provide better information on website/use social media to get the anti-dog fouling message across**
- 7. Continue to encourage and attend community organised events**

8. Introduce a regular programme of visits and work by Community Protection Officers in schools
9. Encourage public involvement in tackling dog fouling/Build on the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) initiative
10. Trial a Multi-agency approach-undertake some joint patrols with CPOs and PCSOs to demonstrate positive cross service support for the exercise; work together with Cheltenham Borough Homes on this issue
11. Investigate opportunities to use mobile CCTV in dog fouling hotspot areas ; Improve signage along with targeted enforcement in hotspot areas
12. Ensure the Community Protection Team has the resources to fulfil its duties in this area including seeking external sources of funding
13. Publicise the good work Community Protection Officers undertake across the borough

Report author	Bev Thomas, Democracy Officer, 01242 775049
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terms of reference 2. Press coverage, Gloucestershire Echo, August 2013 3. Questionnaire



(DRAFT) SCRUTINY REVIEW – ONE PAGE STRATEGY

FOR COMPLETION BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	
Broad topic area	Dog Fouling.
Specific topic area	Management by CBC of services to prevent dog fouling of streets and green spaces throughout Cheltenham.
Ambitions for the review	<p>Local residents and community organisations have expressed concern with increasing dog fouling of streets and green spaces.</p> <p>The issues that this scrutiny topic aims to consider are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management of the dog bin collection services 2. The “ existing policy position on the provision of dog bins”, 3. Changes on actual numbers and sites of dog bins across Cheltenham over the last 3 years 4. The role of the Community Protection officers who work hard to engage with dog owners in prevention and investigation of actual incidents. Their workload is reported to be increasing. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Would provision of more bins free them up to take on other areas of their workload? b. What are the cost implications? 5. Risk assessments on Public Health and Safety which are impacted by dog fouling 6. Provision of dog bins by Parish Councils /Community Associations
Outcomes	<p>Much cleaner streets and green areas of Cheltenham.</p> <p>An improved dog bin/bin collection service.</p> <p>Dog owners express satisfaction with the facilities.</p>
How long should the review take?	6 months.
Recommendations to reported to:	Penny Hall, Nigel Britter, Barbara Driver, Jacky Fletcher, Helena McCloskey, Suzanne Williams.

Membership:	
FOR COMPLETION BY OFFICERS	
Officers experts and witnesses	
Sponsoring officer	Jane Griffiths
Facilitator	Beverly Thomas, Sam Howe.
FOR COMPLETION BY THE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP	
Are there any current issues with performance?	No
Co-optees	
Other experts and witnesses	
Other consultees	
Background information	
Suggested method of approach	By interviewing a range of officers and expert witnesses and reviewing research into the work of other councils on the matter. Also by requesting information from witnesses and reviewing waste contracts etc.
How will we involve the public/media? Or at what stages	
Preferred timing for meetings	6pm

Bid to tackle dog foul issue

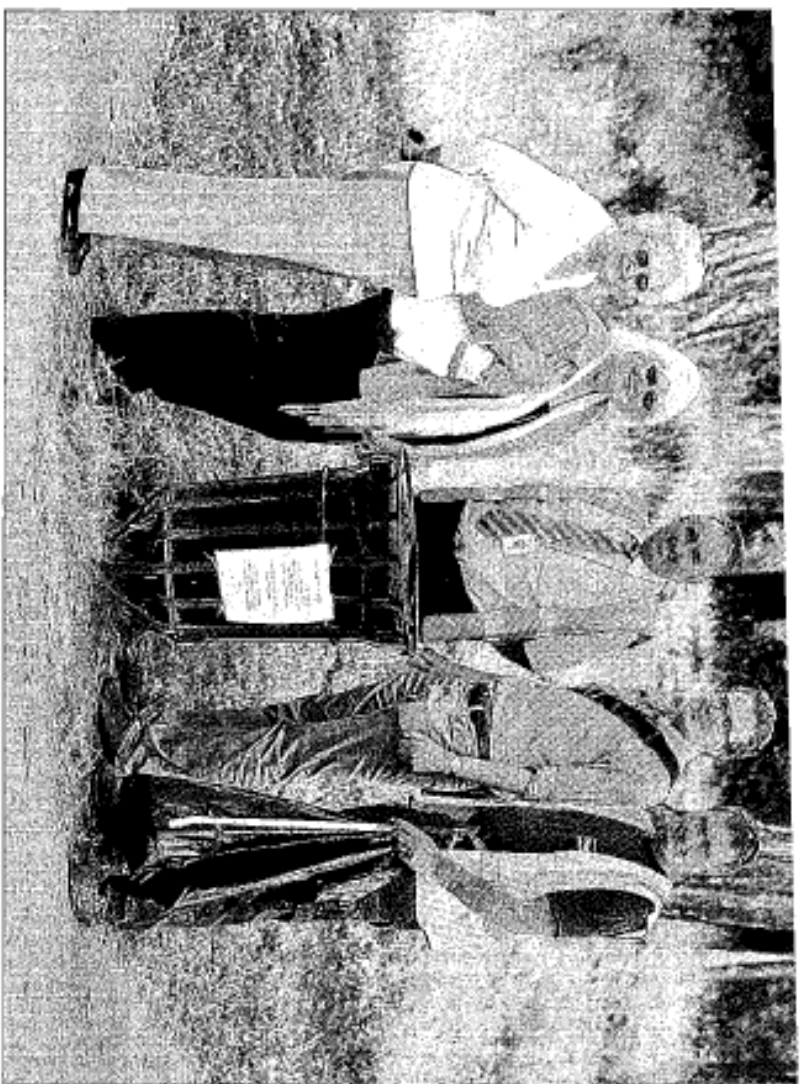
SOLUTIONS to dog-fouling in Cheltenham are being actively investigated.

A working party from Cheltenham Borough Council's scrutiny committee were touring Pitville Park in an effort to gather evidence of the scale of the problem.

The group is led by Councillor Penny Hall (C Cheltenham Park). She said: "We are in the evidence-gathering phase at the moment, we were walking with Uthco staff who maintain the grounds and also looking for dog-fouling hotspots.

"We were talking to dog-owners as well, most of whom had their little bags prominently displayed. They said how disappointed they were when they saw other dog owners move away when they didn't clear up after their dogs."

She added that the group was still looking at what the scale of the problem was, before it makes any recommendations about possible solutions. She added: "We are definitely making a concerted effort and looking at ways of improving the dog-fouling situation in public parks and verges and pavements."



INVESTIGATION: Cheltenham Borough Council dog fouling scrutiny group, from left, councillors Barbara Drive and Penny Hall, John Rees from Uthco, Sam How, democracy assistant with CBC and Keith Hatton from Uthco

DOG FOULING SURVEY

This survey has been issued on behalf of the Scrutiny Task Group to review dog fouling in Cheltenham.

<p>Name of Parish Council/Residents Association/Community Group:</p>	<p>What area of Cheltenham does your organisation cover?</p>
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1. How often do you receive complaints about dog fouling?

2. What action does your organisation take to tackle dog fouling?

3. Are you aware of the laws surrounding dog fouling?

4. How should resources be allocated? Please number in order of preference:

Publicity Education Patrols Provision of bins Fixed Penalty Notices

5. Do you think that greater provision of dog bins would help the dog fouling situation?

6. What do you think should be done to encourage good dog ownership?

7. Should dog fouling offenders be named and shamed in the press if they are first convicted in an open court?

8. How do you think the council should tackle dog fouling?

9. Are you aware of the work of Community Protection Officers?

10. Are you aware of PACT (Partnerships and Communities Together) and their work to prevent dog fouling?

**Please return Completed Questionnaires to: Sam Howe, Cheltenham Borough
Council, Room 128, Municipal Offices, Promenade, Cheltenham, GL50 1PP**