

REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 01/02/24

Report Author: Cat Chambers, Public and Green Spaces Service Manager

Title: Street Cleansing Litter Bin Review

Is this a Key Decision?

Scrutiny is a non decision making committee

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 In September 2023 the Public and Green Space street cleansing teams rationalised the councils litter bin stock, with a view to reducing the number of litter bins and with it the resource strain associated with poorly placed provision.
- 1.2 The service carried out a stock audit and utilised real time use data, provided by the operational drivers directly responsible for emptying the litter bins, to assess the cost-efficacy of the provision. The programme initially reviewed litter bin provision specifically however, during the assessment it became apparent that a very small number of dog bins also provided limited value, and these were added to the rationalisation programme prior to removal.
- 1.3 The cost-efficacy assessment identified litter or dog bins emptied twice a week or less with no resulting overflow, or that suffered significant ongoing fly tipping. These were earmarked for removal. In total the programme saw the removal of 162 litter bins and 19 dog bins, leaving a total of 572 litter and dog bins city wide. Council litter bins are all mixed use taking both litter and dog foul. The remaining dog bins total 76 but dog walkers continue to have access to approximately 500 bins total city wide, suitable for the disposal of dog waste. These are all of the bins that are not sited in play areas.
- 1.4 Litter bins do provide an opportunity to reduce litter at source and continue to be an important tool to manage litter as a result. However, litter continues to be a significant service demand across the city irrespective of the levels of bin provision. The rationalisation supports a service designed to control litter as the primary function, where resources and tools are allocated appropriately to manage litter levels.
- 1.5 The removal of litter and dog bins does have benefits, it means less driving to service them, which frees up additional resources to focus on litter picking and general cleansing duties. Where drivers have been occupied full time on the emptying of litterbins, they are limited in their ability to collect litter in between those bins.
- 1.6 This report outlines the progress of the removal programme to date, the results of the impact assessment and monitoring carried out post removal and advises on the ongoing development of litter bin and street cleansing management within the city.

2. Recommendations:

That the Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The purpose of this report is to outline the progress of the removal programme to date, the results of the impact assessment and monitoring carried out post removal and advises on the ongoing development of litter bin and street cleansing management within the city.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

- 4.1 On going budget constraints required street cleansing services to achieve a budget reduction of £203,700 across 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years respectively. To achieve the saving requirement street cleansing pay budgets needed to be significantly reduced. These reductions resulted in the removal of five vacant posts, and a significant amount of the non-contractual overtime budget utilised for absence cover. In addition, the litter bin replacement budget was also reduced.

Street cleansing budget reductions

Street Cleaning Services reduction	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Pay and non-contractual overtime	-99,930	-93,890	-193,820
Litter Bins replacement budget	-1,920	-7,960	-9,880
Total	-101,850	-101,850	-203,700

5. What are the legal aspects?

This report concerns operational matters and, as such, does not raise any legal issues.

6. Report details:

City wide street cleansing standards pre and post reductions:

- 6.1 Defra's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse requires Street cleaning authorities to benchmark cleansing standards using a visual assessment framework. This assessment framework applies an A-D standard of cleaning, where A is litter free, and D is a location heavily affected by litter with significant accumulation.
- 6.2 The council's street cleansing service applies this visual framework to benchmark city litter levels as follows:



Grade A - No litter or refuse.



Grade B - Predominately free of litter apart from some small, scattered items.



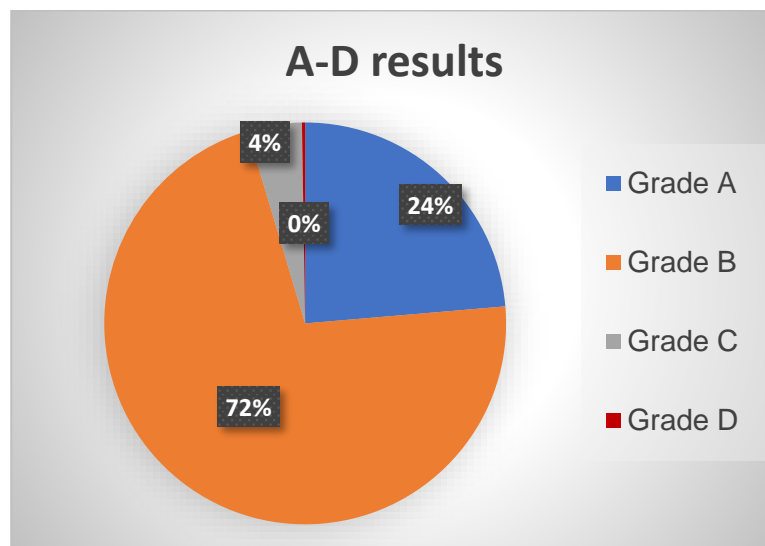
Grade C - Widespread distribution of litter with minor accumulations.



Grade D – Heavily affected by litter with Significant accumulation.

6.2 Between April and September 2023 the Public and Green Spaces street cleansing service carried out 644 general litter assessments across the city. The baseline cleansing standards leading into the bin removal programme were assessed at 95.03% B standard or higher. 612 of the 644 were A/B assessments. Post bin removal between October and December a further 134 general litter assessments were carried out, these returned a 97% B rating or higher. The litter bin removal was expected to support resource levels in light of labour reductions, as a result it was not anticipated that there would be any decline in litter and that the service would continue to meet a 95% minimum A and B level. Initial city-wide assessments support that outcome and indicate no decline in litter standards to date.

A-D results April 2023 – December 2023:



Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
184	558	34	2

Customer initiated litter impact assessments:

- 6.3 After the litter bin removal programme, operational teams received 96 service requests from residents asking for bins to be replaced or concerned about litter or dog fouling levels. These requests related to only 49 sites specifically. The remainder were either duplicates for the same location or related to cleansing levels city wide. The best indicator for city wide litter levels remains the A-D code of practice assessments which remain ongoing, however, to address site specific concerns the service carried out individual impact assessments at each site.

Service requests per ward:

Ward	Total no. of service requests	No. of sites
Alphington	6	4
Duryard	1	1
Exwick	2	2
St Davids	1	1
St James	2	2
St Leonards	2	2
St Loyes	27	8
St Thomas	33	17
Pennsylvania	1	1
Pinhoe	2	1
Polsloe	4	4
Topsham	13	4
Whipton	2	2
Total	96	49

- 6.3 In response to the site-specific service requests, three bins were replaced after the immediate impact assessment indicated an ongoing demand. These were at Grandisson

Court, Dunsford road, and Millennium wood. The remaining locations were subject to ongoing visual impact assessments, carried out by supervisors, with a photo assessment and an A-D rating for cleansing standards taken prior to cleansing being carried out. The service has carried out 209 visual site inspections in total, monitoring the 49 sites of ongoing concern.

The results of the 209 inspections were as follows:

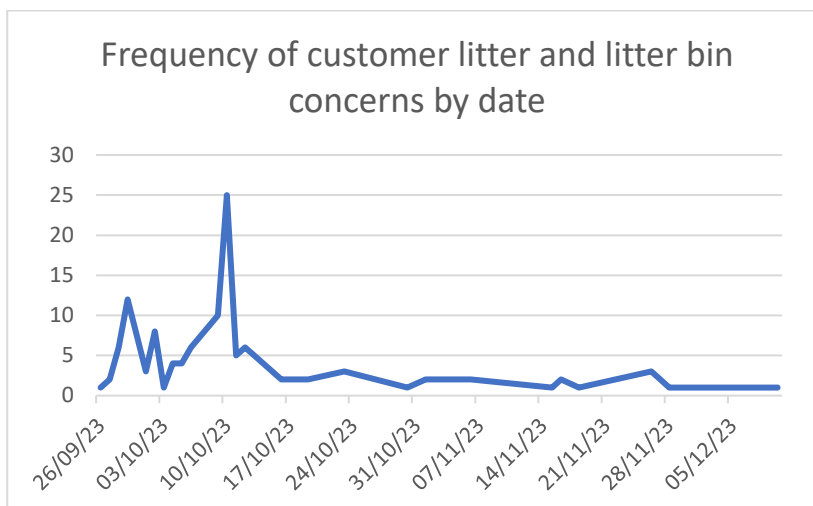
Grade	No. of visual assessment returned
A	64
B	142
C	3
Total	209

- 6.4 Inspections indicated that there were only three grade C assessments* post bin removal (locations in which there was widespread litter with minor accumulations). These were found in Merrivale road, Hatherleigh Road, and at Polsloe bridge. In all three cases the inspections were carried out the day or two days post refuse collection. To review if the impact related to the litter bin removal or was an isolated occurrence, further assessments were carried out. Each road received a further four site assessments on different days and times. These all returned B grades. This suggests the adverse findings were isolated occurrences and not indicative of the litter bin removals. Moving forward sites will now be monitored by drivers and through the existing performance framework.

*Grade C and D litter finding are addressed as soon as possible usually within a couple of hours, but at the latest within 24 hours. Those streets are then picked up as a follow-on inspection the next month. The service has never had two back-to-back substandard findings.

- 6.3 All litter bins were removed by the 10th of October 2023. The initial publication of the removal programme and subsequent operation led to an increase in customer enquiries through the Public and Greenspaces team. Customer enquiries peaked in the second week of October, however by the end of October, correspondence had reduced to standard operational levels. This trend was mirrored through the council's online litter reporting system, this saw a spike in reports in October that reduced in November/ December to average levels. The lack of ongoing engagement, considered alongside city wide litter assessments, suggests that residents relayed their concerns initially, however with time the impact has not been significant enough to warrant further litter reporting on their behalf.

Customer enquiry levels by date:



Condition of the litter bin asset stock:

- 6.4 The rationalisation programme included an assessment of the condition the councils' bins. Initially 122 litter bins were identified for replacement as either in poor or very poor condition. To date 110 of these have been replaced with new or better conditioned stock. The remaining bins will be replaced in the next financial year. Where litter bins require replacement in the future this will be carried out within the existing replacement programme.
- 6.5 The service will continue to audit bin stocks twice a year. These audits currently look at the condition and location of the litter bins only, this has led to an excess of poorly placed bins. In the future, these audits will include levels of use, enabling a full cost-efficacy assessment to be carried out at the point of audit. Where litter bins are reassessed as part of the audit process as having poor cost-efficacy, they may be removed. This will improve the efficiency of resources and support a replacement programme on reduced budget and resource.

The ongoing need for additional bins to meet demand:

- 6.6 Residents can continue to request litter bins where they believe there is a need. Where the operational impact assessment indicates there is a demand for a litter or dog bin, one will be fitted. Over 2024, the service hope to enable an online litter bin request system. The timeline for the delivery of this will be dependent on the capacity of councils IT support services.

Improving street cleansing efficiency

- 6.7 To manage resource reductions efficiently, the council commissioned route balancing across its 12 street cleansing vans, and four deep clean teams. Balancing schedules optimises the allocation of work across street cleansing crews and provides each crew a consistent workload. By preventing the over or under loading of schedules the service can achieve a consistent level of cleansing city wide based on levels of litter demand. The design phase of the work was completed on the 18th of December. The revised schedules, adjusted to accommodate for bin reductions, will go out to trial from the week commencing the 8th of January. The schedules will be under continuous review after

implementation and adjusted as necessary to best reflect litter requirements and retain a 95% or higher A-B standard city wide. Individual street frequencies may change over time, but only as and where necessary to ensure city wide resource needs are met and standards achieved.

7. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

7.1 The optimisation of the street cleansing services supports the delivery of a well-run council by:

- Offering a sustainable route to support a balanced budget, protecting the delivery of the council's statutory street cleansing functions whilst contributing to meet the councils £6.6m budget reduction target.
- Optimising the delivery of frontline services, rationalising and prioritising resource allocation to make the best use of available resources for the minimum obtainable budget.
- Efficiently managing the councils litter bin assets based on cost-efficacy and providing better value for money. The reduced stock supports a planned asset replacement programme that will improve overall asset condition.

8. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

8.1 The Highways Authority withdrawal of weed control has led to increased weeds city wide. The weeds trap litter and detritus but hinder the ability of the council's mechanical sweepers and litter picking teams to control accumulations. To manage litter and detritus as far as practicable in light of constraints, the council has implemented a deep clean schedule which will see all arterial roads and primary and secondary bus routes deep cleaned between 2 – 3 times a year.

8.2 Recruitment of absence cover continues to be difficult resulting in resource shortages. The redesign supports the backfilling of street cleansing functions from within the existing establishment. However, were this occurs there is an impact on other service areas. Where absence can't be filled internally the service remains reliant on the recruitment of temporary staff if available.

9. Equality Act 210 (The Act)

9.1 No potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for noting only.

10. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

10.1 There is no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

11. Are there any other options?

11.1 No alternative options have been identified that would support cleansing standards in light of resource reductions.

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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