



# Northumberland

## County Council

### COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

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#### FLY TIPPING

**Report of Service Director - Local Services, Paul Jones**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Glen Sanderson, Environment and Local Services**

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#### **Purpose of report**

To provide Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on fly tipping and to present a proposed Fly Tipping Reduction Action Plan.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- 1) Consider the options for reducing fly tipping in Northumberland.
- 2) Note that the majority of the increased incidents of flytipping relate to items of household waste that have been encountered in Ashington and Blyth and that these areas will be prioritised when taking actions to reduce fly tipping.
- 3) Note that the enforcement and collection staffing resources deployed to prevent and remove fly tipping have increased in the last 18 months so the increase in fly tipping is not a result of reduced investment.
- 4) Note that there are a range of options available for households to dispose of their bulky household waste legally and that demand for these services remains at a high level and there is no evidence of a link between the increase in flytipping incidents and the introduction or increase in charges for waste services.
- 5) Note that overall bulky waste service performance in terms of availability of collection slots and undertaking collections on the agreed date is good and improving, so focusing on enhancing education and enforcement messages and activity is likely to have a bigger impact on this problem than further improvements in service performance.

## **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the following key themes in the draft Corporate Plan for 2017-2021:-

- 'Living' - We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for
- 'Enjoying' - We want you to love where you live

## **Key issues**

1. The number of recorded fly tips has increased with almost all of the increase occurring in two hot spot urban areas, more detail on this increase is described in the background section below and the background paper 'Fly Tipping Operational Analysis 2019/20' contains a detailed breakdown of the data.
2. The majority of this increase in fly tipping is by a minority of local people dumping household waste in their own local neighbourhoods, often in their own back lanes.
3. Enforcement activity has risen in line with the increase in fly tipping due to enhanced training of operatives, which now means every fly tip is checked for evidence to try and identify the origin of the waste and the persons responsible for the incident.
4. A Fly Tipping Reduction Action Plan (attached as Appendix A) has been developed that will support people to dispose of their waste responsibly and remind them of the ways they can do this, the plan also outlines how we intend to increase our efforts to identify and hold to account those small number of people who continue to illegally dispose of their waste.

## **Background**

1. The number of recorded fly tips has increased significantly. In 2019/20 there were 5,040 recorded instances compared to 3,759 in 2018/19, a 34% increase.
2. Almost all of the increase has occurred in the areas covered by Stakeford and Blyth operational depots. These two areas already experience the highest number of fly tips, with the worst affected being the Hirst area in Ashington.
3. The two most common land types where fly tipping is dumped is in back alleys and on footpaths, the most common type of waste dumped is household waste. It appears that the majority of this increase in fly tipping is by a minority of local people dumping household waste in their own local neighbourhoods.
4. The largest increase of 'incidents by size recorded' relates to flytips involving a 'car boot load or less' and almost all the waste fly tipped in Northumberland could legitimately be taken to one of 12 Household Waste Recovery Centres and disposed of free of charge.
5. Enforcement activity has risen at a greater proportion than the increase in fly tipping with the numbers of investigations rising from 1,438 to 2,514, an increase of 75%.
6. Street cleanliness remains a priority within the service and we have recently reviewed and improved the way we handle fly tip reports, meaning the process for collecting fly tipping is now more streamlined and our performance against our response targets for the

timely removal of flytipped waste has consistently improved across the county in the last 3 years.

7. Blyth and Ashington in particular have seen significant improvements in general street cleansing activity and fly tipping removal since April 2019, as a result of partnership arrangements with Town Councils.

8. There is therefore a clear correlation in these two areas between improved fly tipping removal activity and an increase in the number of fly tipping occurrences.

9. Whilst there is no evidence to show that improved collection performance is the cause of the increase in flytipping incidents in Ashington and Blyth, we should remain aware of the potential risk that improving response times and increasing cleansing resources may, for some people, make it an easier decision to simply dump something in their street if it is known there is a regular, quick cleansing service operating that will remove any flytipped waste from that location.

8. There has been a reduction in the waiting times for Bulky Waste collections and an increase in the number of Bulky Waste requests being booked, especially from the depots covering Ashington and Blyth. Also in these areas there have been no changes to the operation of the Household Waste Recycling Facilities, since the introduction of rubble charges in 2015 and these sites continue to be well used. Overall service performance is good and improving, so focusing on education for all residents and enforcement to tackle the perpetrators is likely to have a bigger impact on this problem than further improvements in service performance.

9. A Fly Tipping Reduction Action Plan was prepared in draft at the end of 2019/20 but before it could be finalised and implemented the service had to respond to the Covid crisis and prioritise maintaining critical council services.

10. Since the Government's lockdown was imposed in March 2020 the Environmental Enforcement Team has continued to investigate incidents of flytipping throughout Northumberland. Evidence has been gathered from a number of incidents including images from the deployment of covert cameras. This evidence is currently awaiting progression with a view to prosecuting the offenders (waste carrier) or the householders (waste producer) who have made inappropriate arrangements with third parties for their waste to be removed and in doing so have failed in their Duty of Care to ensure that their waste is only removed by legitimate licensed waste carriers and disposed of at licensed waste management facilities.

11. Due to Covid there is a backlog of suspects pending a PACE interview which is a legal requirement for offenders to give their account as to what involvement they had in the offence. Unfortunately progress of the investigations are currently on hold until suitable safe arrangements for interviews can be identified that will be PACE & Covid 19 compliant. (This is currently being progressed).

12. Household visits were suspended due to Covid but the development of an effective Covid safe system of work on 20/07/20 now means that Environmental Enforcement Officers have returned to undertaking these visits, which has led to the issuing of 5 x Fixed Penalty Notices for littering linked to fly tipping offences in Ashington & Seaton Valley (£80 each reduced to £65 if paid within 7 days). The offences are mainly bags of rubbish or cardboard boxes left in the street or rear lanes by householders. If the householder continues the behaviour then the next FPN will be for £400, which is the designated penalty fine for fly tipping. In February a vehicle that was used for fly tipping in Northumberland has been seized and crushed by the county council as it continues its zero tolerance approach to this environmental crime. The Suzuki Grand Vitara was seized by the council's public protection service after it was used to dump loose waste onto farmland near Ashington last summer

13. During the initial period of the lockdown it was necessary to make changes to the bulky waste collection service to enable a modified but Covid compliant service to continue, by restricting the size/weight of items that would be collected so that the service could be performed safely by a single operative. These modified arrangements have been reviewed and following changes to vehicles/use of internal screens within cabs it has been possible to return to a 'near normal' service where larger items such as fridges/freezers and sofas can now be safely accepted.

14. The lockdown restrictions introduced in late March had a greater impact on the Council's HWRC service, with all 12 sites having to be closed to the public as travelling to deposit waste at such facilities was considered to be in contravention of the regulations. However, as soon as the Government confirmed that it was acceptable to travel to a HWRC provided certain conditions were met and the sites could be operated safely, the Council quickly put in place modified arrangements with its waste contractor Suez, to enable the sites to be reopened to the public. This initially included restricting the range of waste materials that could be taken into the sites for recycling/disposal - both to meet Government guidance, help manage queues and also due to offtake processors being unavailable as staff had been furloughed. These restrictions have now been lifted and whilst the sites are still operating with internal access controls to limit the numbers of vehicles on site at any time, and with traffic management arrangements having to remain in place at Bebside, Blyth and Whorral Bank, Morpeth to enable the safe management of queues onto the highway - the HWRCs are now providing a full range of recycling and disposal services again.

14. The Fly Tipping Reduction Action Plan has been updated and can now be progressed in a Covid safe manner. Key components of the action plan are to:

- Create additional enforcement capacity at no additional cost through training of existing staff and reprioritisation of enforcement staff activity to focus more time on littering and flytipping activity.

- Deliver a comprehensive communications plan that will raise awareness of the harm of fly tipping, reminding people of the correct way to dispose of excess rubbish or bulky waste and making it clear what the penalties are for not doing the right thing.
- Run operations that deliver a highly visible Council presence in hotspot areas undertaking door to door type education and enforcement visits to demonstrate that the Council is taking action on this issue and holding perpetrators accountable so that there is a more effective deterrent to dissuade potential offenders.

### **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	'Living' and 'Enjoying' are key corporate objectives that relate to making people feel safe, healthy and to have pride in where they live and work. The proposed action plan to improve arrangements for tackling environmental crime, safeguarding the environment and reducing flytipping incidents therefore support the delivery of both of these key corporate objectives.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	The implementation of the action plan can be met from within existing staffing and financial resources for Neighbourhood Services and Public Protection. Reducing flytipping levels will also help reduce the cost of clean up activity and enable the more productive use of staffing resources.
<b>Legal</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human Resources</b>	None at this stage
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Equality issues are considered when providing waste services to ensure they are accessible to the whole community.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Risk assessments and safe working practices have been developed to enable the activities to be undertaken safely during the pandemic.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	The action plan will help to tackle illegal waste disposal activity which blights some communities.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	Reduced flytipping levels will help to maintain high environmental standards in back lanes and alleys in hot spot areas making these cleaner and more attractive places to live.

<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Reducing illegal waste disposal activity and promoting the waste hierarchy will enable more waste to be reused, recycled or recovered, reducing the environmental impacts and carbon emissions associated with waste management.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Reducing flytipping incidents helps to safeguard the health and well being of communities.
<b>Wards</b>	All

**Background papers:**

Fly Tipping Operational Analysis 2019/20 [Link](#)

Fly Tipping Reduction Action Plan 2020/21 [Link](#)

**Report sign off.**

***Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:***

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	n/a
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Relevant Executive Director	Rick O'Farrell
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**Appendix A - Flytipping Reduction Action Plan (see link below)**

[Fly Tipping Reduction Action Plan 2020/21](#)