

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 4 October 2021

Report author: Contract Manager - Parks and Streetcare

Title: Litter Strategy for Watford 2021- 2026

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report presents a Litter Strategy for Watford 2021-2026. The strategy is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Following consultation, this report and strategy has received input from relevant council departments, the council's Environmental Services partner Veolia, feedback from Portfolio Holders in March 2021 and Leadership Board in August 2021.
- 1.3 Development of the strategy secured £25,000 funding from WRAP's Litter Binfrastucture Grant and aligns with the aims of the *Litter Strategy for England (DEFRA 2015)* and resulting national guidance *The Right Bin in the Right Place (WRAP 2020)*.
- 1.4 Adoption of a Litter Strategy for Watford would enable litter and littering behaviour to be dealt with more effectively. It introduces some new ideas and processes to enhance service provision and standards, as well as improving current processes. An Action Plan has been produced as part of the strategy summarising operational, education, awareness and enforcement activities that already take place or are to be introduced. The strategy contains clearly defined governance and monitoring practices.
- 1.5 The Litter Strategy will be delivered within existing service provision and resources, and much is already carried out as business as usual and included within the Environmental Services contract with Veolia.

2.0 Risks

- 2.1 If the council does not adopt the Litter Strategy, this would breach a condition of the grant being awarded.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet approves the Litter Strategy for Watford at Appendix 1 to this report.

Further information:

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Report approved by: Chris Fennell, Head of Leisure & Environmental Services

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Litter is a local, national and worldwide issue. A Litter Strategy for England was published by DEFRA in 2017, and aims to apply best practice in education, enforcement and infrastructure in order to deliver a substantial reduction in litter and littering behaviour. A Litter Strategy for Watford would support the aims of this national litter strategy, as well as taking into consideration local circumstances, to ensure local solutions that meet local needs. It would also complement and support some of the council's other strategies including the Sustainability Strategy and Green Spaces Strategy.

4.1.2 One of the commitments of the Litter Strategy for England was to produce new guidance on "binrastructure" (the design, number and location of public litter bins and other items of street furniture) for local areas to help reduce levels of litter at a local level. This guidance The Right Bin in the Right Place (2020) has now been published by WRAP and has been used to steer the development of Watford's own Litter Strategy.

4.1.3 In order to encourage local authorities to produce their own litter strategies, and to support local authorities in dealing with litter, WRAP launched the Litter Binrastructure Grant in December 2020. Funding of up to £25,000 could be applied for, towards the purchase of new litter bins, enhancement of existing bins and some associated infrastructure.

4.1.4 Watford Borough Council has been successful in its application for the maximum grant amount of £25,000. A requirement of the WRAP grant award is adoption of a local Litter Strategy.

4.2 Current position and strategy overview

4.2.1 Watford Borough Council routinely spends the following on litter-related cleansing and maintenance activities:

Task	Cost
Litter picking and other routine cleansing activities across the public highway and council-owned spaces such as car parks, private roads, garage areas and service yards	Circa £1.36 million per year
Emptying and cleaning litter bins on the public highway	Circa £447,000 per year
Removing and disposing of litter from green spaces	Circa £55,000 per year

** NB. The costs detailed above do not include additional, ad hoc or one off costs*

4.2.2 In 2020/21, Watford Borough Council disposed of 892 tonnes of street cleansing waste, and collected 137 tonnes of waste (mostly litter) from parks.

4.2.3 Many areas of strength have been identified during the development of Watford's Litter Strategy. An audit of existing litter bins has been carried out, and highlights the need to gradually standardise the types of litter bins used with a clearly defined style, colour and signage appropriate for the locations they are situated. All litter bins in the town are emptied at least weekly, and in busier locations this can be up to three times per day. The council and Veolia are able to generate hotspot maps based on recorded reports of issues, in order to determine optimum bin locations and ensure adequate supply. Although the hotspot maps show the worst affected areas to be high footfall retail locations, we are also aware that our most popular parks and open spaces experience littering issues during peak use.

4.2.4 Watford has been known to remove litter bins as a result of attracting fly tipping, and has introduced 'Recycling on the Go' bins to the town centre and our flagship green space - Cassiobury Park, because both locations are high profile and have heavy footfall. At their current locations, the bins are regularly monitored for contamination with non-recyclable materials. The intention is to install further recycling bins at Oxhey Activity Park's new café and Woodside Playing Fields once the new café has opened there.

- 4.2.5 We have developed strong partnerships in Watford, across departments, with contractors, voluntary and community groups, schools, leaseholders e.g. cafés and sports clubs, other local authorities within the county, other statutory duty holders such as the Canal & River Trust and Network Rail, land owners such as Watford Community Housing and the police. We also highly value our relationships with voluntary and community groups, and assist litter picking events within the community by providing equipment, and disposing of any litter (including separated plastic bottles and cans for recycling) that are collected.
- 4.2.6 A particular strength is our environmental cleanliness monitoring regime using former NI 195 survey methodology. Surveys of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting are carried out quarterly and results reported as highly regarded Key Performance Indicators for the council. Along with this we invest heavily in education, awareness and enforcement activities, in order to promote waste reduction, reuse and recycling, and to encourage behaviour change to reduce littering. We support community clean up events and national initiatives such as the Great British Spring Clean, have ambitious aims to eliminate single-use plastics within the council and any partner organisations, a comprehensive schools programme and attendance at a wide range of events in order to engage with voluntary/community groups and members of the public. Our social media presence is strong and we make sure we proactively address local and national issues, support national campaigns and publicise events and achievements. We also have a Town Enforcement Officer dedicated to patrolling the town centre and other hotspots, engaging with members of the public and issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for littering as required.
- 4.2.7 Developing the Litter Strategy has also helped identify some areas for improvement for dealing with litter in Watford. These include more regular bin audits, establishing a clearer process for determining optimum locations, and considering more innovative bin and signage solutions at some litter hotspot locations. The Action Plan within the strategy consolidates the many operational, education, awareness and enforcement activities that already take place as part of routine service delivery and contractual requirements, in order to maintain high standards of cleanliness across the town. The strategy also introduces some new ideas and processes to enhance service provision and standards, as well as clearly defined aims and monitoring practices to ensure regular reviews and ongoing service improvement.

4.3 WRAP's Litter Bininfrastructure Grant

4.3.1 £25,000 has been awarded through WRAP's Litter Bininfrastructure Grant and will be used to help deal with litter issues experienced in Cassiobury Park's busiest hotspot locations, through introducing smart bins with solar powered, compacting technology and sensors, for general litter. These have been proven to have many benefits and are widely used across the country. The bins will include ash trays to help deal with commonly littered cigarette butts, and a foot pedal opening mechanism so that users do not have to touch the bin - particularly essential during the current pandemic.

4.3.2 The council will publicise the smart bins, utilise staff resource to monitor litter levels and bin performance, usage and operational tasks, and empty the bins when required.

4.4 Monitoring and evaluation

4.4.1 The Litter Strategy for Watford has the following aims, in line with the aims of the Street Cleansing, Parks and Open Spaces services:

- To maintain the current baseline cleansing standards across the borough overall and by individual land uses
- To ensure standards of cleanliness and the requirements of the contract are continuously monitored in order to proactively apply the *Zonal Performance and rectification timescales*, to ensure standards of cleanliness and public satisfaction are maintained
- To ensure the gateways into the borough impart a positive image of Watford in being maintained to the required performance standards.
- To achieve the overarching strategic objectives of the council's Green Spaces Strategy.
- To deliver a high quality service to the residents of Watford maintaining or improving on the current customer satisfaction rate of 78% for Street Cleansing service and 96% for the Parks and Open Spaces service

4.4.2 In addition to this:

- To maintain land so it is predominantly free of litter except for some small items, in the most cost/resource efficient way
- To maximise recovery of recyclable materials from waste disposed of on-the-go.
- To support and encourage behaviour change such as waste reduction/reuse/recycling, and appropriate disposal through use of litter bins or taking rubbish home

4.4.3 There are already numerous monitoring practices in place which help measure the amount of litter on the ground and collected from bins, which will continue:

- Recording the tonnages of street cleansing waste take for disposal
- Carrying out quarterly surveys of environmental cleanliness – currently using NI 195 methodology
- Logging of enquiries and complaints
- Monitoring quantity and quality of materials in ‘Recycling on the Go’ bins
- Recording the number of individuals engaged with through school and community outreach, social media
- Staff observations and feedback
- Contractor schedules

4.4.4 Delivery of the Litter Strategy for Watford will be reviewed regularly at contract meetings, progress will be reported to Leadership Board annually and updates on the Action Plan recorded as an appendix.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the Litter Strategy will be delivered within existing service provision and resources, and much is already carried out as business as usual and included within the Environmental Services contract with Veolia. The delivery of the Strategy is also supported by grant funding of £25,000.

5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

5.2.1 The council will conform to the WRAP grant terms and conditions.

5.2.2 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that it is a condition of the grant from WRAP that the Litter Strategy is adopted before the completion of the grant – funded project.

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council’s obligations under s149 of the Equality Act 2010, it is considered that there are no implications as a result of the recommendations.

5.3.2 Having had regard to the council’s obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 The Litter Strategy will be delivered within existing service provision and resources, and much is already carried out as business as usual and included within the Environmental Services contract with Veolia.

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 No accommodation implications have been identified as a result of the recommendations.

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 No crime and disorder implications have been identified as a result of the recommendations.

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 The Litter Strategy for Watford supports the council's Sustainability Strategy through encouraging sustainable solutions to waste management, and promoting waste reduction, recycling and reuse messages through education and awareness.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Litter Strategy for Watford 2021-2026

Background papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

- Litter Strategy for England (DEFRA 2017)
- The Right Bin in the Right Place (WRAP 2020)