

Report on	Clean Neighbourhood Action Plan
Date of Meeting	16 th June 2022
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
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Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	This report is to provide an update on the Council's Clean Neighbourhood Action Plan and the ' <i>Walk This Way Initiative</i> ' in partnership with the Dogs Trust and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB).
2.0	Background
2.1	Previously in April 2022, Members were presented with an update on the progress of the recent commencement of the 12 month pilot for targeted dog fouling and litter enforcement by WISE and Members also resolved to approve Council's participation in the ' <i>Walk This Way Initiative</i> ' in partnership with the Dogs Trust and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (minute reference: D062/22)
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Previously in October 2021, Members at the Environment Committee resolved to approve the terms of engagement and the associated Service Level Agreement for the 12 month pilot for WISE to be engaged for additional support in the area of addressing dog fouling and littering within the Mid Ulster District Council area. A team of Council authorised WISE officers commenced operations within the District on 18 th January 2022 and Mid Ulster District Council became the 4 th Council in Northern Ireland to engage WISE for a 12-month pilot. The team of authorised WISE officers working within the District are now largely settled and all come from a process of local recruitment. The team of 5 litter enforcement officers undertake patrols, working in shifts and provide a 7 day a week operation including mornings and evenings.
3.2	Through the pilot, WISE officers are focussed on providing a visible deterrent and the detection of offences, which also incorporates intelligence and complaint led patrolling across the District. In addition to targeted visits from WISE staff, the areas continue to be monitored by Mid Ulster District Council Enforcement Officers in addition to their other duties.
3.3	The first updated report presented to the Development Committee in April 2022 noted the numbers and types of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN's) issued within the first 9 weeks. Whilst it is accepted that all " <i>litter is litter</i> ", Members also commented on a range of items to include the need for enhanced focus on dog fouling and litter other than cigarette waste. Additionally

further information was requested on a breakdown of time spent in areas of the District and an increased focus on targeted hotspot areas along with rural areas.

3.4 Following Members comments at the April 2022 Development Committee, Council officers met with members of the WISE account management team to relay Members comments and the need for enhanced focus on dog fouling and litter other than cigarette waste. Council officers continue to work with WISE by targeting litter hotspots and promoting anti-litter initiatives. Over the last 7 weeks, there has been a tangible increase in food & drink related FPN's, an increase in dog fouling FPN's and a reduction in cigarette related FPN's.

Table 1 below provides a summary of the FPN's served from the 18th January 2022 to 27th May 2022:

Type of litter	Period 1 (18.01.22 – 22.03.22)	Period 2 (23.03.22 – 27.05.22)
Cigarette Related	538	429
Food Related	38	55
Drink Related	21	22
Dog Fouling	5	7
Chewing Gum	9	3
Other	39	26
Total	650	542

Total FPN's issued 18.01.22 – 27.05.22 – 1192 (883 paid to date: 74% payment success)

3.5 For the recent 9 week period, the total number of FPN's issued has reduced from period 1 however this could be viewed that this is possibly an indication that the public are now becoming more aware of the pilot and feedback received from the WISE team indicate that they can witness more public awareness on the ground and that it could be argued that the issuing of the FPN's are starting to affect a behavioural change. It is hoped this trend continues. Joint patrols between WISE and Council Enforcement staff have been organised for w/c 6th June in various parts of the District.

3.5 The approved Service Level Agreement ensures that WISE will patrol the whole Council area which includes the rural areas and rural roads. They have estimated that this would be between 10-15% of the overall patrol hours - any additional patrols and time spent on rural areas/roads can be facilitated and will be dependent on submitted intelligence and complaints from Members and the public

3.6 As presented previously in the April 2022 update report to Committee, should members of the public be dis-satisfied with any element of the service, their first line complaint will be via WISE customer service agents with information being reported back to Council where relevant.

In the recent 9 week period i.e. from 23rd March to 26th May 2022, a further 22 representations were received by WISE, 19 of which were not upheld and 3 have been accepted with the FPN's duly rescinded. These were mostly relating to a request for extra time to pay an FPN that they had been issued, or saying that they didn't understand the specifics of the offence committed.

3.7 Should members of the public still be dis-satisfied with the outcome of their complaint via WISE, the matter is referred back to Council to implement the process as per stage 2 of the Council's complaint policy. To date, no stage 2 processes have had to be instigated by Council.

- 3.8 A range of communication messages and a variety of media will be used to continue to advise the public of the pilot and that littering is an offence. The Environmental Health team are currently liaising the Council's Equality Officer along with the Marketing & Comms service in respect of the Council's accessible communications policy and to arrange for the translation of literature enclosed within the appendix into a number of alternative languages to help promote the anti-littering message to non-English speaking sections of the Mid Ulster community
- 3.9 Whilst operating on behalf of the Council visibly patrolling the District, the officers from WISE have been able to offer support to members of the public in various situations alongside their enforcement duties. For example, on 28th May 2022, WISE supported a community litter pick event in the Castlecaulfield Village and will continue to make this service available for any groups that may require assistance. Also recently while out on patrol in Cookstown, WISE officers came across a member of the public who had suffered a bad fall and helped support the person and remained with them until the paramedics arrived.
- 3.10 Members are reminded that should they wish to accompany any of the officers on patrol to observe first-hand how they engage with the public that may be arranged.
- Walk This Way Initiative**
- 3.11 As reported in April 2022, "*Walk this Way*" involves creating a dog-friendly walking route in a park, nature reserve, coastal, or woodland area. The route aims to facilitate more opportunities for owners to suitably dispose of dog waste by improving the sites bin-infrastructure and prominence.
- 3.12 The dog-walking route is plotted, and highlighted on welcome maps at entrances. Prominent signage and colourful route markers are fixed at regular intervals along the route. Bin stickers are placed on all bins on the route to remind owners that any litterbin can accept dog waste.
- 3.13 Route markers are positioned every 200 metres to ensure walkers are on the correct path. It is ensured that bins are available at every kilometre along the route, allowing ample opportunity for correct disposal.
- 3.14 The Lough Fea walk near Cookstown was selected as the site for this initiative. The walk is centrally located and is a popular dog walking spot. It is also one of the more significant dog fouling hotspots in the District. The initiative involves a 4-week baseline study of the amount of fouling along the route.
- 3.15 This took place in May 2022. The results of the first few weeks baseline monitoring are shown in Table 2 below. It should be noted that the dog fouling was cleaned up at each monitoring visit. '*Walk this Way*' signage was erected following the May monitoring period, and monitoring recommenced on 6th June with the signage installed.

Table 2

Date	Bagged Dog Foul	Unbagged Dog Foul
02/05/22	2	23
04/05/22	5	47
06/05/22	3	36
09/05/22	6	65
11/05/22	5	51
13/05/22	10	67
16/05/22	6	53

3.16	As can be seen from the table above, Lough Fea suffers from a persistent dog-fouling problem largely due to its popularity with dog walkers and its relatively secluded nature that makes detection of this offence very difficult. It is hoped that the recent addition of high visibility signage and extra bins every 200m of the designated route will encourage dog walkers to dispose of the foul appropriately. The Council's Marketing & Comms team continue to raise public awareness of the initiative via the relevant communication channels.
3.17	Council Enforcement Officers are also undertaking joint patrols with WISE officers for this location in conjunction with this initiative and an update will be brought for member's attention upon the completion of the study.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	<p>Financial: WISE will retain 90% of the income generated and pay Mid Ulster District Council 10% of all income generated at the end of months 3, 6, 9 and 12. There may be additional legal costs incurred for prosecutions in the event of non-payment of fixed penalty notices however, it is anticipated that the income proportion to Council from the issue FPN's by WISE can meet the cost of the administration of legal proceedings.</p> <p>The cost of the "Walk this Way" initiative is £300.</p>
	<p>Human: Staff liaison time with the external enforcement contractor.</p> <p>Staff time for the "Walk this Way" initiative – planning, erecting the signage/route markers and bin stickers. The site is currently cleaned three times per week so there will be no additional staff resource although there will be additional time to monitor fouling for the duration of the study.</p>
	Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant policies and procedures.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
	Rural Needs Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To note the contents of this update report on the Clean Neighbourhood Action Plan.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix A: Targeted Enforcement Pilot Update 22rd March 2022 – 27th May 2022 Appendix B: Sample Artwork