

Progress of Waste Crime Enforcement and Future Focus

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| Final Decision-Maker | Community, Housing and Environment |
| Lead Head of Service | Jennifer Stevens, Head of Environment and Public Realm |
| Lead Officer and Report Author | John Edwards, Street Scene Operations Manager |
| Classification | Public |
| Wards affected | All |

Executive Summary

To provide the Committee with an update on the past 24 months of the actions and results achieved by the Waste Crime Team and outline details of the approach the team will take to reduce the level of litter, fly tipping and graffiti in the Borough over the next 12 months.

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. For the contents of this report, relating to progress over the past 24 months and the future focus of the team on reducing littering, fly tipping and graffiti, to be noted.

Timetable

| Meeting | Date |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Community, Housing and Environment | 30 March 2022 |

Progress of Waste Crime Enforcement and Future Focus

| Issue | Implications | Sign-off |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Impact on Corporate Priorities</p> | <p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>The work of the waste crime team supports the Council’s objective for a Safe, Clean and Green environment through targeted disruption of fly tippers, enforcement action against those caught littering and issuing notices against landowners who fail to keep their land free of graffiti.</p> | <p>Head of Environment and Public Realm</p> |
| <p>Cross Cutting Objectives</p> | <p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Tackling waste crime supports several cross-cutting issues such as improving the appearance of areas which reduces likelihood of anti-social behaviour and crime. The appearance of an area can also have health benefits as well as promoting biodiversity and wider environmental improvements.</p> | <p>Head of Environment and Public Realm</p> |
| <p>Risk Management</p> | <p>This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.</p> | <p>Head of Environment and Public Realm</p> |
| <p>Financial</p> | <p>The report is for noting only.</p> <p>The actions outlined within the report will be delivered within the existing revenue budget.</p> | <p>Head of Environment and Public Realm</p> |

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| Staffing | We will deliver the proposed actions with our current staffing. | Head of Environment and Public Realm |
| Legal | The report is for noting only. | Head of Environment and Public Realm |
| Privacy and Data Protection | The report is for noting only. | Policy and Information Team |
| Equalities | The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment | Equalities & Communities Officer |
| Public Health | The report is for noting only, however improving the appearance of the environment is shown to have positive impacts on wider public health issues. | Head of Environment and Public Realm |
| Crime and Disorder | The proposed actions will have a positive impact on Crime and Disorder. | Head of Environment and Public Realm |
| Procurement | The report is for noting only | Head of Environment and Public Realm |
| Biodiversity and Climate Change | The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and are; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change. | Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer |

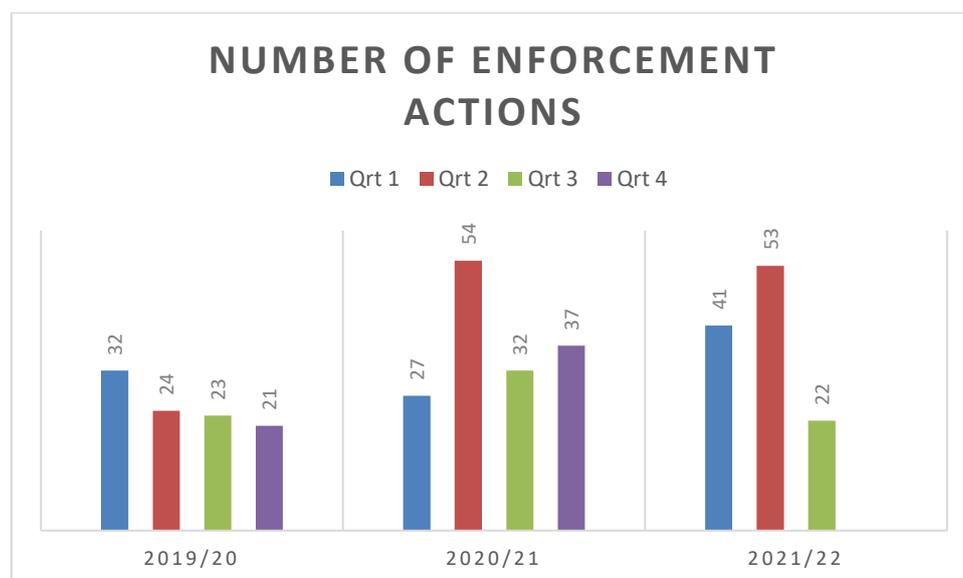
1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2019 the Waste Crime Team was created to provide a dedicated team that could focus on the enforcement of littering and fly tipping as a priority for the Council and to support the delivery of the Safe, Green and Clean corporate objective.
- 1.2 At this time the team consisted of a Waste Crime Manager, Waste Crime Officer and 2 self-funded Street Scene Enforcement Officers. The main goal of the Street Scene Enforcement officers was to enforce against those who littered on the highway and from vehicles with the Waste Crime Officer focusing on CCTV deployment and enforcement against those who fly tip.

- 1.3 Whilst the team has continued to deliver results since their creation, it has not been without challenges. Staff retention and recruitment to the Street Scene Enforcement Officers has been difficult. The shift in focus to fly tipping enforcement and littering from vehicles, meant the decision was taken to delete the Street Scene Enforcement Officers and focus resources on larger waste crimes and work more collaboratively with other agencies such as the Police to tackle organised waste crime.
- 1.4 Littering from vehicles remains a priority and Maidstone is still undertaking a trial of artificial intelligence technology to identify littering using cameras. As this technology is in its infancy it is proving difficult to deliver direct results, within no FPNs issued to date. However the indirect result has been positive, with litter levels around the location of the camera significantly lower than previously experienced. Work is ongoing with LitterCam to refine the technology to enable FPNs to be issued and the camera is due to be moved shortly to other locations across the Borough.

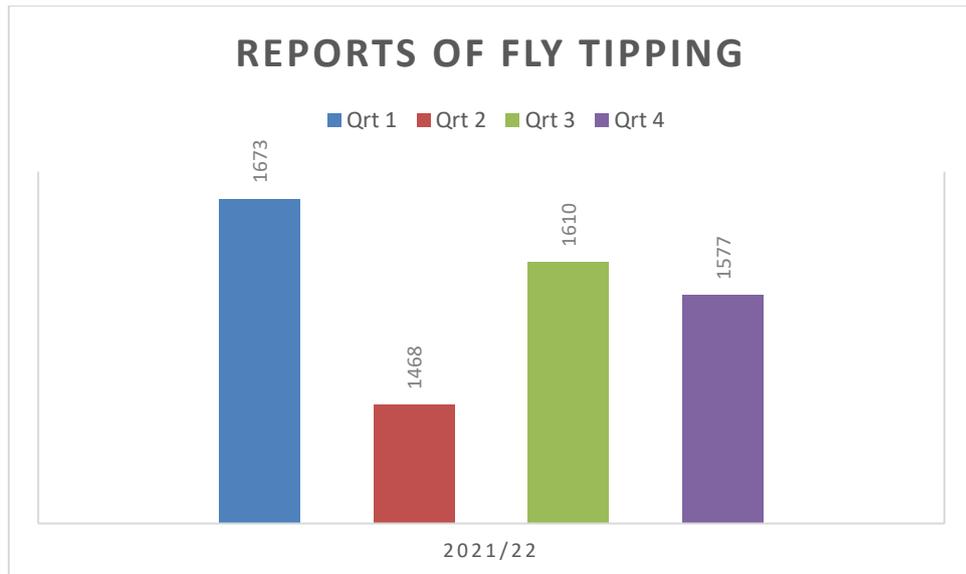
Results

- 1.5 The graph below shows the numbers of enforcement actions taken by the team since 2019. This includes fixed penalty notices (FPNs), vehicle seizures and community protection warnings (CPWs).



Graph 1 – Number of Enforcement Actions over the past 3 years

- 1.6 There has been a steady increase in the actions being taken and the team currently have a large prosecution pending for commercial fly tipping.
- 1.7 Graph 2 shows the number of fly tips which were reported in 2021/22. This data is now the most accurate we have had as it fully utilises the information provided by residents and the collection operatives. For this reason, we do not have directly comparable data for the past 3 years.

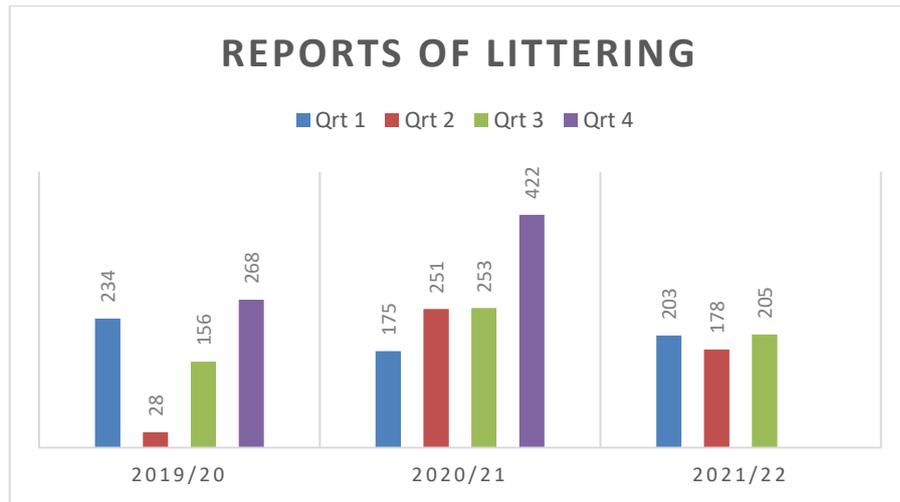


Graph 2: Reports of fly tipping received by the team

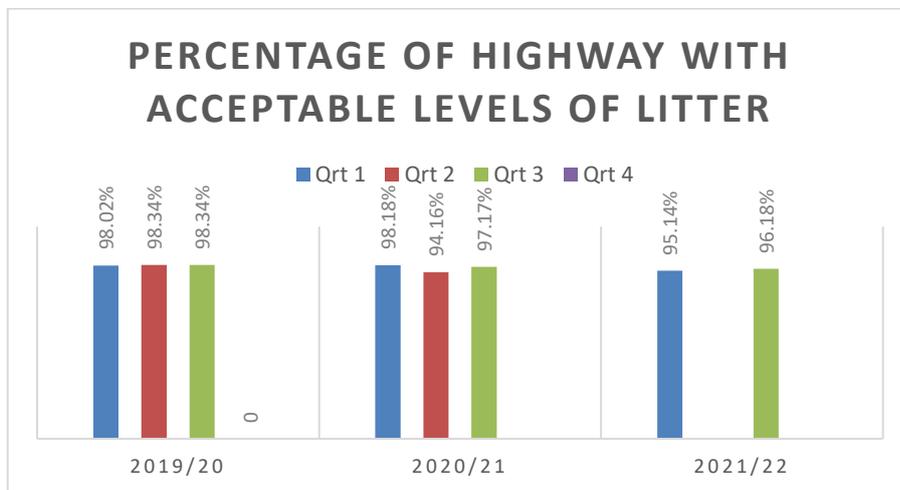
- 1.8 During this period, the waste crime team...have issued 25 fly tipping FPNs (£400), 18 waste carrier offence FPNs (£300), 72 littering FPNs (£120 – reduced to £90 if paid early) and 7 duty of care offence FPNs (£300). This generated over £23,980 which was used to fund the service and additional equipment.
- 1.9 In the past 6 months the Waste Crime Team has invested in 35 new CCTV cameras. These cameras are predominantly small mobile camouflage that are easy located and can deploy quickly (see image below). These have already started to yield results with FPNs issued and investigations started into commercial fly tippers.



- 1.10 Regarding littering, graph 3 below shows the number of reports over the past 3 years, which can be compared with the street cleansing monitoring data in graph 4.

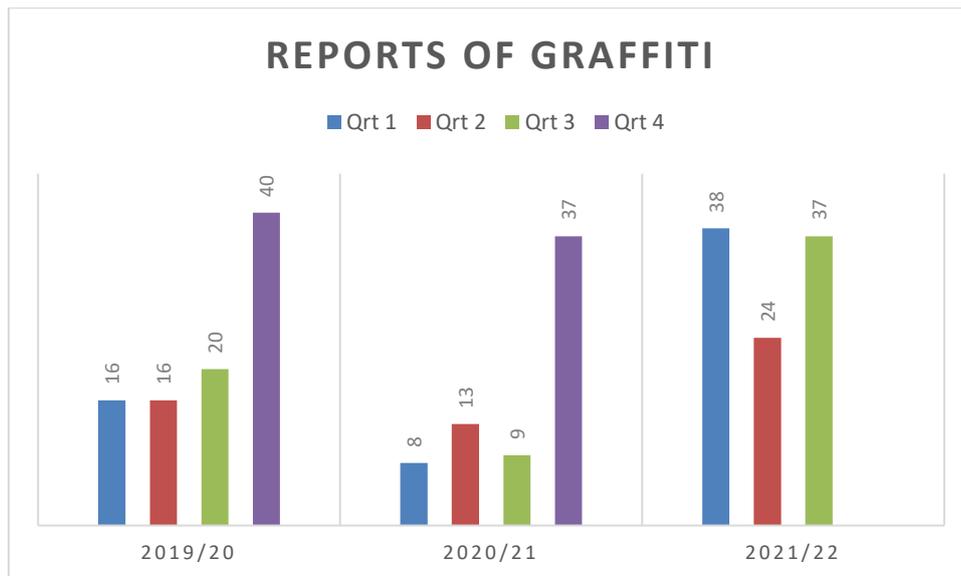


Graph 3: Reports of littering received



Graph 4: Percentage of roads which scored a grade B or above for litter levels

- 1.11 The monitoring data is captured across 300 transects three times per year. It shows that performance remains consistent and overall littering levels are low as indicated by both sets of data.
- 1.12 Since Mid-2020 there has been a noticeable increase in graffiti across the borough especially within the High Street Ward. It's difficult to understand the reasons for the increase in the graffiti but appears there is a correlation between increasing levels of residential properties within the High Street Ward and an increase of graffiti. Lockdowns due to the pandemic also can be linked to the increase as schools, colleges and other youth activities have been shut or limited. The graph below shows the levels of graffiti reported to the Council.



1.13 When dealing with graffiti, the Street Cleansing team has always taken a very proactive approach and offered a free removal service for private residents and advice to private companies. In the cases of graffiti on utility boxes and Network Rail property, the team paint over the graffiti as historically these companies are difficult to engage with and very slow to react.

1.14 On the rare occasion when private companies are unwilling to engage with the team, Community Protection Warnings have been issued and these have forced the landowners to remove the graffiti.

The Future Focus

1.15 The Waste Crime Team has now been operational for 3 years and within this period the team has been able to change and adapt to the needs of the service. The coronavirus lockdown periods did change the behaviour of some residents as well as those committing waste crimes. An example of this was the closure of the household waste and recycling centres (HWRCs) which provided an opportunity for 'Facebook fly tippers' to exploit.

1.16 Littering by far has the greatest operational and visual impact on the environment. A 'wholesale' approach will be undertaken with fixed media campaigns and signage warning those who wishes to litter of the consequences such fines and damage to environment. It's become quite clear during the 1st 6 months of the LitterCam pilot by highlighting a targeted area with forceful messaging creates a behaviour change.

1.17 The Waste Crime Team would be unable to provide the level of littering enforcement required to provide a noticeable change but high-profile campaigns and well-advertised 'hotspot' littering enforcement will provide the required impact. Therefore the team will still be deployed to undertake this but locations will be driven by intelligence and data.

1.18 Fly tipping has continued to decrease and this is mainly due to the increase of camera deployment resulting in offenders being identified and joint working with Kent Police. These successful working practises will continue

and increase, with a newly recruited additional Waste Crime Officer and additional camera deployment there is an aim to increase such fly tipping enforcement by 100% in the next 12 months.

- 1.19 With increased reports and incidents of graffiti in the borough the Waste Crime Team needs to work closely with the Community Protection Team to identify regular areas of graffiti incidents and those likely to be responsible. There is also a need to develop working practises that not only offer advice to those who been a victim of graffiti and more regularly issuing of CPN's and CPW's to those wishing not to remove graffiti or prepared to protect their properties.
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2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 2.1 This report is for noting only, however the Committee could ask that the team identify other areas of focus. The team welcomes input from the Committee on how the team can further build community links to gain intelligence on organised fly tipping and other waste crimes.
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3. RISK

- 3.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.
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4. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 4.1 Information relating to the Waste Crime Team has been regularly reported to the Committee and has been positively received. This report is intended to highlight the current areas of focus and how the team propose to increase enforcement action over the coming 12 months.
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5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 The Team will continue to use social media and other communication routes to promote the work of the team and the zero tolerance approach Maidstone has to waste crime.
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6. REPORT APPENDICES

None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None