



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Thursday 10 December 2020
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 8
Subject	Approach to Litter Bin Placement and Renewal Programme in West Oxfordshire
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Norman MacRae, Cabinet Member for Environment; Email: norman.macrae@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Scott Williams, Business Manager – Waste Email: scott.williams@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update Members on the issues being experienced with litter and dog bins in West Oxfordshire and to seek approval for a renewal programme to be delivered over the next five years.
Annex	Annex A – List of all current litter and dog waste bins
Recommendations	<p>That the Committee considers the following recommendations included in the report to Cabinet and comments as it sees fit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) That the risks and financial implications relating to the provision and servicing of the current litter and dog waste bins be noted;b) That the introduction of the set of principles for the placement of litter and dog waste bins going forward be approved, as set out in the report;c) That the proposal to complete a rationalisation exercise of the existing litter and dog waste bins to ensure that the coverage is suitable for the district and that bins are located in the most appropriate places and in line with the agreed set of principles referenced in b) above be approved;d) That Council be recommended to increase the annual capital budget by £13k per annum over the next five years, to give an annual total of £25k for bin purchases and fitting; ande) That Officers work with Ubico to identify the revenue savings arising from this rationalisation and, by agreement, seek to reduce the contract value accordingly.
Corporate priorities	The proposal contained within this report supports the Council priority: Climate Action - Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity.

Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Councillor Norman MacRae and Senior Council and Publica Officers.

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1. Under the Environmental Protection Act, West Oxfordshire District Council is a 'Litter Authority' and is responsible for cleansing of the adopted highway within its district boundary, and may provide and maintain in any street or public place receptacles for refuse or litter (referred to as litter bins).
- I.2. It is the duty of a Litter Authority to make arrangements for the regular emptying and cleansing of any litter bins provided or maintained by them and the regular emptying must be sufficiently frequent to ensure that no such litter bin or its contents shall become a nuisance or give reasonable ground for complaint.
- I.3. To support this and as is commonplace in other areas, the Council has for many years provided a network of litter and dog waste bins to encourage responsible disposal of those waste types. The existing provision captures litter and dog waste, which has a direct benefit to the street cleansing function, in not having to manually pick items deposited in the bins from the adopted highway. This in turn then means that the street cleansing function has been able to concentrate efforts on other cleansing duties which are important to the Council in upholding its duty as a Litter Authority, and for the benefit of local communities.
- I.4. The Council has always aimed to provide a sufficient coverage of bins across the district, but in recent times Town/Parish Councils have requested additional requirements which have been deemed as a nice to have, rather than critical to the service. As a result, the costs of the bin purchase, installation and emptying has been paid for by Town/Parish Councils. Latest data from UBICO shows projected income this year of £11k to the Council, paid by some of the Town/Parish Councils for emptying litter/dog bins in this category in certain areas and goes to offset some of the cost of the service.
- I.5. Having conducted a recent evaluation of the bin portfolio, the Council currently has approximately 700 litter and 500 dog waste bins (total 1,200) in place, which are in varying conditions and have differing levels of usage. In many cases there are multiple bins in the same location and in some cases these are seldom used.
- I.6. People expect bins to be accessible, easy to spot – but the logistics of managing a large bin estate, and making it work as effectively as possible, is far from simple. A visible, well maintained litter bin is more likely to be used than an overfilled rusty litter bin with holes, but the Council doesn't have a replacement programme for litter/dog bins and instead has always acted to replace them on a case-by-case basis. This unfortunately means that a significant number of bins have all come to the end of their usable life at the same point in time and so it is appropriate to undertake a review, introduce a set of principles to ensure that the coverage is suitable for the district, and have an annual replacement programme to avoid this occurring in the future.
- I.7. Litter and dog waste now both go to the Energy from Waste Facility and so recently stickers have been placed on litter bins in certain areas informing that dog waste can also be placed in them. In addition, brand new bins which are being installed in areas close to dog walking routes also have the information attached.
- I.8. To ensure litter bins remain aesthetically appealing, the maintenance of them is important and litter bins are developing to become more efficient. The development of a smart bin, which informs a central hub when it requires emptying, and plans a collection route, can help with

the maintenance of litter bins (particularly in high usage locations like town centres), and play its role with reducing the amount of litter on the streets. Ubico is currently supporting a trial of smart bins in Cheltenham as part of their forthcoming In-Cab Technology project, and those results will be appraised as part of the Councils proposed litter bin replacement programme and support the Councils implementation of In-Cab Technology in 2021. *Initial understanding is that smart bin technology can be retrofitted to any bin and the price quoted by an external provider to a Ubico partner authority for the set-up and installation of 29 devices, and 3-months subscription as a service was £4,218.75. In addition, this particular supplier is working with Yotta (the Councils forthcoming In-Cab Technology provider) to improve the In-Cab Technology system they offer, so is an element the Council can build in to that project.*

- 1.9. The Council has adopted a [design guide for street scene and public realm](#) which identifies that the streets and roads of West Oxfordshire are increasingly cluttered with a proliferation of traffic signs, bins, bollards, guard rails and street furniture. This results in streetscapes that are both unsightly and lack character. It identifies that coordinated action is needed to reverse this decline. The URL for the design guide is <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/53bn5agi/18-design-guide-street-scene-and-public-realm.pdf>
- 1.10. This report is being considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 December, and this Committee is invited to submit comments on the report, and on the recommendations to Cabinet set out on the first page.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. In order to tackle the urgent requirement to replace bins (as outlined in 1.6), the Council (supported by Ubico) has initiated replacement works, with bins in the worst state of repair being replaced as a priority. To date 68 bins have been replaced in the main towns of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton, but there are approximately 100 bins still in need of replacement and an estimated 25 from the remaining assessments. To tackle this, 50 bins are scheduled to be replaced over the coming months which will now focus on the other areas of the district.
- 2.2. Capital budget of £53k was set aside in 2019/20 and largely went unspent, so this has been carried forwards into this financial year and added to a budgeted provision of £12k, making a total budget this year of £65k.
- 2.3. Metal litter bins cost £261.25 per bin and plastic versions cost £135. Because metal bins are far more expensive than their plastic alternatives, and over time they degrade and look tatty, working in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, agreement has now been given for plastic bins to be used wherever possible.
- 2.4. The anticipated replacements required mean that the budget will likely be fully used in responding to the urgent works this year, but there will be no programme and only limited budget in place for further replacements in the coming years.
- 2.5. In order to effectively provide a suitable coverage of litter/dog bins it is necessary to define a set of principles by which the management team can use to review and rationalise the existing portfolio, and ensure that adequate provision is in place at the areas which will most benefit, and that those bins are replaced when necessary.

3. BIN PROVISION PRINCIPLES

- 3.1. Bin positioning is important because litter bins need to be placed in prime locations such as along pedestrian pathways that are well used, commercial shopping areas and in places where littering and/or dog fouling is a problem. Litter bins near fast food restaurants, bus stops and train stations also help to catch some of the 'on the go food' users. Much of the research carried out shows that people often blame their littering on a lack of bins.

- 3.2. The changing lifestyle with people in a rush means that more people are eating 'food on the go'. Research carried out by Keep Britain Tidy showed that in 80% of sites surveyed, that there was some form of 'food on the go' litter present. With the pace of daily life increasing, more and more people eat on the go, resulting in the requirement for well positioned litter bins. Whilst the amounts of litter have been impacted upon by the Coronavirus Pandemic and associated lockdown measures, it's reasonable to assume that 'food on the go' will continue to result in litter with litter amounts increasing as restrictions are relaxed.
- 3.3. It is important to consider where the demand for the litter bins will be the greatest. By providing litter bins in areas which require them, for example near to a bus stop, can play its part in preventing the dropping of litter and encourage people to dispose of litter responsibly.
- 3.4. An experiment carried out by Keep Britain Tidy showed that when a litter bin was placed within a 50 metre strip outside a row of shops, there was 10% reduction in overall littering. This demonstrates that by ensuring litter bins are placed where there is demand, it will play its role in helping to reduce litter being dropped on the streets and support the overall cleanliness of the district and reduce the cost of this service.
- 3.5. Recycling litter bins can be effective if properly designed and positioned however, it's common for the material captured to be of poor quality and contaminated with non-recyclable items, such as food waste. This then risks there being greater amounts of contamination in the recycling material stream and may result in a load being rejected by the re-processor, which would mean an increase in cost for the Council.
- 3.6. The high street has been changing for a number of years and whilst there is still a high degree of footfall in certain areas, a large proportion of shoppers are now electing to make purchases online and have home deliveries. This in turn means that the high streets are shrinking and their usage is reducing, so it is important to ensure that litter bins are provided in areas where they are most effective and not outside a vacated shop or a building that used to be a public house for example. In addition it's important to recognise that bins must be accessible to all users including those with disabilities.
- 3.7. Within the district there are a number of examples of bins being located inappropriately or two bins being located very closely together or litter and dog waste bins next to each other, which is a waste of resource and goes against the priority outlined in the Councils design guide 18.
- 3.8. Litter and dog waste bins therefore need to be available, accessible and visible to be most effective.
- 3.9. It is proposed that the Council introduces a zonal system for the placement of litter/dog waste bins as follows;

Zone 1 – Town Centres with large numbers of commercial shops, licenced premises and food outlets

Litter bins would be placed in prominent positions, with multiple bins only being located in very high footfall areas

Zone 2 – Village Centres with smaller numbers of commercial shops, licence premises and food outlets

Litter bins would be placed in prominent positions

Zone 3 – Bus stops and roads having smaller grocery type shops

Litter bins would be placed at key bus stops and in prominent positions

Zone 4 – Outdoor recreational areas (solely those owned by the council)

Single (or multiple where there is a clear need) litter and/or dog waste bins would be located at entrance and exit points and within these areas at strategic locations based on the historic provisions and where the Council has a responsibility to provide

Zone 5 – Housing estates & outlying town/village areas

Single litter and/or dog waste bins in these areas would be strategically placed based on demonstrated need - on a recognised school walking route for example

- 3.10. Officers would review the location of the current bins and make a decision using the principles as a guide, together with an accessibility assessment, to decide whether they were providing good, limited or little benefit - (in certain cases using the principles may not be feasible and in which case a bespoke assessment including accessibility would be undertaken, but these instances should be in the minority and with the increase in budget provision, the necessary money will be available to support this should there be additional costs).
- 3.11. Consultation would then be had with the relevant Town/Parish Councils where bins were in locations offering limited or little benefit including those which had previously been paid for (including the current emptying) by that Town/Parish Council, with the proposal that they be removed and providing they were in good order, used to increase the capacity in areas with a greater need or kept for a future replacement.
- 3.12. A [report on determining the impact on litter levels when removing litter bins from locations across Herefordshire](http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Herefordshire_Council.pdf) showed that it is incorrect to assume that the removal of litter bins would automatically result in increased litter. With effective planning and the necessary Town/Parish Council consultation, the removal of certain litter bins could actually result in a reduction in litter, if similar results were seen in West Oxfordshire. The URL for the report is [http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Herefordshire Council.pdf](http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Herefordshire_Council.pdf)
- 3.13. Using the £12k capital budget provision and allocating an additional £13k each year, the bins in the worst state of repair would be replaced using the zonal assessment and a co-ordinated approach between the Council, Ubico and the Town/Parish Council responsible.
- 3.14. This approach would also reduce the litter bin related complaints from residents, Town/Parish Councils.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The Ubico provision required to empty the current litter and dog bins across the district is approximately £287k per annum – but these costs are built in to the street cleansing contract costs and therefore not itemised separately. Officers will work with Ubico to review the costs of providing the service annually as part of the budget setting process.
- 4.2. Whilst a proportion of cost is already captured within the Ubico contract and supporting budget relating to existing resources, Ubico has estimated that it costs up to £150 to install a new litter/dog waste bin because of the complexities brought about by having to liaise with all service providers, gas, water, telecoms and electric prior to the works being undertaken with labour and the materials involved - postcrete, slabs, thunder bolts and fittings. Replacing existing bins where there is no need to install a new concrete base would be lower in cost due to less materials being required. In addition, commonly in that case there would not be the need to liaise with third party utility companies, so for the purposes of this review an average cost of £100 is assumed to fit each bin.
- 4.3. Officer's initial estimate is that a number of litter and dog bins can be consolidated and the number can be reduced by up to 25% (280) without having any detrimental impact on service provision, In addition, there are a number of examples of bins being located inappropriately and offering little benefit so it is assumed that these could be removed. This reduction in the number of bins having to be serviced would equate to up to circa £70k of the current expenditure, but a large proportion of these costs are related to the pool of labour used to

complete all of the cleansing activities in the district, which could not be reduced and are therefore non-cashable. If however 25% (280) were removed, there would be cost reductions associated with a reduction in fuel, which is estimated to be £30k per annum and so officers would work with Ubico to capture these savings and look at further efficiencies as part of the programme.

- 4.4. UBICO shows projected income this year of £11k for emptying litter/dog bins in certain areas where Town/Parish Councils are paying for the enhanced service and so this may be affected should bins in a certain location be removed. However, with a litter bin portfolio which reflects the needs of the district and provides effective coverage, it is anticipated that operational savings would be available in reduced time and fuel (as per 4.3) which would more than offset this. There would also be less Co2 produced which would go towards supporting the Councils aspirations in tackling the declared climate emergency.
- 4.5. A budget growth of £13k is proposed which added to the current provision of £12k would make an annual replacement and fitting fund of £25k, and would allow for the purchase and fitting of approximately 100 of the new style plastic litter bins.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The Council is legally required to cleanse the adopted highway under the Environmental Protection Act and as a 'Litter Authority', but there is no stipulation on the type and/or number of litter/dog waste bins which must be provided.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. The Pros and Cons of rationalising the litter/dog waste bin portfolio and adopting a replacement programme for the next five years are set out below:

6.2. Pros

- Builds in an effective replacement programme using agreed parameters for bin placements.
- Provides effective coverage of litter/dog waste bins and limits wasted resources.
- Reduces cost of collecting litter/dog waste by Ubico and therefore the Council.
- Frees up cleansing staff for other duties.
- Reduces complaints / calls / press enquiries and potentially reputational damage.
- Reduces demand on ERS team in having to investigate littering with frequently no evidence present.

6.3. Cons

- Littering/dog fouling may increase in areas where a bin has been removed or moved.
- It's difficult to establish monetary savings from the UBICO contract, other than a reduction in fuel from litter bins emptying (estimated at £30k). Further work would be required on this as part of the renewal of the contract in 2022.
- Removal of bins provided by WODC may lead to criticism, but the communications needs to be clear that there is a strategic and effective provision of litter/dog waste bins for residents and visitors to the district, and that the programme future proofs the ongoing replacement requirements for the next five years.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1. Litter has direct financial, environmental and health consequences to individuals and communities. To aid in the prevention of littering, and to save the cost of street cleaning it is

necessary to consider the positioning of litter bins, ensuring they are placed in key locations. It is important to remember that litter bins should be accessible, available and visible.

- 7.2. The recommendations within this report will have a positive effect on the different service users, customers and staff, because the Council will improve the network of litter/dog waste bins and have these resources in the right areas. In addition, the formalised replacement program will ensure that bins needing replacement will be actioned promptly.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Having litter/dog waste bins strategically positioned will optimise the Ubico collections and should reduce fuel usage, which will have a direct carbon benefit in lower emissions and the CO₂ produced. In addition, the potential introduction of smart bins would further increase efficiency and reduce the fuel used.
- 8.2. Having a robust set of principles and replacement programme for litter/dog waste bins will ensure that they are fit for purpose and able to effectively hold litter and dog waste.
- 8.3. If recycling litter bins were installed in appropriate locations, then there would be a direct climate benefit, in diverting the material captured away from energy recovery.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1. The alternatives to implementing a litter/dog waste bin siting and replacement strategy would be to:
- Retain the current approach with the large number of bins, accepting that they are not all in the correct locations and Ubico will likely be wasting time and fuel in having to visit them;
 - Accept that Ubico will likely not be able to manage collecting from all of the bins and so additional resources would be required sooner than if the bin estate is managed by way of the replacement programme;
 - Accept that without an agreed set of principles, the location of litter bins is likely to be decided upon with little evidence to support their effectiveness.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1. None

List of all current litter and dog waste bins

Area	No.of dog bins	No.of litter bins
Witney/Hailey/Ducklington	83	132
Minster Lovell	18	20
Carterton/Black Bourton/Alvescot/Brize Norton	62	81
Woodstock/ Wooton/ Hanborough/Bladon	39	85
Charlbury/Finstock/Ramsden	23	36
North& South Leigh /Freeland	20	21
Chipping Norton	41	69
Leaffield/ The Wychwoods	28	27
Great Rollwright/ Over Norton	9	6
Enstone/Chadlington	18	16
Taynton/Fifield/Churchill	9	6
Kingham/Salford	9	19
Tackley/Middle Barton/Great Tew	18	15
Coombe/Stonesfield	15	13
Burford/Fullbrook/Bradwell/Lechlade	28	49
Eynsham/Cassington/Sutton	30	31
Bampton/Aston/Cote/Clanfield	26	31
Stanton Harcourt/Standlake/Northmoor	22	11
A40 Layby		22
Total	498	690