

TACKLING DOG FOULING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following a request from the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee in March 2021, this report provides an update on the matter of dog fouling, the Council's available resource to manage this issue and also promotes a social media campaign to educate irresponsible individuals who don't clean up after their dogs.
- 1.2 The request from the Environment, Development and Infrastructure committee followed discussions around complaints and anecdotal reports around dog fouling and the perception of dog fouling. Whilst there clearly are areas of dog fouling it is important to remember that Argyll and Bute is a beautiful location and has consistently scored above the national average in terms of the LEAMS for street cleanliness. However, increased dog ownership through the lockdown months and a small number of inconsiderate dog owners who don't take personal responsibility to clean up after their pets does cause an issue in some locations.
- 1.3 The Council has received very limited reports of dog fouling issues over the past two years. We need people to report issues to us in order that we can take steps to deal with them:

Dog fouling reports	
2019/20	194
2020/21	151

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members endorse the ongoing work to help reduce dog fouling and the proposal to introduce a campaign around dog fouling.
- 2.2 It is recommended that Members consider the content of the dog fouling briefing and posters in Appendix 1.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 Argyll and Bute Council Environmental Wardens currently enforce legislation that allows

officers to issue £80 fixed charge notices to people who fail to lift their dog's mess as long as they are observed doing so. The monetary penalty was increased from £40 to £80 in April 2016 by Scottish Government. The fixed charge notices penalty charges are fixed by Government, the Council does not have the ability to vary these charges.

- 3.2 Enforcement activity is carried out by multifunctional wardens who are also involved in commercial waste, fly tipping, parking, control of dog notices, litter enforcement and education, pest control etc. Our wardens' presence in dog walking areas usually results in owners picking up after their dogs and very few penalty notices being issued and is therefore a highly effective deterrent. Our enforcement warden service has been reduced from 9 to 4 FTEs due to reductions in the funding available to the Council. This means that warden coverage across the area is limited. No dog fouling signage is in place across many parts of Argyll and Bute.
- 3.3 There are 4 seasonal additional wardens who are being recruited to deal with issues arising from staycation. These wardens will focus on litter, parking and other issues associated with staycation demands as opposed to dog fouling per se. Depending on the demands received there may be scope for the wardens to be involved in some dog fouling enforcement if there are significant concerns in particular locations. The council also employs 6 parking attendants who are fully engaged working on parking enforcement to both on and off street parking. There is no capacity for the parking attendants to deal with other duties alongside parking activities.
- 3.4 Limited information is received from members of the public regarding offending individuals. Where information is received and where individuals are prepared to give evidence we are able to pursue the individual responsible for allowing their dog to mess by issuing a fixed penalty providing a written statement is provided by the witness and where the council have reason to believe an offence has been committed. Unfortunately few individuals are prepared to provide written evidence which would be required for the council to progress any dog fouling matter through the courts.
- 3.5 An initiative was previously considered in 2017 regarding 'naming and shaming' those owners responsible for dog fouling, however, legal advice at the time confirmed that we cannot name and shame individuals when fixed penalty notices are issued. It would only be possible to name an individual if the fixed penalty charge is not paid within the allotted time, the council send a report to the Procurator Fiscal and the case is then heard with the person potentially being convicted of an offence. The council does look to pursue non-payments through the procurator fiscal where this situation arises but these incidences are few and far between. These cases are likely to be reported in the local media negating the need for a specific policy of naming and shaming offenders. The council does not currently have a policy of naming and shaming those committed of other offences it enforces and introducing it only for this offence may raise questions as to why this issue is being dealt with differently.
- 3.6 Officers have successfully deployed CCTV at known locations where dog fouling is an issue. This acts as a deterrent and encourages dog owners to pick up their dog mess and behave responsibly.

Toxocariasis

- 3.7 Toxocariasis is a disease which can lead to blindness. The disease is caused by parasites which live in a dog's digestive system meaning that dog mess can be a host for the parasite. *Toxocara canis* is a roundworm parasite of dogs and foxes. The eggs of these parasites can survive in the environment for many years. More information

can be found on the Public Health Scotland website here: [HPS Website - Zoonoses \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/hps/website-zoonoses/)

Social Media and communications

- 3.8 In this era of ever increasing social media use, awareness, information and possibility of cost effective campaigns there is an opportunity to promote a campaign around responsible dog ownership, both via the Council's established platforms and the new RIS Twitter account. These messages should complement the 'take your litter home' campaign which the council are currently broadcasting as part of the staycation initiative.
- 3.9 Appendix 1 includes a briefing and posters from the Council's Communications team showing research carried out and what the team can offer in terms of a campaign. This appendix details posters which are available to purchase for use in areas of focus, based on complaints and actual evidence of dog fouling, and typical images which could be used via a social media campaign. The posters have a modest cost which would require a budget allocation.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report provides an update on how the council deals with dog fouling, the resource available within the warden service and a proposal to develop a communications campaign.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – the 1990 Environmental Protection Act details the requirement for keeping streets and public spaces clean and tidy.
- 5.2 Financial – Budget would need to be identified should the poster campaign be progressed.
- 5.3 Legal – None.
- 5.4 HR – None.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: (please refer to guidance on Hub)
- 5.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – none known
- 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – none known
- 5.5.3 Islands – none known
- 5.6. Risk – none known
- 5.7 Customer Service – This report highlights a campaign to help reduce dog fouling in the area.

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Appendix 1 – Dog Fouling Briefing and Posters