

## RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

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meeting date: 28 OCTOBER 2021  
title: ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM FOR DOG WASTE / LITTER BINS  
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
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### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present to committee the recommendations of the Dog Fouling Working Group.

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the time of writing, the Council has around 560 litter / dog bins across the borough. In line with a decision of Community Services Committee some years ago, the majority of those bins are designated to accept litter and dog waste. In practice it appears that many of the bins that are designated for dog waste only are used for both purposes as well.
- 2.2 Of the total stock of bins, 42 are emptied by the dog wardens on a weekly basis. These bins are often in locations frequented by dog walkers but inaccessible to the refuse collection vehicles that service around 85% of the total. The remaining bins are located in our parks and play areas and are serviced by the ground's maintenance team. Town Centre bins are also emptied as required by the early morning street cleansing teams.
- 2.3 When the 'dedicated' dog waste bins were first deployed, they were emptied by the refuse collection crews during their daily rounds. When the stock of those was expanded substantially at a later date, it was recognized by committee that if they were to be placed along dog walking routes, they would need to be serviced in some other way, so the Council doubled the dog warden resources so that this new work could be picked up by the wardens as part of their contracted duties.
- 2.4 Complaints have been received at times from staff whose duties include emptying dog waste (in all of the teams involved) but appropriate personal protective equipment is issued in each area and – for the most part – our staff carry out their work as determined by the Council.
- 2.5 In order to examine this matter in more detail than is practical in a committee setting, a working group was set up to investigate whether/how the Council can improve the service substantially.

### 3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The Working Group was proposed by Health & Housing Committee against a background of increased dog ownership and increasing evidence that more Ribble Valley residents were walking regularly for exercise during the Covid Pandemic.
- 3.2 Complaints of full and overflowing bins have increased over the period and at the same time, evidence of misuse of the bins and fly-tipping has mushroomed. When a complaint originates from a resident or from a parish council however, the explanation of what's causing the problem is rarely seen as acceptable.
- 3.3 At the Working Group's meeting held on 26 July 2021, a report was requested examining the costs of practicalities associated with providing and servicing the bins across the borough, with an assumed increase in numbers of bins in response to growing demand. The theoretical limit set was a total of 800 bins.
- 3.4 The assumptions requested to underpin the report were that the number of bins might reach that upper limit of 800 and that bins were to be emptied twice a week.

The starting premise was that a new, standalone service could take over, but officers advised that an alternative be considered using existing resources, supplemented by a team of 3 new vehicles and appropriate personnel.

- 3.5 Both options were presented to a meeting of the working group on 15 October 2021, and the comparison is included below for committee's information. Both options are based on a number of assumptions and the costs quoted are derived from current prices/rates as accurately as possible.
- 3.6 In addition to whatever the measures might be introduced to improve the service, the working group felt that it is important that a coordinated awareness campaign should be developed, covering publicity in the Council's own media, in the local press and on social media.

#### 4. ANALYSIS

- 4.1 The majority of our existing stock of bins is emptied once per week by refuse collection crews as they pass. The remaining bins are emptied by grounds maintenance staff or by dog wardens, so it is unlikely that any of those areas could offer any saving in personnel or vehicles arising from giving up those peripheral tasks.

##### 4.1.1 Option 1

If we consider the creation of a new, dedicated team to take on the whole of the task, emptying all the bins (up to a new maximum of 800) twice per week we need to include travel time, so assume 10 minutes average per bin, per collection. (The current actual task time ranges from around 1 minute for a wheeled bin when the RCV can pull up right next to it to move them, to more than 10 minutes to access remote locations or to clear up fly-tipping or overflows).

800 bins x 10 minutes	=	133.3 hours to empty each bin once
2 empties x 133.3 / 37	=	7.2 units, each with a vehicle
add 14% for holidays etc.	→	8.2 units

Based on 1 man operation on street cleansing staff pay and including for some direct oncosts:

Annual cost of personnel 8 x 25,323	=	£202,584
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Each unit would need a vehicle. A Ford Transit, caged tipper vehicle is currently available for £38,000 with Euro 6 diesel engine, or will be available at £60,000, full electric (daily range 350km or 219 miles).

Because of the price difference and the fact that we don't yet have charging facilities in Salthill Depot for electric vehicles, the working group was content to proceed for the moment, on the assumption that diesel engine vehicles would be the more likely – at least initially.

8 x £38,000	=	£304,000 capital on vehicles
240 extra bins x £136.75 (Nov 2020 price)	=	£32,820 capital on bins

It is possible that some savings on vehicles could be made if the units worked in teams of 2. However, to get through the workload, this would have to reduce the average time per empty to 5 minutes. Given that travel time makes up the bulk of this average (the teams have to cover 244 sq. miles twice in the week) it is doubtful whether this is realistic.

Check No. 1

800 bins x 2 empties per week/37 hours = 43 bins per hour  
 So each unit must empty 43/4 = 11 bins per hour  
 = 5.45 mins / bin

So if 5 mins per empty were realistic, 4 units would just about get through the work

Check No. 2

7 RCV's currently cover the borough and empty 85% of bins

In a week they travel 1985 km total

1985 x 0.62 = 1231 miles per total

If we assume that all bins could be collected once within this weekly mileage

Then 2 collections = 2 x 1231

= 2462 miles per week

At an average speed 20mph 2462/20 = 123.1 hours travel per week

= 7386 minutes travel per week

800 bins: 7386/800 = 9.2 minutes travel per bin

This suggests that 10 minutes per bin is more realistic, and that 8 units would therefore be needed to cover the borough (probably lone workers rather than teams of 2).

#### 4.1.2 Option 2

If we assume that all existing arrangements remain place, the service could be enhanced by the addition of supplementary resources. Then, in simplistic terms, the workload of the 'new' team is halved, as the service improvement is to move from the existing level of 1 empty per week for the majority of bins to twice a week.

This leads, then, to a reduced-cost upgrade with the capital requirement being:

4 x £38,000 = £152,000 capital on vehicles

240 extra bins x £136.75 = £32,820 capital on bins

It seems reasonable to assume that the additional revenue cost would also be halved to £112,210 based on half the number of additional staff, half the additional fuel consumption etc.

4.2 Clearly, both options are based on a number of assumptions as to how the new system could work. This service is one that is determined – to some degree – by geography. Additional bins to cope with dog waste need to be deployed in areas where dog owners walk frequently, and some of the demands that we have received in recent months have been for bins to be placed in areas that are unapproachable in motor vehicles. So if, for example, many of the additional bins were to be deployed in more remote locations, the target service time of 10 minutes may be unachievable, whereas the opposite may be true if all the new bins are placed alongside roads.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Based on the assumptions outlined above a new, dedicated litter and dog bin service emptying all 800 bins twice per week would require a team of 8 operatives (with 8 vehicles). This includes no cover for sickness / holidays to ensure continuity of service.

Capital investment for 8 vehicles = £ 304,000

Capital investment for 240 bins = £ 32,820

Total capital = £ 336,820

Annual revenue cost, personnel 8 x 25,323 = £ 202,584

Fuel 2462 x 6.9 L/100km = £ 8,834 Litres per annum

8834 x 1.34 = £ 11,837 pa diesel cost

Indicative total annual revenue cost = £214,421

(This excludes some other costs such as tax / insurance / maintenance)

The fact that the cost of a dedicated service is so high illustrates vividly why the Council decided in the past to opt for the efficiency of a weekly collection from most bins using a hybrid delivery system, with some town centre bins receiving extra attention as required.

- 5.2 Option 2 offers a more modest cost of £184,820 in capital and £112,210 extra revenue cost per year. This option is dependent on existing arrangements remaining in place.
- 5.3 In each case, the new capital assets will have to be incorporated into the Council's replacement programme, with the vehicles being replaced after 6 or 7 years (if existing patterns continue) and the bins after anything between a couple of years to 20 or more! Although reference was made above to electric vehicles, cost projections for diesel-engined trucks have been used to keep the costs down and in recognition of the fact that we don't yet have facilities in the Depot to charge electric vehicles. (As a side issue, it is worth noting that there is no room in the Depot for an additional 4 or 8 vehicles to park up at night).
- 5.4 Based on the information provided, the working group preferred to pursue Option 1 as a new, stand-alone service. The group did recognize, however, that in light of the inevitable pressure on Council resources, Committee might be more comfortable with the reduced costs of Option 2.

Committee ultimately will have to consider whether this is a reasonable 'bid' in the budgeting process, given the provisional budget forecast reported by the Director of Resources to last month's meeting of Policy and Finance Committee.

## 6 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Approval of this report may have the following implications:

Resources – There is no provision currently in the Council's budget for these new/supplementary services. The revenue and capital implications of both options are included in the body of the report, but each estimate is based on a number of assumptions which are yet to be proven.

If Committee are minded to support either of the options proposed, then the next stage would be to recommend that option to Policy & Finance Committee as a growth item to be included in the Council's revenue budget from next year, and as a bid for the capital resources outlined to be included in the Council's capital programme.

No resources have been identified at the time of writing to support either the revenue growth or the capital investment.

Technical, Environmental & Legal – There are no technical obstacles to the service enhancements included in the report, provide that the extra resources are available. The service itself is not a statutory obligation, although many residents might argue that there is a moral obligation to protect the environment of the area by offering this service. The negative impact on the environment of dog faeces, whether bagged or not, is well documented, including the health risk to those coming into direct contact with dog faeces.

Political – There are no political implications arising as a direct result of this report

Reputation – The growing number of complaints from dog owners and others about overflowing litter bins suggests that it is reasonable to conclude that there is an expectation that the Council will respond to the increased use we're seeing of our litter and dog bins.

Equality and Diversity – No implications have been identified arising as a direct result of this report.

- 7 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE
- 7.1 Decide which, if either of the options proposed to put forward to Policy & Finance Committee as a growth item to be considered in the Council's budgetary process for the coming financial year.
- 7.2 Decide from what date the new services should become operational (and, therefore, at which point both capital and revenue resources would be required).

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES