

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

meeting date: 28 MAY 2024
title: HIGHWAY LITTER
submitted by: ADAM ALLEN DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Committee with an update on the current arrangements for collecting litter on the highway.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley, encompassing our objective to encourage economic development throughout the borough, with a specific emphasis on tourism.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At committee in March 2024, officers were asked to bring a report regarding litter on the highways and how this could be better addressed.

2.2 The Borough Council along with other District Councils in Lancashire, receives some funding from LCC for three areas of public realm work; grass cutting, weed spraying and road sweeping. The collection of litter from the Highway is not included within this and it is not a Borough Council responsibility. However, the Borough has for many years picked up litter from the main roads as well as country roads and in the villages and towns of the Borough. This helps to ensure that the environment is kept as clean as possible for our residents and visitors.

2.3 Recently due to changes in traffic regulations and revised risk assessments, the areas where the Council staff can safely work without traffic management has been reduced.

2.3 The majority of this litter comes from people simply throwing the rubbish out of their vehicles and includes fast food packaging, empty packets, bottles, and cans.

2.4 Legally there is an argument to be made that it is the landowners' responsibility, however this is very difficult to define where road verges are concerned. Nor is it simply a Ribble Valley issue because litter is a nationwide problem on road networks.

2.5 The Borough Council does help several community groups at various times throughout the year by supplying plastics bags, gloves, high viz waistcoats and litter picking tongs. We then arrange to pick up the bags of waste collected. However, this support is conditional on groups following the same safe procedures as Council staff to ensure their safety and to comply with council insurance conditions.

3 THE ISSUES

3.1 Staff require a safe area to work in when working on or alongside "live roads", i.e. where traffic is flowing. The width of the safety zone required for working alongside highways depends on the speed limit which applies to the road. In the towns and villages where pavements exist, staff can carryout their work with appropriate signage and due awareness of the traffic, from the pavement. However, many of the country roads have no pavements and 60mph speed limits. This is the same for most of the A59, apart from where it passes through villages.

- 3.2 Safety zones are designed to provide safe areas for working and all employers have a duty of care for their employee's health and safety whilst at work. These areas are defined by cones/barriers and often linked to traffic management controls, e.g. lights, stop and go boards or impact protection vehicles. The zones range from a minimum of 0.5m to 1.2m in width, depending on the speed limit of the road.
- 3.3 Highways and pavements are the responsibility of LCC as they are the Highway Authority, therefore anything which interferes with traffic requires their permission. The Borough Council does not possess legal authority to work on the highway without this permission and also suitable traffic management being in place. Work on the highway also requires a traffic order which is an additional cost of over £1k per Traffic Order.
- 3.4 As an example, the road from the A59 to Sabden over the Nick O' Pendle would cost the Borough Council over £1k for the Traffic Order from LCC, plus around £1500 for the traffic management element and staffing to litter pick. LCC have suggested that the public realm funding could be used for traffic management, however due to the area of the borough the cost would be too high to be financed through the current Public Realm budget.
- 3.5 There are currently 6 staff in amenity cleansing who work everyday of the year including Christmas and New Years Day. They carry out a wide range of functions in addition to litter picking such as bin emptying, removing dead animals and fly tipping along with weed spraying. Despite the considerable workload, staff are very keen to see less litter on the highways and have offered to clear the highways if suitable traffic management can be provided by County Council. Further partnership working is required with County to establish exactly how this can be undertaken safely and at a reasonable cost.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications.
- Resources – The Council receives over £97,000 annually, from LCC to help offset the costs incurred for the work carried out on their behalf.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Borough has no legal power to implement traffic orders they must be provided by the Highway Authority, LCC.
 - Political – No implications identified.
 - Reputation – There have been numerous complaints recently of the rising amount of litter, which is strewn across road verges, all have been directed to LCC, unfortunately in turn they normally respond that it is a District Council responsibility to deal with, which cause more confusion and frustration with those people making a complaint.
 - Equality & Diversity – No implication identified.

6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Delegate the Director of Community Services to negotiate with LCC to achieve further support for the Borough with costs of traffic management.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS – None

For further information please ask for Mark Beveridge, extension 4479.