

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 2024/25: Reduce litter bins and dog waste bins		Service Director: Jon Winstanley		8 February 2024	
		Author: Paul Hendry & Daniel Warne		Version 1 (Scrutiny Commission)	
Proposal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To remove approximately 340 litter bins on a permanent basis (equivalent to 44% of the total number) To remove approximately 230 dog waste bins on a permanent basis (equivalent to 90% of the total number) To reduce the frequency of emptying some dog waste bins and litter bins in parks and open spaces from three occasions per week to two To cease emptying dog waste bins and litter bins on behalf of a number of parishes; we will work with them to identify an alternative contractor <p>Our street cleansing and litter picking service, and Town and Parish Council maintained litter bins are not affected by this proposal.</p> <p>In order to allow for the increased capacity the council will, over time, seek to replace dog waste bins with covered litter bins.</p>				
Total budget 2023/24:		Initial proposed saving 2024/25:	Up to £90,000	Recommended saving 2024/25:	Up to £80k (subject to contractor negotiations)
No. of responses:	<p>In total, 986 responses were received. The breakdown of responses is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 874 - A resident of West Berkshire 26 - A visitor to West Berkshire 40 - A West Berkshire business owner 49 - Employed by a West Berkshire business 46 - Employed by West Berkshire Council 32 - A Parish/Town Councillor 				

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 - A District Councillor • 2 - A partner organisation • 2 - A West Berkshire Council service provider • 12 - Other <p>We received 0 petitions.</p>		
Key issues raised:	The overwhelming majority of responses strongly disagreed with the proposed changes. Concerns were voiced regarding the potential adverse impacts on the environment, as well as the health and wellbeing of residents, particularly younger, older, and more vulnerable individuals. The prevailing sentiment conveyed a strong belief that the proposal offers no benefits, would affect everyone, and could lead to an increase in litter and dog waste in the environment. Consequently, there was a resounding call not to proceed with this proposal.		
Equality issues:	One respondent stated that the proposed decision will have a highly adverse and detrimental impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users, despite what the EqIA states.		
Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Not possible/Don't do it.	It is accepted that the proposal could be unpalatable to many and will have impacts. However, we need to find substantial savings to be able to balance our budget for 24/25.	
	Provide a communication and education programme, including signs and equipment to loan.	Agreed that sound communications and stakeholder engagement will be essential if this proposal goes ahead.	
	Remove fewer bins, leaving them in hot spots and consider a trial.	It may be possible to phase in the reduction in the number of bins, but this won't realise a saving in the financial years required. We will look to keep bins in 'hot spot' locations where	

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		possible, using data provided by contractors and reports received by residents.	
	Take enforcement action against people who litter (includes dog mess).	The Council does have a dog warden service who try to work with the dog owning public, encouraging them to become more responsible. We agree that increased enforcement action may help reduce the impact. However, it will not be feasible to increase our staffing resource while we are looking to make savings.	
	Provide bigger bins for dog mess.	This is an option we have explored before. However, there is a Health & Safety issue as larger dog bins can accommodate for greater quantities of waste and the bags can be extremely heavy for operatives to empty.	
	Undertake more litter picking	That incurs an additional cost in both contracts.	
	Sponsor bin or pass over to the Parish Councils.	Parish councils have in the past taken on the responsibility for dog and some litter bins and some have expressed an interest in taking on some dog bins if this proposal goes ahead. Generally, parishes haven't engaged with the devolution process as much as we might have expected. We are keen to explore this further with parish councils. We are beginning to investigate how the Council can increase sponsorship of assets across the district.	
	Keep all the bins but reduce frequency of emptying.	That is a part of the proposal we have presented regarding dog bins. It may be possible to reduce emptying of some bins or rationalise numbers where usage is lower. This however	

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		increases the risk of bins becoming full. We only empty the litter bins along the public highway when they are full.	
	Reduce Council staff pay and number of staff.	Recruitment across the council is under review.	
	Increase collection of remaining bins.	This will not be possible if we are to achieve the saving figures.	
	Reduce Council Tax.	This suggestion has been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
	Merge dog and litter bins.	This could be an option in some locations but requires capital investment.	
	Use community service to empty the bins.	This option doesn't provide any continuity of service, individuals on reparation activities change from week to week.	
	Reduce frequency of emptying the bins during the winter.	Yes, seasonal emptying is perhaps an option to look at in some areas but won't provide a significant cost saving across the services.	
	Manage Council finances better.	This suggestion has been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
	Increase Council tax.	This suggestion has been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
	Install fenced dog areas in green spaces.	Possible but there aren't enough parks or open spaces to deal with demand. Also requires capital investment.	
	Install compactor bins.	These are generally expensive to purchase and maintain.	
	Introduce Dog/Pet License.	Unworkable in the sense that any income would have to cover salary and overhead costs.	

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Identified benefits or opportunities	Suggestion	Council response	
	None.	We agree that there aren't many benefits from this proposal, but it will provide a saving to help the Council balance its budget.	
	Cost savings already identified.	Agreed.	
	Passing responsibility onto community/parish Councils.	Parish council have in the past taken on the responsibility for dog and some litter bins and some have expressed an interest in taking on some dog bins if this proposal goes ahead. Generally, parishes haven't engaged with the devolution process as much as we might have expected. We are keen to explore this further with Parish Councils.	
	Increased personal responsibility.	Agreed and this will be promoted further.	
	Increased recycling.	This is something that the council is pursuing. This will encourage the public to take their litter home and recycle it.	
	Restructure Council Management.	This suggestion has been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
	More work for litter pickers.	There could be an associated cost for this.	
Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:	Suggestion	Council response	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Management and Efficiency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form County Council/share costs/ideas with other Local Authorities (LAs). Better financial control/be more efficient and effective. 	<p>The council does share services with other councils, where practicable, in order to provide economies of scale.</p> <p>Other suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage contracts better/re-tender/procurement/have fewer contractors. • Use technology better. <p>2. Council Structure and Operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Councillors Allowance. • Reduce the number of Councillors. • Don't employ agency/contractors/bring in house. • Council leadership should be operational only, not strategic to save spend on wages. 		
	<p>3. Communication and Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more and better communications and education. 	We agree, this will have to be part of the process should this proposal go ahead.	
	<p>4. Social Services and Community Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with volunteers (DWP/local groups) & Parish Councils. • Pay local residents to empty the bins. • Stop the bus service to Oxford. • More help from Govt/keep all rates collected. • Spend less money on the 10% and more on the 90%. Do not let social care swallow the majority of your budget. 	<p>We have a number of supported volunteer groups in the council, and they carry out valued work. It would not be appropriate to rely on volunteers in this work, disposal of litter bags would be an issue alone.</p> <p>Generally, parishes haven't engaged with the devolution process as much as we might have expected. We are keen to explore this further with parish councils.</p>	
	<p>5. Waste Management and Environment:</p>	Collecting the litter and dog bins using the black bin collection vehicles is an interesting point but unlikely to be feasible on an	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure collections/collect litter and dog bins with household black bins. • Provide different recycling bins for household collections. • Introduce a Deposit Return Scheme. • Remove new food waste service. • Use wheely bins for dog poo, sticker those happy to accept dog waste in their bin. • QR to scan when a litter/dog bin is full. • Reduce frequency of emptying/increase size rather than number of bins. • Change some litter bins to dual/recycling bins. • Only empty the litter/dog bins when they are full. • Reduce HWRC opening hours. • Stop cutting verges/weed spraying. Sow wildflowers, plant more trees/rewild. • Introduce an emissions tax in town centres for vehicles. 	<p>ongoing basis where bins are not on collection routes or visited frequently enough to keep the bin usable.</p> <p>Reducing frequency and size of bins has been considered, however there is a H&S issue as larger dog bins provide for greater quantities and the bags can be extremely heavy. Reduction in dog bin servicing from 3 to 2 times per week is part of this consultation process. Litter bins along the highway are only emptied when full.</p> <p>We will be looking at the bins we provide to household for recycling collection as part of our new Waste strategy, however any change will require significant investment.</p> <p>As part of the measures introduced in the Government's Resource and Waste Strategy, a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) system is due to be implemented across England in 2025.</p> <p>All Waste Collection Authorities will have to provide a weekly food waste service by 2026, as per The Environment Act 2021 section 57. So, we will not be removing it. It is also having a positive impact on the amount of waste we recycle.</p>	

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		Using black wheely bins is an interesting point which can be explored further although it would need community buy in – it is not expected that there would be a lot of enthusiasm for this.	
		Reduction in grass cutting and reducing HWRC hours are some of the proposals we are consulting on.	
	Highways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop bodge fixing potholes - reduce insurance claims. • Fix the online report a problem issue • Replace streetlights with LEDs. • Stop doing unnecessary road works. • Routine drain clearance • Turn off streetlights late at night. 	<p>The Council has already replaced streetlights with LEDs.</p> <p>Changes to the gully cleansing/drain cleaning service has also been consulted on. Other suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.</p>	
	6. Infrastructure and Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell/develop Council property. • Close Council Office/Libraries/Museum. • Don't develop Four Houses Corner. 	The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
7. Public Services and Amenities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove funding to other groups/organisations. • Don't provide tea/coffee at Council meetings. • Put on fewer events in Newbury. • Stop wasting money on pavement resurfacing/cycle lanes. 	The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.		

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	<p>8. Miscellaneous Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut other non-statutory services and activities. Stop wasting money on Faraday Road/20mph/Newbury Wharf/Pedestrianisation. • Turn off lights in the office. • Post planning notices rather than sending officers to put up. 	The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
Suggestions for income generation:	Suggestion	Council response	
	<p>1. Bin and Asset Sponsorship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce sponsorship of bins and other assets. 	The council does operate a sponsorship scheme, we will explore how to expand this.	
	<p>2. Waste Management Charges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase garden waste charge. • Better and increased enforcement of litter/dog fouling. 	<p>We could retain and increase the garden waste charge; this would be easily implemented and generate a significant amount of income to cover the financial shortfall if the instruction is given by decision makers. However, the Council is currently exploring potential options for phasing out the garden waste charge over time.</p> <p>We agree that increased enforcement action may help reduce the impact. However, it will not be feasible to increase our staffing resource while we are looking to make savings.</p>	
	<p>3. Revenue and Permit Increases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Council tax. • Increase street work permit charge. 	We are consulting on increased parking fees.	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase parking charge/have more CEOs. • Revalue households Council Tax band after extensions are built, not when sold. • Fine people parking on pavements 	The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
	4. Property and Development Income: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent out/sublet council property to local business and groups not used or out of hours. • Increase income from developments S106/CIL/Planning applications. 	The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
	5. Pet/Dog-Related Charges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charge for access to dog parks. • Charge for dog waste bins (like Garden Waste). • Introduce a pet/dog licence. 	<p>There is a significant capital costs relating to introducing dog parks as well as administrative fees related to charging.</p> <p>Charging for dog waste collection is an interesting idea, we will undertake some investigation to see if it is feasible.</p>	
	6. Social Care and Translation Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase social care fees. • Stop providing or charge for translation services. 	The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	
	7. Boat Mooring Charges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a charge for boats to moor at Pangbourne Meadow/Thames. 	The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.	

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	<p>8. Community Fundraising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web-based 'honesty box' for residents and dog walkers to raise income/ask for donations. • Run a local lottery. 	<p>The Council already run a local lottery.</p> <p>The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.</p>	
	<p>9. Leisure and Cultural Facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase prices at Leisure centres/Theatres/Library/Museum/build better facilities. 	<p>The suggestions have been noted and will be shared with the relevant teams for consideration.</p>	
Officer conclusion and recommendation as a result of the responses:	<p>It is noteworthy that this proposal has garnered the largest number of responses out of all the budget proposals consulted on, indicating a significant level of community engagement with this topic. The overwhelming majority of these responses expressed strong opposition to the proposal. There is significant concern that the proposal will lead to increased instances of littering and dog fouling. Nonetheless, this remains an option that decision makers can approve because of the Council's challenging financial situation. Officers wish to recommend this option for consideration by decision makers. If approved, suitable mitigation will be put in place to manage stakeholder expectation through communications and ensuring the areas with highest footfall are suitably provided for.</p>		

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