

**Belfast City Council**

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| Report to: | Health and Environmental Services Committee |
| Subject: | Update on the Council's Anti-Litter Campaign |
| Date: | 10 th May, 2010 |
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Relevant Background Information

As part of the action plan for the Brighter Belfast initiative, the Head of Cleansing Services was tasked to develop and deliver an Anti-Litter awareness campaign. Phase 1 of the campaign commenced on 10th March 2004 and successfully raised awareness of litter as an issue with the public and in the media. Yearly phases of the campaign have been ongoing since that time and have shown ongoing significant improvement in people's stated littering behaviour. The most recent phase targeted 18-35 year olds and focused on cigarette and gum litter. We are currently planning the 2010/2011 phase of the campaign. Cleansing Services commissioned independent research in 2004, before the start of the campaign, to act as a baseline. We also commissioned independent research annually and latterly every two years, around February, to ascertain the effectiveness of the campaign and to find out what effect it was having in changing public littering behaviour.

The most recent round of research was carried out during February/March 2010 and the key findings show that the campaign is having an ongoing effect in maintaining a high level of awareness of litter in the public's mind and up to this time research had shown significant improvement in littering behaviour. This time round however the research shows that some littering behaviour has worsened. We have looked at this with our research provider and our campaign provider and there is no obvious reason why this should be the case. Despite high levels of campaign recognition and high levels of awareness of litter as an issue, public littering behaviour has not continued the improving trend established in earlier successive surveys. However, the 2008 figures had shown a particularly significant improvement, with the 2010 figures being closer to the results in 2005 and 2007. So it may be a case of an exceptional one year figure in 2008 rather than a significant trend downwards. A further survey in 2011 will give us a better idea of the trend.

Key findings - See Appendix

Key Issues

We have made excellent progress in raising the profile of litter and, up until the last survey, were making significant improvements in changing littering behaviour but we had not yet got to the point where littering is socially unacceptable by the vast majority of people. If we can achieve this goal there are long term benefits to the Council in terms of less money spent picking up after people. We are already seeing significant improvement in the quality levels of street cleanliness and these are being maintained, despite the latest survey results.

It is therefore imperative that we keep up the momentum of the campaign otherwise the awareness and profile we have built up over the past six years will be lost. Education and awareness are now an integral and indispensable part of tackling littering and maintaining the cleanliness of our City.

Resource Implications

Ongoing funding for the campaign has been previously agreed by Committee and is mainstreamed into the Cleansing Services' revenue estimates. The expenditure level has however been reduced from the amounts allocated in the first few years of the campaign. Expenditure of £130K has been included in the Cleansing Services' revenue estimates for 2010/11. It is also proposed that we will complete further research in 2011, a year earlier than planned, to see if there is a reverse behavioural trend forming.

A further report will be brought back to Committee at that stage.

Recommendations and Decision

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and to give ongoing support for the anti- litter campaign.

Decision Tracking

The Head of Cleansing Services will ensure that a further research survey is undertaken in February 2011 and will bring a further report to Committee regarding the results.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Document Attached

Appendix - High level details of the most recent research results into people's stated littering behaviour.

Key Results – Independent Littering Behaviour Survey by Ipsos MORI in February/March 2010

- The number of people who admitted to engaging in littering is still down since the commencement of the advertising campaign from 52%, following Phase 1 of the campaign, to 46% in Phase 6.

| <i>% of people who have been involved in any form of littering in the past six months</i> | | | | | |
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| Stage 1 Jan 2004 | Stage 2 Nov 2004 | Stage 3 Nov 2005 | Stage 4 Feb 2007 | Stage 5 Feb 2008 | Stage 6 Feb 2010- 04-19 |
| 52% | 57% | 48% | 45% | 38% | 46% |

However this shows a significant increase from phase 5 to phase 6.

Reading of the trend shows similar levels of behaviour at stages 3, 4 and 6, so the issue may be an exceptionally good one year result, at phase 5, rather than a significant downward trend. A further survey in February 2011 will assist us in determining this.

- Highest levels of littering are recorded among young people (56%), men (56%) and smokers (55%).

Awareness of **what constitutes littering** was high, with the top issues being;

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| Throwing anything away in a public place | 97% |
| Emptying an ashtray from the car onto the road | 96% |
| Dumping a large item in a public place | 95% |
| Throwing a piece of paper onto the ground | 95% |
| Throwing a cigarette butt out of a car window | 92% |
| Throwing a cigarette butt onto the ground | 92% |
| Spitting out chewing gum in a public place | 90% |
| Allowing a dog to foul without clearing it up | 86% |

The main types of littering **undertaken** by the public were as follows;

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| Discarding a piece of fruit/other food | 18% |
| Throwing anything away in a public place | 18% |
| Throwing anything away at an outdoor event | 16% |
| Dropping a bus/train ticket | 13% |
| Throwing a piece of paper onto the ground | 13% |
| Throwing anything away at an indoor event | 13% |
| Throwing a cigarette butt onto the ground | 12% |
| Throwing a cigarette butt out of a car window | 12% |
| Leaving an item behind in a public place | 11% |
| Dropping fast food packaging | 8% |
| Spitting chewing gum in a public place | 5% |
| Allowing a dog to foul | 4% |

Main stated reasons for littering;

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| Laziness | 42% |
| Lack of bins | 32% |
| Carelessness | 13% |
| Ignorance/Not taught not to litter | 11% |
| Habit/Didn't think | 10% |
| I just don't care | 6% |

98% agree it is up to the individual to take responsibility for litter

Advertising awareness

- The proportion of people who generally recall advertising relating to littering remains high at 82%. The features of recent advertising campaigns, from Belfast City Council, have the highest levels of recall - pile of cigarette butts covering person 51%, pile of chewing gum covering person 45%.
- Over half (62%) are generally familiar with Belfast City Council's advertising, whilst 82% recall some form of anti-litter advertising.
- Television remains the key medium of exposure of BCC's littering advertising with 87% of those who recall advertising, recalling it from TV ads.

Advertising effectiveness

- Of those that were familiar with it, 67% think that the Belfast City Council advertising is effective.
- The three areas targeted by the campaign were young people, cigarette butts and chewing gum. Figures show a decrease in both types of littering behaviour between the 2008 survey and the 2010 survey.

Cigarette butt littering has reduced by 2%
 Chewing gum littering has reduced by 3%

Young people, 16 to 29 year old, showed a 16% improvement in littering behaviour.

The advertising has therefore had an improving effect on these three specific areas.

- The areas of increase in littering are:

Dropping fruit and food litter increased by 6%
 Dropping anything in a public place increased by 6%
 Fast food packaging increased by 4%