



Subject:	Update on Graffiti Control
Date:	4 th June 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director, City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services Vivienne Donnelly, Enforcement Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>At Committee on 4th December 2018, Members endorsed a number of actions to be undertaken in relation to the Council's approach to dealing with the control and removal of graffiti throughout the city. This followed a Notice of Motion, proposed by Councillor Boyle and seconded by Councillor Dudgeon as follows:</p> <p>"This Council recognises the damage caused by and unsightliness of the growing amount of graffiti within our City centre and our neighbourhoods, on our shutters, our walls, our doors, our utility boxes etc.</p> <p>As the Council has the power under Article 18 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 to remove or obliterate any graffiti which, in the opinion of Council, is detrimental to the amenity of any land in</p>

	<p>the district, pro-active policies and procedures for addressing the problem need to now be put in place, perhaps on the lines of those adopted in 2016 by Ards and North Down Borough Council. Accordingly, the Council agrees to allocate the necessary funding and resources, or the reprioritisation of existing resources, to tackle the environmental scourge of graffiti in the City.”</p> <p>(To be referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee)</p>
1.2	It was agreed at the December Committee meeting that a progress report would be brought back to Committee to update on actions undertaken to date.
1.3	The purpose of this report is to apprise Committee of actions and ongoing work in relation to the control and removal of graffiti across the city.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the update provided in this report.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	At the Committee meeting held on 4 th December 2018, the following actions to tackle the issue of graffiti were agreed:
3.2	Re-engagement with external partners, statutory agencies and utility companies to raise the profile of problematic graffiti within their organisations, highlight their responsibilities in relation to graffiti removal on their properties and sites, and to agree actions for them to address the issue of graffiti, including site monitoring and graffiti reduction and removal programmes.
3.3	The Enforcement Manager has continued to engage with the key utility companies and statutory bodies. These organisations have been advised by Council, of the current concerns in relation to graffiti activity on their property and in response, they have outlined their current approaches to its removal. Some of the organisations carry out a programme of maintenance whilst others only remove contentious graffiti or graffiti which has been the subject of complaint. In one case, a utility company (Virgin Media) has agreed to undertake a proactive maintenance programme on their equipment. Contacts for these companies and organisations have been established and they have been advised that they may receive

more frequent requests from Council, highlighting the need to remove graffiti from their property.

3.4 **Following engagement with statutory agencies and utility companies, officers within the enforcement team will undertake a proactive monitoring regime by identifying hotspot areas and engage with the respective statutory agencies and utility companies to achieve removal of the graffiti.**

3.5 Enforcement Officers have commenced a monitoring programme, to identify and highlight property and equipment that requires the removal of graffiti. There have been challenges associated with this process, as there are so many organisations who now own street furniture and, in the absence of signage identifying the owner of the property, officers have to spend considerable time ascertaining ownership. To overcome this problem, we are exploring the use of GIS systems to assist in the identification of ownership in relation to equipment owned by the utility companies. Notwithstanding this, a number of organisations have responded positively and have already undertaken the necessary work to remove the graffiti. Unfortunately in a number of instances, the graffiti has re-appeared within days of its removal.

3.6 **Where appropriate, the use of FPNs and Defacement Removal Notices.**

The use of Defacement Removal Notices will be kept under review and can only be used when all avenues of engagement have been exhausted. Fixed Penalty Notices can only be issued to those observed in the activity of defacing property and detection of such offences is extremely challenging, given that the majority of the offences occur during hours of darkness.

3.7 **Continued engagement with Probation Board NI (PBNI) to further develop the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and support, where appropriate, the effective removal of non-contentious graffiti in all areas of the city.**

A series of meetings has taken place between the Council and the PBNI to explore better and more effective use of this resource, to provide a city wide service to owners of private property who have requested assistance with the removal of graffiti from their property.

Since Christmas, the graffiti bus has experienced operational issues which has resulted in it being unavailable for a number of weeks. Work is however continuing to ensure that robust procedures and appropriate resources are provided in the deployment of the graffiti bus to

maximise its contribution to graffiti removal across the city. To assist with the promotion of this service within local communities, officers from the Community Safety Team will be providing additional support by identifying properties defaced by graffiti which could benefit from the services of the graffiti bus.

3.8 **Develop a Graffiti Removal Policy.**

A policy has been drafted and will be presented to Committee at a later date subject to equality screening.

3.9 **In response to reported contentious or offensive graffiti, Council will continue to obliterate this type of graffiti from private property following completion of the relevant disclaimer form.**

The City and Neighbourhood Services Department has a limited budget to deal with graffiti removal and at present resources are sufficient to deal with graffiti removal from Council properties and sites together with the removal of reported contentious graffiti from public places and private property. In the period January 2019 to March 2019, the Council responded to 81 Service requests for removal of contentious or offensive graffiti.

In addition to the above work activity, the following projects, aimed at addressing graffiti issues are currently being delivered:

3.10 **The Belfast Canvas Pilot Project**

At the March 2019 meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee, Members agreed to a pilot project in the city centre to take forward a public art project involving utility boxes similar to the Dublin Canvas project. This pilot public art project has been undertaken in partnership with Destination Cathedral Quarter and Belfast One Business Improvement District and is aimed at improving the look and feel of the area through animation. In addition the project aims to decrease incidences of graffiti/tagging, fly posting, and other anti-social behaviours associated with utility boxes. Professional street artists, collaborating with community groups and university students, will decorate privately owned utility boxes in the city's main retail heart, to transform them into unique works of art, adding colour to the cityscape. Nine utility boxes have already been transformed under this scheme and a total of twenty four boxes will be completed by June/July 2019. Following an evaluation of Phase 1, a more detailed proposal will be brought back to Committee for delivery of Phase 2 on the

	<p>Belfast Rapid Transport route. It is anticipated the timescale in relation to Phase 2 will be August 2019.</p>
3.11	<p>City Centre Rejuvenation</p> <p>Following the Primark Fire in September 2018, additional funding of £100,000 has been provided to enable the Council to provide enhanced cleansing within the immediate retail area affected by the fire. This funding will enable additional resources to be deployed for deep cleaning street surfaces and the provision of graffiti removal services to the commercial/retail sector whose premises have been defaced with graffiti. This project commenced in mid-May 2019 and will continue over the next six months. Graffiti on shop front shutters is a prevalent feature of the street scene within the city centre area and options to address this issue are currently being explored.</p>
	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.12	<p>There are no additional financial resource implications associated with the work relating to the activities referred to in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.6 of this report, which is being undertaken within existing resources. Funding in relation to the Belfast Canvas Pilot project and the City Centre Rejuvenation has been approved.</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.13	<p>Council recognises the importance of removing contentious or offensive graffiti as quickly as possible to reduce fear and community tension and will continue to operate this approach using existing resources.</p> <p>A policy in relation to Councils approach in dealing with graffiti removal has been drafted and will be subject to equality screening.</p> <p>There are no rural needs implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.