



<b>Subject:</b>	Update on education around responsible dog ownership
<b>Date:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services Lisa Caldwell, Head of Corporate Communications
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an overview, as requested by Members, on the amount spent on advertising on the education of responsible dog ownership, which helps to tackle the problem of dog fouling. The report also demonstrates the return on investment of advertising and how it sits with operational support to educate, advise and regulate this issue.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Note the overview provided as requested.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<b>Background</b> Up until the 2019/20 financial year the marketing budget for department initiatives that required marketing and communication support was determined by and paid for by City and

Neighbourhood Services. Following the marketing and communications structural review and related centralisation of spend in 2018, spend is now determined by the marketing and communications function in consultation with the business area/ department.

3.2 **Previous campaign spends**

17/18 - £108,300

18/19 - £57,680

19/20 - £25,000 (Jan 2020)

20/21 - £25,000 (Oct 2021)

3.3 **Campaign objectives/strategy**

The advertising objectives are to generate awareness and to tap into the need to act responsibly, as a dog owner, and to raise awareness of the fines related to enforcement.

The key message is 'Pick up or pay up, dog wardens are patrolling your area' and to reduce the number of dog fouling incidents in our city and show our citizens that the council takes this issue seriously. We generally advertise in the winter months as there is an increase in dog fouling in the dark evenings and mornings.

3.4 **Media placement**

We use a combination of the following to deliver our messaging on dog fouling:

- Radio to reach a large audience quickly and deliver repetition of message
- Bus stops in residential areas and in close proximity to parks and schools, and ads outside newsagents to target dog walkers
- External bus advertising to give an on-street presence and build awareness
- Internal bus panels to target a captive commuter audience
- Online advertising to target people at home

3.5 Our advertising activity allows us to target all Belfast City Council residents during all aspects of their life – showing them that the council is addressing the dog fouling problem in their local area.

3.6 **Research**

Independent research undertaken by Cognisense in 2019 to evaluate the impact and awareness of the dog fouling campaign (17/18) reported a very low incidence of individuals admitting to having allowed their dog to foul in the last six months. 70% of those asked said

they had seen the campaign. The most prevalent area of recalled advertising was the “£80 fine”. This level of ad recognition is well in excess of the relevant UK awareness norm. Overall prompted awareness was greater than seen in the previous 2017 research. External bus advertising was particularly prominently recalled (85%).

### 3.7 **Results from October 21 campaign**

We review all statistics during, and post campaign. We then feed findings into future planning.

- Bus externals – 82% of Belfast adults saw our ad on average 3.4 times
- Bus internals – 30,800 Belfast dog owners notice advertising inside a bus each week
- [www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk) delivered 320,000 impressions and 423 clicks (click through rate of 0.13% much higher than UK average of 0.13%)
- Belfast Live and Daily Mirror online activity delivered 100,012 page impressions and 144 clicks (click through rate of 0.14%).
- Panels at bus stops and newsagents - 73% of all adults in Belfast saw our ad on average 12.5 times.
- Facebook – strong engagement rates

3.8 In September 2021 there were 128 instances of illegal dog fouling incidents recorded (as part of the 5% random sampling of streets). In October 2021 this had decreased to 101 incidents – a 22% decrease. (It should be noted that the second surveys for Central and City were not carried out due to illness in the section so this may have affected the figures recorded and may have contributed to the decrease in dog fouling incidents recorded).

### 3.9 **Dog Warden Service & Fouling Fines**

The Dog Warden Service operates from 08.00 hours to 20.00 hours seven days a week. The team consists of 12 dog wardens and 2 Supervisors. They work in teams of three, with two teams operating daily.

3.10 The service was impacted by COVID 19 restrictions but was partially recovered by August 2020 and has continued to resume activities in the intervening period.

3.11	It should be noted that, as part of an overall transformation project across the City Services Department, management are conducting a resource analysis with the support of Human Resources and the Continuous Improvement teams which includes our Dog Warden Service.
3.12	<p>With approximately 12,000 dogs in the Belfast City Council area, the Dog Warden's role incorporates many activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responding to service requests.</li><li>• Investigation of complaints.</li><li>• Investigation of dog attacks.</li><li>• Detecting and dealing with straying or uncontrolled dogs.</li><li>• Detecting and dealing with infringements of the legislation, including issuing notices.</li><li>• Preparing investigation/evidence files and court attendance where necessary.</li><li>• Detecting and dealing with dogs prescribed under the Dangerous Dogs (NI) Order 1991.</li><li>• Collecting stray or unwanted dogs and taking them to the appropriate kennelling facility.</li><li>• Making recommendations for enforcement action with regards to dog attacks and the imposition of control conditions.</li><li>• Assessing conditions of dogs in our care, and dogs seen on properties and referring them to animal welfare where necessary.</li><li>• Inspecting and making recommendations for the registration of breeding establishments and guard-dog kennels under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011.</li><li>• Patrolling streets and public places.</li></ul>
3.13	To detect owners who let their dog foul in public places and don't pick up their mess, the dog wardens are deployed on routine proactive monitoring patrols. However, securing detections is challenging as in order to effect a prosecution we must witness an irresponsible dog owner in the act, which is unlikely. It is widely recognised that the problem of dog fouling cannot be addressed solely by enforcement intervention. It requires a three-pronged approach which recognises the need to encourage behavioural change, supported by enforcement and underpinned by a regular cleansing regime.
3.14	In order to enhance the patrols undertaken by the Dog Wardens, the following operational arrangements have been reinstated:

- The Dog Warden Supervisor and the Dog Wardens will liaise with the Area OSSS management teams and other enforcement staff in their respective areas to discuss priority areas and hotspots.
- Scheduling of patrols most days at particular times has resumed in the last number of weeks, including early mornings and evenings when resources permit in response to complaints and/or information that identifies a 'hot spot'.

3.15

The table below indicates the level of enforcement activities relating to dog fouling offences within the last four years. Covid-19 restrictions have impacted the number of fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling in the last two years for a number of reasons. The public health restrictions have impacted on staffing levels due to a number of officers having had to isolate due to contact with Covid or having tested positive for Covid. Due to concerns around contracting the virus, the teams had to approach individuals with caution and only where absolutely necessary. Also, the general public when approached were reluctant to engage and sometimes hostile, due to fear of infection.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Number of Dog Fouling Fines</b>
<b>17-18</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>18-19</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>19-20</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>20-21</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>21-22YTD</b>	<b>15</b>

3.16

### **Community Awareness Team**

A summary of the Community Awareness Team (CAT) activities focused on responsible dog ownership is outlined below:

- The team has incorporated responsible dog ownership including dog fouling in all their school activity sessions.
- During the Covid recovery phase we are undertaking outdoor playground litter/waste education sessions which includes dog fouling, in addition we have adapted our resources to be able to offer online workshops with schools.
- A supply of dog bags are regularly distributed to Community Centres for members of the public – this is a resource that the public can avail of if they find themselves without a dog bag in the locality.

- This summer we offered litter game sessions to community centre based summer schemes. This included a dog fouling game to reinforce the dog fouling message and the consequences of noncompliance.
- We have worked with the Dogs Trust supporting them with their microchipping promotion sessions at community centres.
- We normally attend a number of community and parks events with our animation Scoop Dog, including Family Fun Days, Spring and Autumn Fair.
- We launched the Green Dog Walkers project in Belfast. On signing, individuals pledge to commit to the principles of good dog ownership.
- We work with our Dog Wardens Service to ensure compliance with licensing requirements which has resulted in a number of unlicensed dogs being identified.
- We delivered the pilot dog fouling stencilling project in the parks.



### **Other initiatives**

- 3.17 As part of our campaign monitoring, Corporate Communications review all social media comments and feed back to the department with information on parks and streets where dog fouling is a problem. One of the reoccurring messages was that the public did not see dog wardens on our streets. Dog wardens patrol in Belfast City Council marked vans, however at times they need to be discreet to enable them to detect offences. Therefore, we designed magnetic panels for their vans which can be attached when commuting from area to area and removed when required.
- 3.18 There has also been a high level of messages on social media about dog fouling within our parks. To tackle this issue dog fouling related stencils were placed in 19 of our parks in the summer months.



3.19	<p>Whilst we recognise that marketing and communications alone does not eliminate and dramatically reducing dog fouling, what it does do is reinforce a message which needs high levels of awareness in order to try and influence behavioural change. As per the research results mentioned above, our campaigns perform well in terms of advertising recall and reach the intended audience. We also work closely with the department to determine “hot spot” areas which see high levels of dog fouling incidents and as such we are then able to target our messaging and advertising within these areas using the appropriate channels to do so. As dog fouling is a behavioural trait it is vitally important that we continue to generate awareness of the issue and the consequences via ongoing marketing and communication support.</p> <p><b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b></p>
3.20	<p>There are no additional financial implications associated with this report.</p> <p><b>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</b></p>
3.21	<p>There are no implications associated with this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None