



Members of the Public's Questions to Environment Committee.

Questions from Eric Torrington

Background

A volunteer litter picker and campaigner based in Dursley Gloucester undertakes regular litter picks in Cam & Dursley, Stroud, and Gloucester and has adopted 10 lay-bys on the A38 between Berkeley Heath and Cainscross Roundabout. By 2022 it is expected that over 300,000 items will have been picked up in Gloucestershire, as a solo litter picker.

The UK's litter problem is getting worse, and that is also apparent in Gloucestershire. Our roads, towns and countryside are in a mess. Implementation of UK litter legislation (EPA 1990 + Clean Neighbourhood & Environment Act 2005 + Code of Practice for Litter and Waste + Voluntary Code of Practice for Local Partnerships) simply does not work; more people drop litter than pick it up, no one cleans their patch, very few businesses lead by example and it is not enforced by Litter Authorities. Less than 1% of population pick up litter, 48% drop it and the rest do nothing (Cleanup Britain). Few people make the link between litter and the wider climate crisis. Councils and litter volunteers are overloaded by a tidal wave of food on the go litter. Therefore such trends need to be addressed starting at the source of all litter, namely major supermarkets and fast food outlets.

Councils should monitor and enforce, as necessary, the clearance of litter from in and around land owned or leased by supermarkets, fast food outlets, petrol stations, retail parks, business parks, construction sites and schools. They have powers to do so under current legislation

Question 1

Businesses need to be part of the litter solution and clean up in and around their premises, lead by example and practice what they preach with anti-litter campaigns. This will act as a positive nudge to staff and customers. Will the council initiate a programme of engagement with major supermarkets and fast food outlets (to start with) making them aware of their legal obligations, instigating daily clean up in and around their boundaries to standards called for in codes of code of practice (Litter Grade B) and put in place measures to address littering hotspots resulting from their retail activities, typically within 100m of their outlets or as otherwise agreed with the council?

I point to Moto Services who in 2021 now clean up to their boundaries daily and once a week on 'Litter Wednesdays' go further. They have collected over 2000 bags of rubbish from all their motorway service stations (at Sep 2021).

Reply

As the Principal Litter Authority, Stroud District Council invest heavily in their street cleansing function, ensuring that streets are swept, litter and dog bins are provided and emptied, and litter picking is undertaken as necessary.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic started, levels of litter and fly-tipping have increased. SDC

have supported Ubico, our environmental services partner, by providing an additional interim resource to cope with demand. The budget setting paper being presented to committee tonight supports this and lays out the recommendation for an additional street cleansing crew to be added to the establishment, on a permanent basis.

Whilst SDC acknowledge the legislation at our disposal and concur that most litter items can probably be traced back to retail establishments, the blight of litter is particularly nuanced. Anecdotal evidence from our collection teams suggest that litter hotspots aren't necessarily driven by the proximity to retail, but can be in any location frequented regularly, either on foot, or by vehicle. However, we are certainly keen for businesses to play their part.

In 2022 SDC will be working on a new policy to formalise litter bin provision. This will provide an opportunity to engage with fast food and larger retail outlets as part of the preparatory work. I am therefore happy to be able to agree to your request and will ensure that officers open dialogue with these businesses to try and bring about positive change.

Importantly, SDC recognise the litter picking undertaken by residents and are thankful to all who partake and contribute to keeping our district as clean and tidy as possible.

Question 2

Under the powers of the Clean Neighbourhood & Environmental Act 2005 how many litter clearance notices / community protection notices (or similar) has the Council, as Litter Authority raised on businesses in the last 2 years?

Reply

None. However, SDC do have powers to issue Community Protection Notices (CPNs), directing businesses, or individuals to clear litter from around their premises and/or take steps to prevent future littering. CPNs would only be used if there was a persistent issue, with sufficient warnings given in the first instance.

Questions from Les Richards

Question 3

Please will the council consider a policy of businesses being able to sponsor litter bins and allowing their logos on the bins? SVCC was successful in Lidl agreeing to this at lower Dudbridge lock after their railing works rendered the existing dog bin useless but was refused as no such policy existed.

Reply

The Environment Committee work programme for 2022 includes the creation of a new litter bin policy, which will be subject to approval from committee. This will be a comprehensive policy, outlining how bin provision will be achieved and altered in our changing communities. The feasibility of a sponsorship scheme will be undertaken as part of this piece of work.

Question 4

Both SVCC and SDC canal volunteers have offered to the council to provide labour free of charge to install replacement or new bins along the canal towpath. Already done at Bowbridge to your approval. I have also requested replacement dog bin 1495 which is beyond repair at Hilly Orchard foot bridge and to replace the dog bin with a multipurpose bin at Ham Mill lock both of which we would be happy to install. Please advise if the general offer of installation is acceptable and your thoughts on the 2 specific bins?

Reply

As a general rule, officers have indicated that they are more than happy to accept the volunteers offer to install new and replacement litter/dog bins along the canal towpath. Officers will make contact to arrange the installation of a new floor mounted litter bin at Ham Mill Lock, alongside the removal of the dog bin at the same location. The dog bin removed will be used to replace the broken dog bin (number 1495) at Hilly Orchard. Please note that there are supply issues with new bins and a current order won't be delivered until the new year. In the meantime, we'll persist with the existing provision, as dog bin 1495 is unsightly, but still serviceable.

Question 5

Please would officers approach Costa at Bonds Mill as their litter is blighting the towpath both east and west as well as being the reason the bin at Bonds Mill is often overflowing.

Reply

As per the response to the public question from Eric Torrington, officers will open dialogue with several businesses, including Costa, as part of preparatory work for the new litter bin policy referred to in question 1.

Questions from Liz Childs

Question 6

Described in the Local Plan is the policy of 'general restraint' for planning in the open countryside. This policy may be too limiting for our rural farming landscape, after a national 10% increase in local-food retail market systems over recent years.

In the interests of the District's future food and farm resilience, would it be best to follow the guidance of Professor Tim Lang (former director of the London Food Commission and currently of the City of London University's Centre for Food Policy) when he speaks of encouraging local councils to support the rebuilding of a local-food wholesale markets system?

This to

1. return our market-towns to being towns with markets, and thus a short route to direct sales for farmers,
2. enable a horticultural landscape adjacent to our towns and villages thus adding more vocational employment, increased skills, diversity and prosperity, for the small farms of the district.
3. I ask that Stroud District Council agree to, positively support planning considerations on behalf of local small-holders and the development of market gardens, as the most sustainable thing to do for building a future food-resilient district, for the sake of our younger generations?

Reply

The Council's Local Plan supports the diversification of farming businesses within rural areas for employment uses and supports the extension of rural businesses. The new emerging Local Plan provides even more positive support for rural tourism proposals, for proposals relating to biodiversity enhancement, carbon sequestration and renewable forms of energy in the countryside. The emerging Local Plan also actively supports the provision of new community orchards and allotments.

The Council has recently approved a Draft Economic Development Strategy which identifies agriculture, agritech and rural diversification as a key sector to deliver our vision of a sustainable inclusive and thriving economy for our businesses, communities and visitors. In the Strategy we highlight recent ideas for developing a circular economy in terms of food and farming, bringing positive impacts to the sector and local communities through improved access to the District's market offer. We will ensure that the emerging Gloucestershire Food and Farming Strategy will be reflected in the final version of the Strategy. We are currently welcoming views on the contents of the Strategy and what actions need to be in the Council's Action Plan to support our local economy. Views are welcomed by 10 February 2021.