



Members Questions to Environment Committee.

Questions from Mr Eric Torrington

1. **Background:** Further to my questions and subsequent engagement with the council in December 2021. I am aware of the constructive efforts made by the council to engage with major supermarkets and fast-food chains, seeking to raise awareness of their obligations under current litter legislation (EPA 1990 & Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005) and invite their participation in the voluntary codes of practice for local partnerships. This COP provides a framework to help all concerned reduce litter and waste that comes from selling and consuming food on the go. The council has received no response to any communications and its approaches ignored. Fear not, this is nothing personal, and based on my experience many councils and litter pickers are treated the same. Rather, see it as a company-wide / country-wide practice to avoid communications on this issue. It's very much a head-in-the-sand vow of silence shared by these sleeping giants.

Question: Would the council in 2023 now move to the next level with face-to-face engagement, monitoring of litter levels, grading cleanliness in and around major supermarket premises (up to 100m on safe access route), and the application of a 3-strike rule leading to the issue of a CPN on finding litter levels below grade B standard on 3 separate occasions. It is only when the council (and others across the country) flexes its powers under the legislation will it wake up the sleeping giants and potentially make a difference in the problem of food-on-the-go litter locally.

Reply:

Stroud District Council are committed to keeping the district as clean and free from litter as possible. In addition to the varied work our partners, Ubico, undertake in this field, SDC officers undertake regular inspections, using the nationally recognised standards. These results are monitored and applied as part of our suite of key performance indicators.

Introducing a new regime of business inspections, where we seek to grade within the grounds of car parks, simply isn't viable. However, given the previous insights you have afforded and further to the dialogue we have had to date, we propose to better integrate inspections around these multiple premises, to try and evidence the problem. Unacceptable litter grades directly outside business units or car parks will be recorded, allowing us to challenge the retailer directly. We hope this will prove more fruitful than writing a generic letter, which as you're aware, didn't provoke the response or engagement we were hoping for.

SDC has given some consideration to the use of Community Protection Notices and whilst we wouldn't rule this out in the future, especially considering the further evidence gathering we are committing to, we aren't currently minded to apply this legislation. The test for serving a CPN includes certainty that the behaviour is "detrimental to the quality of life of those in the locality". Currently a cross section of officers believe this is questionable.

Supplementary Question: Would the council please share/benchmark their recent experience with other councils to help raise this nationally, and also to our local MP asking that she pass on this experience to the Minister for the Environment (DEFRA)? Communications should point to the root of the problem, namely that businesses do not follow legislation as intended and that the voluntary code is just that, voluntary when in fact it should be reformed as a set of mandatory minimum requirements. As such it will be complimentary to DRS and EPR schemes and any associated legislation to follow, as such offering an integrated solution to litter at source.

Reply

Stroud District Council have put this forward as an agenda item for the next Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership, Senior Managers Group Meeting. The Community Services Manager attends and will seek feedback from the other five districts in Gloucestershire. We'll also raise the matter with member authorities of the Worcestershire Waste Partnership, so similarly, we'll ascertain what the outlook is like in Worcestershire. The Community Services Manager will report his feedback to the Chair and Mr Torrington directly, by the end of January 2023.

With the permission of this Committee, I will also ask the same Officer to write to Siobhan Baillie MP, expressing our collective concerns about the reliance on a voluntary code of practice and our preference to introduce mandatory minimum requirements.