

Council – 29 April 2021

Responses to Members' Questions

Question 1

Cllr Joseph Dumont to ask Cllr Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

At Council in July of last year, I brought to the attention of the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the issue of litter in our District. I asked what was being done to hold the Contractor to account. The Executive Member assured me that he was meeting regularly with Officers and that this Council had powers to act if need be. He told me;

'contracts have performance management regimes in place which bear financial deductions should cleansing not be achieved at the standard we expect'

Since I asked this question, last year I'm sorry to say the situation has gone from bad to worse. The very stretch of verge, the A414 slip road into Stanstead Abbots, which was the section first brought to my attention as being a significant location for litter and fly tipping has still not been picked. This is despite the situation being raised many months ago. There have been phone calls, site inspections and emails about this one short stretch of verge, yet it remains an awful mess.

Across our District, the community has taken matters into its own hands, notably the Wombles of WareAbouts and also TUBS in Bishop Stortford. These are members of the public out and about picking litter because they want to live in a clean and tidy environment. Surely in East Herts not having rubbish all over the place is not too much to ask.

Will the Executive Member please join me in thanking the Wombles and members of TUBS for their good work, update me on his progress, specifically if the powers of 'contract management' have been applied and tell me when he expects the verge off the A414 into Stanstead Abbots to actually be cleaned?

Response from Cllr McAndrew

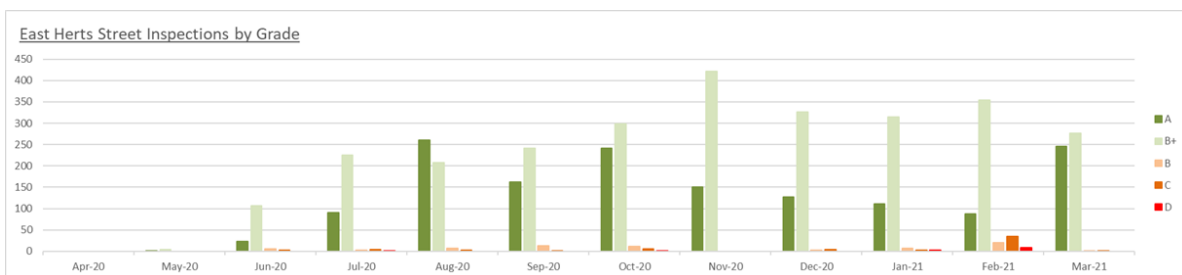
Thanks to Cllr Dumont for drawing to the Council's attention the excellent efforts of those residents who undertake litter picking in our district. Residents have been helping keep the district clean for years and indeed we still provide support to parishes where litter picking is undertaken by parishes rather than via our contracts. However we have seen a number of groups over recent months including the Wombles of Ware, residents in Buntingford and TUBS in Bishop Stortford helping to encourage community litter picking by more and more residents and I also wish to add my thanks for this fantastic work and commitment to our district.

Officers from the Shared Waste Service are gearing up for the Great British Spring Clean and are keen to liaise with groups about the initiatives they are putting in place to support the work of the community, and of course to make sure safety arrangements and arrangements for the collection of waste is in place. I would ask all Members to support this work by keeping an eye on our social media channels and by re-sharing our publicity material. After all if residents and visitors did not litter no one would need to be picking it up.

In response to the question from Cllr Dumont I can confirm the details regarding the contract monitoring which has been undertaken over the last year in specific relation to street cleansing.

EH Street Inspections/ rectifications & Defaults			
	Inspections	Rectifications	Defaults
April	0	0	0
May	5	0	0
June	137	0	0
July	323	0	7
August	478	0	2
Sept	419	0	0
Oct	557	4	2
Nov	572	4	4
Dec	460	3	
Jan-21	438	1	2
Feb-21	505	10	0
Mar-21	525	4	3

Cleansing inspections were suspended early last year due to the initial Covid 19 pandemic, cleansing was not. However, Members can see from the large number of inspections undertaken by the Shared Service in relation to street cleansing that officers are regularly monitoring the standards across the district. Where the inspection identifies that the standards are below the expectations of the contract a rectification is issued and where a rectification is not actioned within the contractual timeframes required a default is issued, with some elements resulting directly in a default where standards are considerably outside of the contract specification.



The Covid 19 pandemic has presented additional challenges affecting both the resourcing of street cleansing services and of course the response to changing resident and visitor behaviours.

I am sure Members will agree that we have seen little disruption to waste and recycling collections over the last year and the roll out of

the new charged garden waste service. It must be accepted that on occasion resources for waste and recycling have to be temporarily back filled at short notice by street cleansing staff, for example where test and trace has impacted on staffing levels. Despite all this, inspections of the contractor performance demonstrate a good standard of work overall.

Some areas of street cleansing have traditionally been undertaken alongside the work of Ringway and their grass cutting programme. This collaborative work was suspended last year but has begun again this year and the section of the A414 in question scheduled for 7th – 10th May 2021.

I'm sure Cllr Dumont will join with me, in that the current practise of tossing rubbish from vehicles spoils the environment, costs millions and puts road workers' lives at risk when they have to clear up.

To that end there must be emphasises on behavioural change and the message to residents is take your litter home, in line with the duty of care legislation our individual waste is our responsibility. Dropping litter and dumping rubbish are offences and we will issue fix penalty notices and prosecute as necessary. Litter spoils the beauty of the countryside and can be dangerous to wildlife and livestock. If we all work together we can enjoy a cleaner and greener district.