

Members Clean Environment Framework Document



1. Summary

This framework document summarises the findings of a small group of members who have met informally to consider how the behaviour of the public can be influenced to have a positive impact on the environment and especially the cleanliness of the borough. The group has also considered the role of a councillor in facilitating this change in behaviour.

The purpose of the framework is to assist members to take the initiative to facilitate this change within their own wards and communities.

2. Background

The Council invests significant resources to maintain a clean environment. Whilst the public generally are respectful of their environment, there is unfortunately an element that through their behaviour are detrimental to the Council's efforts to maintain a clean borough.

The area committee action plans have identified the clean environment, especially dog fouling, as a priority. Resources to address these issues are not infinite and the member group recognise the excellent work carried out by the neighbourhood teams and the benefits of the new approach to neighbourhood working. The member group has therefore concluded that the way forward should be to change the behaviour of certain elements of the public and for members to have a key and lead role in facilitating this change.

3. Recommendations of the Member Group

The member group has identified four key themes which it is considered will provide a framework to assist members in taking the initiative to facilitate and promote change.

- **Role of Members**
- **Community Involvement**
- **Education, Promotion and PR**
- **Support for Members**

a) Role of Members

The member group felt strongly about the role of members and that they should take the lead within their local areas.

The framework makes provision to assist members to champion the clean environment within their communities. Members are also encouraged to engage and work with local businesses to encourage support and sponsorship for local initiatives.

Learning hours are available to members and can be used to increase awareness and knowledge of the clean environment and to assist members to champion their communities.

It is intended to provide a session early in the new municipal year to promote this framework document to members.

b) Community Involvement

Community involvement will be essential to bring about stepped change to behaviour. If communities can be encouraged to take ownership of their areas this will not only impact positively on the use of the Council's existing resources but will help to encourage behavioural change. Community pressure on those who do not respect their environment has the potential to be a powerful tool to bring about improvements.

The business community also has an important part to play and should be encouraged to invest in the environment through sponsorship and funding for local initiatives.

Examples of initiatives include encouraging residents to keep their patch clean, developing community groups to take responsibility for their area or estate, resident/community pledges to not throw litter down and to pick up litter every day, sponsored litter bins (provision and emptying) and businesses being encouraged to provide funding for local clean ups and improvements.

Members are best placed to know and understand their communities and can play a key role in championing local initiatives, community groups and working with local businesses.

c) Education, Promotion and PR

Neighbourhood Services undertake an annual education programme which includes visiting all of the primary and high schools in the borough. The programme is well received by the schools and whilst it is difficult to measure its effectiveness, it is considered that the programme is successful in helping to influence the behaviour of the pupils.

With regard to promotion and PR, opportunities are currently taken to promote the clean environment through Forward and by sending out press releases.

A sustained approach to education, promotion and PR can be taken through the ongoing development and updating of the plan so as to maintain continuity. It is important to ensure that the right language, messages and initiatives are included for the different target audiences. Equally important is to recognise and build upon successes so as to help bring about continuous improvement.

Examples of what can be included in the plan include regular and planned space in Forward, working with the local press to run campaigns, more competitions and reward mechanisms for schools including certificates/pledges of commitment to improving the environment.

Members can play a key role in supporting the plan by promoting the message in their communities and through involvement with local schools, groups and businesses.

d) Support for Members

As detailed above the member group consider that members have a significant leadership role in improving their wards and encouraging community respect and ownership of the local environment.

The following appendices include information which should be helpful to enable members to embrace and develop their leadership role so as to make a real difference to their areas.

Appendix 1 – A Community Action Group Case Study

Appendix 2 – How to set up a Community Action Group

Appendix 3 – Existing Friends and Community Groups

Appendix 4 – Schools / Education Programme

Appendix 5 – Press and Public Relations

Appendix 6 – Support from Council Services

Appendix 7 – Enforcement / Restorative Justice / Community Pay Back

Appendix 8 – Support from other Groups and Organizations

Appendix 9 – Helpful Websites

Appendix 1 – A Community Action Group Case Study

The following case study identifies a success story from officers facilitating the setting up of a small community group which is making a real difference to the upkeep of a local area of open space. Through this framework document members may wish to take the initiative in facilitating the setting up of similar groups.

Acorn Close Community Volunteers

A piece of woodland and open space area has been transformed into a clean and tidy wildlife oasis thanks to a group of community volunteers.

The Acorn Close Community Volunteers have cleared rubbish, planted bulbs and put up bird boxes in a bid to clean up and attract wildlife to the area in the heart of Leyland.

The strip of woodland and open space, which runs from Church Road and along Beechfield Road in Leyland, has mature trees, a public footpath, a hedge, open grassland and is the home of birds, bats and woodland creatures.

Last autumn teams from the council's neighbourhood services cleared the ground and made the area safe. A group of local residents were so pleased with the improvements they decided to pitch in and help keep the area clean and tidy, forming the Acorn Close Community Volunteers.

With the help of the council the group has undertaken a series of events. In November and December they undertook a litter pick, cleared the ground and planted 1,200 British bluebells, crocuses and miniature daffodils.

At the end of January the eager group put up bird, bat and owl boxes to encourage biodiversity and have created a natural habitat for hedgehogs and other animals with discarded branches and leaves.

The group has also been given litter pickers and bags to carry out clean-up days when necessary and the council has agreed to remove any waste.

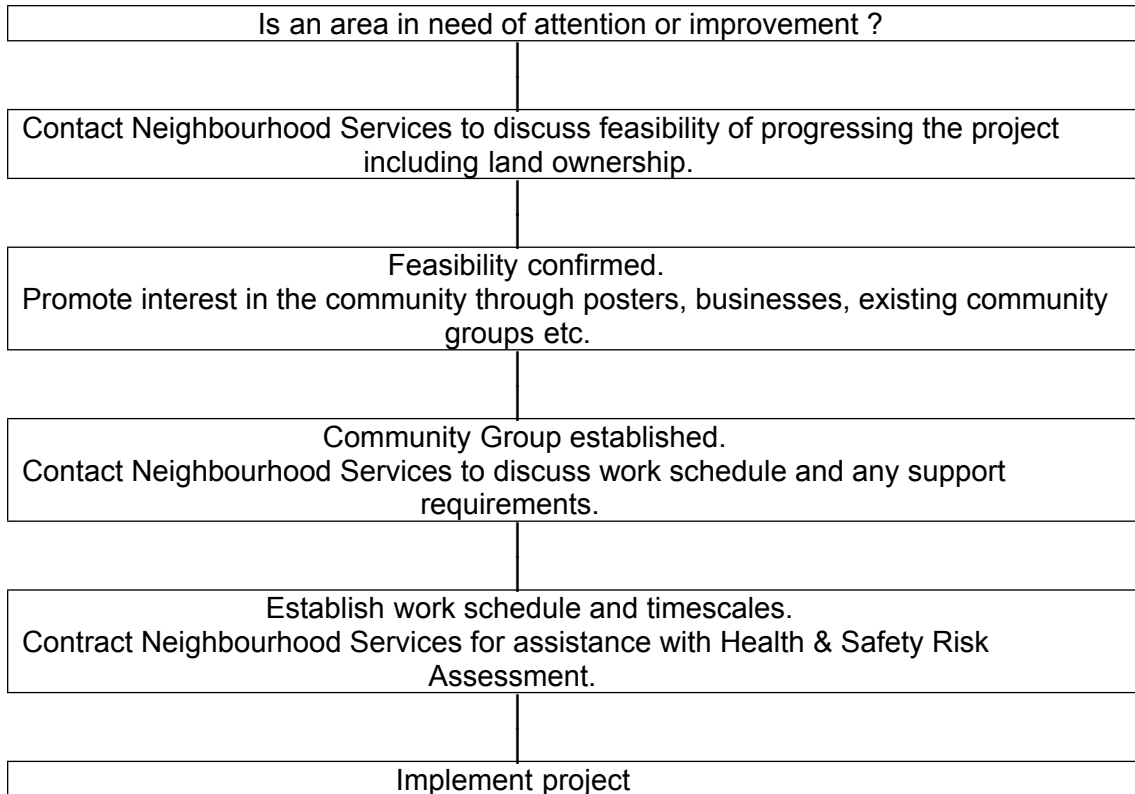
The hard work of the residents has not only resulted in an improvement to the appearance of their neighbourhood, but it has helped build community spirit and to educate adults and children about the benefits of a clean environment and local wildlife.

Whilst friends groups have been in existence on our major parks for some time, the Acorn Close Community Volunteers represent a new approach to helping the council maintain smaller areas of local open space by giving some ownership back to the community who live there.

Appendix 2 – How to set up a Community Action Group

The following flow chart identifies the key stages of setting up a community action group. Support will be available at all stages of the process should any member or group of members want to set up a group in their own ward.

Setting up a Community Action Group



Note: Children or vulnerable adults must be supervised by a family member at all times.

Appendix 3 – Existing Friends and Community Groups

Friends and Community Groups

Members may wish to become involved with existing friends and community groups and help to champion the role of these groups within the community.

South Ribble has seven friends / community groups and three junior groups who work with the council's neighbourhood services to help look after parks and open space areas. The groups are:

- Friends of Hurst Grange Park, Penwortham.
- Friends of Worden Park, Leyland.
- Longton Brickcroft Nature Reserve Volunteers.
- Friends of Shruggs Wood, Leyland.
- Friends of Walton Park, Walton Le Dale.
- Friends of Withy Grove Park, Bamber Bridge.
- Acorn Close Community Volunteers.
- Bamber Bridge Junior Rangers.
- Penwortham Junior Rangers.
- Longton Brickcroft Watch Group.

Some of the groups are constituted which gives them greater autonomy and a flexible financial footing which is helpful if applying or bidding for sources of funding.

Contacts for these groups are available from neighbourhood services.

Appendix 4 – Schools / Education Programme

Schools and Education Programme

There are forty one primary schools and ten high schools within South Ribble with most having some involvement in the local environment and some having environmental co-ordinators.

Neighbourhood Services visit every school in the borough annually to provide education on environmental issues such as litter, recycling and sustainability.

Support is provided to schools which want to carry out environmental projects and community clean ups. Competitions are some times held that encourage children to use and not abuse the natural and built environment. These take the form of quizzes, treasure hunts and pledge/certificate schemes.

Eco Schools

The Government is encouraging schools to be sustainable. Eco Schools is an international award programme that guides schools on their sustainable journey. For example **The Big Wildlife Garden** is a programme supported by Eco Schools and Natural England to progress bio diversity in schools and help increase the range of bio diversity in our gardens. The following website gives further information on this initiative. www.bwg.naturalengland.org.uk

Member Involvement

Member support to the education programme can add value and weight to the various initiatives especially those which involve projects within the community.

The children often involve their parents and can carry a powerful message to a wide range of age groups about how to respect the environment.

Should members want to become involved with their local schools through the educational programme, such as accompanying the neighbourhood officer on the annual visit or championing local projects, please contact neighbourhood services.

A list of schools and contact details is also available from neighbourhood services.

Appendix 5 – Press and Public Relations

Press and Public Relations

Good news stories involving the community are welcomed by the press and media and are a powerful tool to promote messages to the public.

The council's PR team provide support and advice on how to promote an event or good news story including press releases and photographs and engaging with the press and media. The council has in place PR protocols which are adhered to for all PR activities.

PR Forward Plan

The following forward plan provides themes around which promotional stories can be developed and either included in Forward or promoted to the press and media through a press release. The plan is to be maintained as a twelve month rolling plan and added to as opportunities occur. However, good news stories should be highlighted as they occur and the PR team will advise on the approach to be taken.

As PR opportunities are identified around clean environment initiatives, such as clean up events, it will be important to highlight the cost and resource implications. This will help educate the public to understand the cost of clearing litter and that if certain elements of the public behaved more responsibly, this money could be better spent on other priorities.

March 2011 Spring Clean and Spring Watch

Looking forward to the arrival of spring in the borough with the promotion of new events such as spring cleans and spring watch to see if the bird boxes put up by volunteer groups are being used by our feathered friends.

Note: An article is to be included in the March Forward covering the introduction of a third Hit Squad and the re-branding of the hit squads following the restructuring of neighbourhood services and the creation of three neighbourhood areas.

June 2011 Spic and Span for Summer

A focus on our parks and open spaces to encourage users to respect the facilities and help keep them clean and litter free.

An update on our volunteer and friends groups to see what activities they have been involved in.

September 2011 Clean Green and Safe

As autumn approaches we look at how our neighbourhood services keep our streets, parks and open spaces clean and safe for the public to use.

December 2011 Review of the Year

As the end of the year approaches we look at our efforts to maintain a clean environment and celebrate the activities of our friends and volunteer groups.

Appendix 6 – Support from Neighbourhood Services

Neighbourhood Services

Neighbourhood Services has three area based teams covering street cleaning, waste and recycling, parks, grounds maintenance and street works activities (bus shelters, street furniture, street nameplates etc.). The three work areas and teams are each linked to two area committee areas. These are:

Western Parishes and Penwortham

Leyland East and West

Central and Eastern

Support to Members

The neighbourhood teams can provide support to members and offer advice around working with the community, setting up an action group and championing clean up initiatives and other projects.

Risk assessments need to be carried out for each activity which the neighbourhood teams can help with as well as the more practical activities such as collecting waste after an event.

Equipment

Neighbourhood Services can provide equipment packs to assist with community clean up activities including:

- Litter pickers
- Bin bags
- Gloves
- Eye goggles if required

Support can also be provided by the neighbourhood operational teams using equipment such as mechanical sweepers, strimmers, blowers and other professional equipment.

Information Packs / Contact Lists

Information packs (produced by the council's community engagement team) and contact lists for schools, existing volunteer groups, parish and town councils, other council services and other helpful organizations are available to members from neighbourhood services.

Appendix 7 – Enforcement / Restorative Justice / Community Pay Back

Enforcement

The council's neighbourhood services carry out enforcement activities to support the maintenance of the clean environment. There are over 20 officers, including those from other council services, who are all trained to issue fixed penalty notices. Regular enforcement patrols ensure visibility across the borough and the targeting of hot spots and known problem areas.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is an alternative way to deal with offenders of environmental crime instead of issuing a fixed penalty notice. The offender, under supervision, is required to spend time cleaning up an area in relation to the offence committed such as littering or graffiti. This has had success with young people in various parts of the borough.

Community Payback Schemes

Community Payback Schemes are projects managed by the probation service that require offenders to give something back to the community through carrying out unpaid work. Examples of projects include clean ups of local eyesores and improvements to open space areas.

Contact neighbourhood services for further information on the above, any advice on enforcement matters or to alert the neighbourhood teams to problem areas.

Appendix 8 – Support from other Groups and Organizations

Parish and Town Councils

There are eight parish and town councils in the borough with many operating a lengthsman scheme. A parish lengthsman carries out cleansing and minor maintenance work for the upkeep of the parish. Through their lengthsman the parish/town councils have a good working knowledge of their area and the needs of the community.

Contact details for the parish and town council clerks are available from neighbourhood services.

Lancashire County Council

Lancashire County Council is the highway authority and also through its countryside service manages some areas of open space within the borough including Preston Junction Nature Reserve. LCC has countryside officers and public rights of way officers who cover the borough. These officers can give advice on environmental issues and the availability of potential grant awards to small community groups.

Contact details are available from neighbourhood services.

Small Grant Awards for Community Groups

Small grants can be available to community groups for tools, clean ups and other environmental schemes.

The following websites give more information:

www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/communityprojects

www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/schoolgrounds

South Ribble Scouting Association

South Ribble district has twenty four scout groups and eight older explorer groups that get involved in local community actions.

Contact details are available from neighbourhood services.

Appendix 9 – Helpful Websites

Keep Britain Tidy Group.

The Keep Britain Tidy Group is an environmental charity which operates the national anti-litter campaign. The group also operates the Blue Flag Award for beaches and Green Flag Award for parks, both being quality based awards that demonstrate practical action. <http://www.keepbritainty.org>

Love Clean Streets

This is a website that enables the public to photograph problems like fly tipping, litter and graffiti. They can then send them to an administrator who will put the site on the system and then contact the relevant local authority. You will need to be registered on this site to input information. www.lovecleanstreets.org

The Big Tidy Up

This website gives practical advice and information on community clean up campaigns. It will also help with school lesson planning, business awards and the benefits to businesses, sponsorship, publicity and working with young people's groups and competitions. www.thebigtidyup.org

Knowledge Banks

This is a one stop shop website for information on specific issues relating to environmental quality and is found on the Keep Britain Tidy site.

<http://www.keepbritainty.org/Expertise/Research/KnowledgeBanks/Default.aspx>

North West Together We Can

This is a website which promotes empowerment and active citizenship across the North West region. www.nwtwc.org.uk

Information on Improving Public Space

CABE space (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) produce a very good booklet 'It's Our Space' that is aimed at community groups working to improve the public realm. www.cabe.org.uk

Groundwork UK

Groundwork UK is a federation of trusts working with partners to improve the quality of the local environment. www.groundwork.org.uk