



<b>Committee</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date</b>	21/03/2024
<b>Subject</b>	Review of Partnership Working to Tackle Environmental Issues
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Rachel Smith-Lyte, Environment Portfolio Holder
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Key Decision?	No
Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN

### Purpose/Summary

The purpose of this report is to:

Provide information to assist the Committee to understand and review how the Council and its partners work together to tackle environmental issues such as fly tipping or cleansing operatives ignoring rubbish etc to ensure that anything raised by Members or residents will be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Provide information to assist the Committee to ensure whether or not effective partnership working exists to tackle environmental issues across the district irrespective of which agency has responsibility and identify potential areas of weakness for improvement.

### Recommendation(s)

That Scrutiny:

1. Having considered the report, makes any recommendation as required.

### Strategic plan

How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

<b>Environmental Impact</b>	Preserve and maintain the district's beauty and heritage. Restoring ecosystems and biodiversity
<b>Sustainable Housing</b>	Promote community pride in homes and neighbourhoods.
<b>Tackling Inequalities</b>	Work with partners to better understand need. Use local data to design and deliver services.
<b>Thriving Economy</b>	
<b>Our Foundations / governance of the organisation</b>	A solution focused approach.

## Justification for recommendations

### 1. Background

#### Relevant Legislation/National policies

- 1.1. For the purpose of this report, the term 'environmental' has been taken in the context of public realm, such as litter, weeds, fly tips, pollution (water, smoke, noise and dust).
- 1.2. This is a complex area as there are several pieces of Government legislation and policy in place to support the tackling of environmental issues, which are delivered by a range of agencies. The most relevant legislations are listed below:
  - 1.2.1. Waste Management: Environmental Protection Act 1990, Controlled Waste Regulations 2012, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive, Hazardous Waste Directive (HWD)
  - 1.2.2. Fly tipping: Environmental Protection Act 1990
  - 1.2.3. Litter: Environmental Protection Act 1990
  - 1.2.4. Water Pollution: Numerous water related legislation
  - 1.2.5. Bathing water pollution: Bathing Water Regulations
  - 1.2.6. Waste on Land: Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
  - 1.2.7. Smoke: Environmental Protection Act 1990, Clean Air Act
  - 1.2.8. Dust: Environmental Protection Act 1990
  - 1.2.9. Noise: Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
  - 1.2.10. Local Air Quality: Environment Act 1995
  - 1.2.11. Antisocial Behaviour: Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

#### Collaborations and partnerships with other organisations

- 1.3. Green issues:
  - 1.3.1. There are a range of groups working across the district and County addressing the climate change and nature emergencies. This was reported at the last scrutiny committee.
- 1.4. Enabling community action:
  - 1.4.1. The Greenprint Forum is a non-statutory voluntary network of individuals, community groups and organisations taking or aspiring towards positive environmental action. It is facilitated by East Suffolk Council as part of the council's agendas on enabling community and environmental action. Its overall focus and activities are steered by a Steering Group comprised of external community leaders and key personnel from East Suffolk Council including the Portfolio Holder. It is chaired by a volunteer representative of the community sector. The purpose of the Greenprint Forum is to connect

and support community, organisational and youth champions and elected representatives to enable them to help the people of east Suffolk work together to improve our quality of life and living standards, whilst reducing our environmental impact. It does this by sharing knowledge and inspiration, facilitating discussions, organising events and linking research to need and where need is identified helping to (for example) draw in resources or arrange training to enable action.

1.4.2. The important work of the Greenprint Forum also helps support the delivery of our environment core programme, plus the wider Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan in addition to the independent work of its member groups and organisations. The Council proactively showcases examples of actions and initiatives delivered by independent members of the Greenprint Forum on an ongoing basis through newsletters, arranging site visits and Forum events and activities on behalf of the network to ensure that knowledge share opportunities are presented to encourage inspiration and replication of good practice through networking between its members. This work is complemented by the county-wide Community Network under the auspices of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership of which ESC is a key member.

1.4.3. In addition, the work of the East Suffolk's Amazing group – following a motion made to Council in 2023 concerning taking action to improve the standard of cleanliness in the public realm – has identified an opportunity to provide better coordination of and communication with volunteering groups as part of a plan to improve environmental and street scene standards.

## 1.5. Biodiversity

1.5.1. East Suffolk has been part of a joint application to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF), led by Suffolk County Council, along with other district and boroughs, through the Forestry Commission. This has seen the planting of 60 standard trees and 600 whips in two locations within East Suffolk since 2023. This work is an integral part of the development of the Council's Tree Policy.

1.5.2. East Suffolk Council is also part of developing and delivering the SCC-led Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which will involve multiple public, private and third sector organisations working in partnership to create the strategy by the end of 2025 and then deliver its actions. Biodiversity Net Gain delivery is also linked to the strategy.

## 1.6. What resources are available?

1.6.1. The Strategic Waste Contracts Team have 5.5 FTE. This comprises of:

- 1 x Partnerships Manager
- 2 x Contracts Managers – Waste Public Realm

- 2 x Street Scene Monitoring Officers
- 1 x PT Customer Experience Officer

1.6.2. The Team currently has no direct operational budget, but does have an important role in monitoring and directing the budget of East Suffolk Services Ltd.

1.6.3. Environmental Protection have a team within Environmental Health, comprising of:

- 1 Senior Environmental Protection Officer
- 3 x Environmental Enforcement Officers
- 1 x Environmental Health Technical Support Officer

1.6.4. The Climate & Environmental Sustainability Team have 3 FTE equivalent and provide strategic support and advice towards the development of relevant policies and projects across the various service areas of the council, internal monitoring of environmental performance and facilitation, on behalf of the council, to the Greenprint Forum.

- 1 x Lead Officer – Climate Change & Environment
- 1 x Environmental Sustainability Officer
- 1 x Apprentice for Climate & Environment (0.5 FTE)
- 1 x Graduate Project Officer (0.5 FTE)

## 1.7. What are other LA's are doing?

1.7.1. Other local authorities in Suffolk have both Environmental Health teams and departments that deal with strategic waste issues. These come together in a range of partnerships, such as under the umbrella of the Suffolk Waste Partnership, or fly tipping forum. Ideas and solutions are shared within these partnership meetings.

1.7.2. Other authorities have also harnessed volunteers to help support litter picking and street cleansing that is outside of the scope of their own direct service delivery. This includes Suffolk County Council – who have a programme to support Parish Councils to carry out litter picks, and the cleansing and maintenance of local signage. ESC has met with SCC to discuss this programme and to see whether there are lessons to be learned to support our own local activity. This has been done by the East Suffolk's Amazing working group.

## 2. Answers to Scrutiny Committee questions.

2.1. **Committee question 1: What processes and reporting mechanisms are in place between the Council and its partners such as neighbouring Authorities, East Suffolk Services Ltd (ESSL), the Environment Agency (EA), Highways England, parishes etc to tackle any environmental issues?**

- 2.1.1. Council officers and councillors attend and have representation on a number of cross-council meetings. Some examples are set out below:
  - 2.1.1.1. Suffolk fly-tipping Action Group (STAG) – this is chaired by Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council and includes representatives from the Environment Agency and Environmental Protection teams. It seeks to share information on fly tipping,
  - 2.1.1.2. County Biodiversity Meeting – this is a cross county meeting chaired by Highways representatives from Suffolk County Council to discuss issues such as grass cutting, weed management, tree works etc. It meets on an infrequent basis.
  - 2.1.1.3. The Suffolk Waste Partnership is a strategic partnership of Suffolk’s five District and Borough Councils and the County Council, working together to continuously improve waste management services throughout the county. It houses the [Suffolk Recycling website](#) and co-ordinates work packages and procurement of key waste management services.
- 2.1.2. The Strategic Waste Team has regular contact with town and parish councils as part of its work; for example, in setting up the team, a welcome email was sent and in consulting on the Litter and Fido bin policy all parish councils were written to. Parish Councils have been provided information on the best routes to report issues to the Council for waste, fly tips, grounds work etc.
- 2.1.3. The Council has set up a cross-party task and finish group to tackle key issues within the district around the public realm and public perception. This has identified key areas of work and will be the subject of a separate briefing.
- 2.1.4. The Council meets with Managers from ESSL on a regular basis to discuss contractual and operational issues. The Council provides direction for the work of ESSL through service specifications, which are under constant review. The Strategic Waste Team has daily contact with ESSL staff at all levels to pick up and deal with live issues.
- 2.1.5. East Suffolk Council holds a service level agreement (SLA) with Suffolk County Council for works on highways verges around grounds cutting, tree works and hedge cutting. This is renewed on a three yearly basis and has agreed locations in which ESSL operate. Both ESSL and the Council hold annual review meetings with County on the SLA and any subsequent issues arising from it.
- 2.1.6. The Environment Agency contacts East Suffolk Council where there is an instance of potential pollution of Bathing Waters during the bathing water season, April 15 to 30 September. Where there is an instance of potential pollution in such sites, the Council has a role through ESSL in putting up

advisory signs to warn the public. ESSL also open and close EA floodgates in resort areas.

- 2.1.7. The Council's Customer Services Team are trained and have procedures and processes in place to pass on service requests or enquiries via calls to the appropriate teams both internally and to partner agencies. Customer Services houses the main database on customer contacts and will track enquiries and complaints via their online processes.
- 2.1.8. The Council's website is a first port of call for information to residents and through this, the 'Contact Us' section allows the public to raise issues and complaints.
- 2.1.9. The Council is part of the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit, hosted by Suffolk County Council. This deals with major incidents, co-ordinating local authority responses. Through ESSL, the Council provides on-the-ground operatives to support issues, such as erecting the flood barrier in Lowestoft, pumping out flood water and dealing with stranded marine animals etc.
- 2.1.10. The Council has a data-sharing policy with ESSL, which means that customer data can be passed through for specific reasons. However, should enquiries come via other means, such as other local authorities, data protection rules govern how contact information can be shared. This may mean customers are not updated on their request, if this is passed along.

**2.2. Committee question 2: Are there any areas where there have been challenges with working in partnership to tackle particular environmental issues?**

- 2.2.1. Incorrect report of fly tips - there has been two recent cases where a fly tip has been reported but does not meet the criteria of such. Both instances could pose a danger to life or property but does not fit into a particular team to deal with, as related to private land. In both cases, there was not clear direction on which team/ agency should lead and what the priorities were.
- 2.2.2. Glyphosate usage - changes to the County policy on spraying meant that there was an unprecedented impact on the District's ability to deliver on street cleansing in 2023. Complaints rose and part of the outcome of this was the formation of the East Suffolk's Amazing cross-party group to tackle public perception. While the County has now changed its policy for 2024, it highlighted how one organisation's policy has a knock-on effect on another's service delivery.
- 2.2.3. Fly tip clearance issues – there have been instances where fly tips were not cleared by ESSL for some time. From a thorough review of the process from start to finish there are simplified reporting mechanisms, a move to digital rather than paper trails, more investigation of land ownership from the start and much clearer guidance on removal procedures.

2.2.4. Large Commercial site – Noise and dust complaints from local residents from a site that has multiagency regulation. This is being moved forward through the creation of multiagency group that includes local residents and Councillors.

2.2.5. Fly tip prosecutions - better liaison with the Police is a priority as fly tipping is not an issue that they will normally have an involvement with, but the Council sometimes need their assistance. However, Environmental Health do work closely with the police on their Protective Services Command Day of Action where various agencies join forces for the day to disrupt criminal activities. This is achieved by agencies meeting at a specific point within a district and look for those who may be in breach of the various bits of law that can then be enforced. Environmental Enforcement Officers look for unregistered scrap metal dealers and vehicles illegally carrying waste without waste carrier licenses or without waste transfer notes.

**2.3. Committee question 3: How are Members and residents made aware of what they can report and which agency has responsibility for a particular environmental issue?**

2.3.1. The Council's website is the first port of call for reporting issues. This has a plethora of information on services and links to external agencies, as appropriate. The website is reviewed on a regular basis and coupled with the call centre, provides a central source of information and signposting for customers. The website has reporting forms for many environmental Issues. It is important that these forms are used to ensure that the issues reported are directed through to the correct teams.

2.3.2. Members were written to with an introductory email when the Strategic Waste Team formed in 2023. They were provided with a range of information and links on key aspects of litter, waste, fly tips and grounds reporting mechanisms. The Team are planning to send regular updated via this route.

2.3.3. Environmental Protection and Strategic Waste are working on the process of reporting and clearing fly tips and gave a briefing session to Members in December to set out the issues, what the Council can and cannot do and where to report.

2.3.4. The Comms team have had campaigns where they have highlighted fly tipping issues and asked through social media for any information on who may have carried out the tips. They have included contact information and reporting routes and have included this information in articles in press releases and residents' magazines.

2.3.5. The Council provides a regular magazine twice a year to residents which is sent to each household. Back issues are available here: [East Suffolk](#)



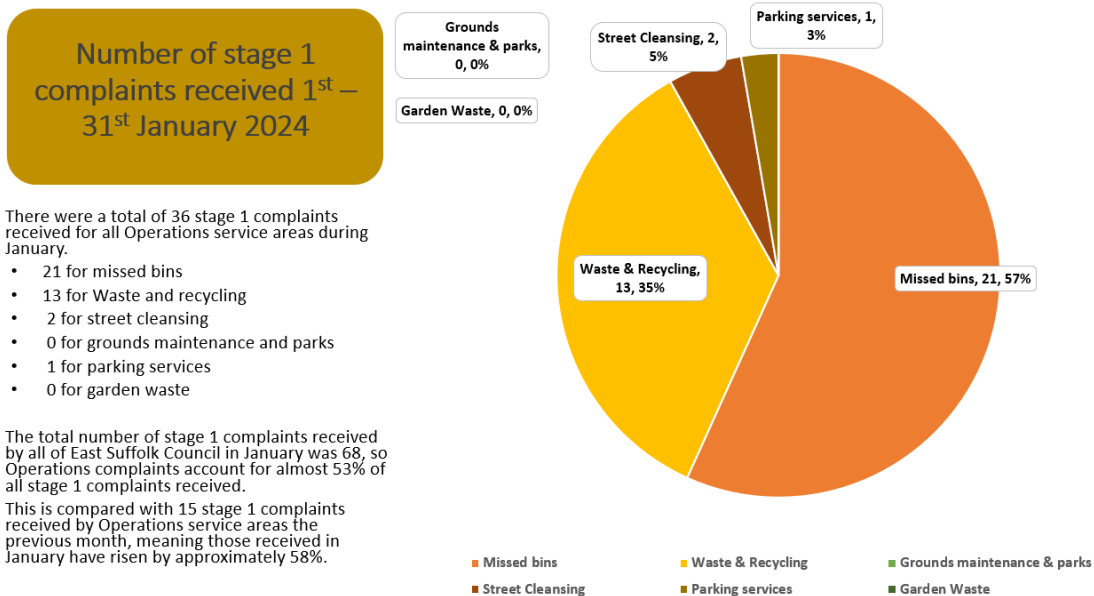
[Magazine » East Suffolk Council](#). This provides targeted information, but also 'contact us' details.

**2.4. Committee question 4: How should Members and residents report issues and how can this be made as easy as possible?**

- 2.4.1. The Council's website and call centre is the first port of call for all reporting.
- 2.4.2. Using online methods, all reporting tools are easily found using any search engine, which will take residents directly to the reporting pages of our website. Every matter that can be reported online can also be reported over the telephone or in person at our customer contact centres. All reporting channels feed into the same process.
- 2.4.3. Members can encourage residents to use these tools, use the same tools themselves or use reporting tools available internally on Sharepoint (Dash forms).

**2.5. Committee Question 5: How is it ensured that cases are tracked (particularly if they are the responsibility of a partner organisation) to ensure they are being dealt with in a timely and efficient manner and that whoever reported the issue is kept informed of progress?**

- 2.5.1. The Council's Customer Services department and website is the first port of call for public complaints and comments and those relating to street scene, environmental and grounds maintenance are triaged to the correct department. The responses are collated and regular reports given by the Customer Experience Team:



- 2.5.2. For issues such as fly-tipping, a cross-organisational spreadsheet has now been developed to keep track of tips and clearances, so all the teams involved have immediate information. The Council can use this tool for tracking issues and the status of clearance. This is used for Key Performance Indicator reporting both for ESSL's service delivery and also by Environmental Health for national reporting statistics.
- 2.5.3. The Council have to report on a monthly basis to Waste Data Flow (held nationally) on waste clearance from fly tips and waste (all types). This allows the Government to collect statistics and share this data via regular updates to map trends.
- 2.5.4. Many teams, such as Environmental Health, use Uniform to track cases, however this is not across the whole Council. The Strategic Waste Team does not use Uniform, so the only way cases are tracked is through reports via the Customer Service Dash Case Loads.
- 2.5.5. Environmental Health are actively working with ICT to map the location of fly tips on an internal system for councillors to view these (updated on a monthly basis).
- 2.5.6. ESC is working with ESSL on the implementation of a software system that will provide, it is hoped, higher levels of transparency on the current operation – for example, providing real time updates on when bins are collected and litter picking carried out – and offers the potential for people to 'self serve' and access up to date information. This programme is being managed by the Digital team.

**2.6. Committee Question 6: How does the Council and partner agencies encourage residents and town/parish councils to have civic pride and work with them to tackle environmental issues in their communities eg litter picks etc?**

- 2.6.1. The Council's approach to Community Litter Picks is under development. Groups can book online through the Council's website to register a pick and request equipment. The Strategic Waste team have recently purchased more litter pickers for both north and south. The next stage is the development of risk assessments and registration of community litter pick volunteers through a platform, to ensure that groups are covered by the relevant insurance.
- 2.6.2. As an outcome of the Pilot work for Lowestoft and Felixstowe in terms of Street Cleansing, the Council is setting up a quarterly drop-in session with Felixstowe Town Councillors to discuss key issues in the town in terms of litter and grounds maintenance. Through the work of the Street Scene Officers, there is a great deal of support given to town and parish councils and other organisations, such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to listen to and aid with key issues they want to address.

- 2.6.3. Led by the Communities Team, there is a cross-departmental and organisational series of Impact Days planned across the district. One took place in Felixstowe in 2023 and will be repeated in Lowestoft, Beccles and Leiston in 2024. These include representatives from the Police, Suffolk Fire and Rescue, ESSL, ESC (licencing, environmental protection, strategic waste, communities). The premise is to be visible within a location and provide information and advice to members of the public on key areas, such as safeguarding, waste management, grounds clearance, licensing etc. A separate Civic Pride Day was organised in Beccles in 2023 by the leader of the Council.
- 2.6.4. As part of its work contributing towards the Greenprint Forum’s goal of a “Pollution Free Environment” and ongoing campaign of Plastic Action since 2018, the Council has, for many years, arranged Beachwatch activities on behalf of the Greenprint Forum typically with two activities per year to coincide with Great British Beach Clean, contributing towards data capture about marine pollution on the national scale by the Marine Conservation Society, whilst simultaneously cleaning the beaches. In recent years, the Greenprint Forum has partnered with a number of local community groups on these Beachwatch activities, including Litter Free Felixstowe, Blyth Litter Angels, and The Kirkley Centre.
- 2.6.5. In addition, a working group has been established to promote community pride and improve environmental standards. The East Suffolk’s Amazing programme is organised around four main themes:
- Better coordination with Suffolk County Council to ensure that the areas in their area of responsibility are carried out
  - Working with East Suffolk Services to ensure that we get the most out of the existing contract
  - Supporting volunteering – in particular, groups who are engaged in community litter picking – through the provision of equipment and guidance
  - A district wide community pride campaign under the banner ‘East Suffolk’s Amazing – Let’s Keep it That Way’

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1. There are no direct financial implications of the issues set out in this paper. The current focus is on making sure that ESC can achieve the best outcome for the current level of spend on street cleansing and grounds maintenance. A change of expectation around the level of cleansing, however, could lead to an increase in the staffing levels or equipment needed to deliver more frequent cleansing. This paper does not cover resource requirements, as these have not been calculated, but we are working with ESSL to cost potential service changes in this area of the contract.

### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1. The Council has legal obligations for the collection of litter from any area of public land within the district and should work to take preventative measures, investigate incidents and the causes of littering, maintain collection facilities and clean up or remove waste.
- 4.2. All services around the collection of litter should be carried out to the specification defined in the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse issued April 2006 modified in September 2019 issued under section 89(7) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and any subsequent modifications and any other relevant legislation, which includes, but is not limited to:
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
  - Controlled Waste Regulations 2012
  - Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive
  - Hazardous Waste Directive (HWD)
- 4.3. The Council, through ESSL, will assume full compliance with the provisions of all statutes, regulations, orders, statutory instruments, the Code, ACOPS, bylaws in force or coming into force relevant to:
- the provisions of service,
  - the vehicles, plant and machinery employed in connection with the provision of service,
  - the keeping of records or data in connection with the services,
  - the employment of staff in connection with the services

## **5. Risk Implications**

- 5.1. There are no risk implications as a result of this report.

## **6. Options**

- 6.1. Not applicable.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1. That Scrutiny consider the report.

## **8. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 8.1. This report has been provided to allow Scrutiny Committee to review the partnership working to tackle environment issues and make any recommendations as felt necessary.

### **Areas of consideration comments**

#### **Section 151 Officer comments:**

There is no financial impact as a direct result of this report, subject to any follow on recommendations made by the Committee.

**Monitoring Officer comments:**

Not applicable.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/EQIA:**

Not applicable.

**Safeguarding:**

Not applicable.

**Crime and Disorder:**

In relation to fly tips and anti-social behaviour.

**Corporate Services implications:**

Not applicable at this stage.

**Residents and Businesses consultation/consideration:**

Not applicable at this stage.