

Dog Fouling

Introduction

Over the Christmas period there was considerable concern raised direct to the Town Council and on social media sites not related to the Town Council about the levels of dog fouling in the town. It should be noted that all the complaints received related to pavements which fall under the responsibility of Shropshire Council not the Town Council. The matter was also raised at the December Town Council meeting and the Clerk was asked to investigate the feasibility to installing lamppost mounted dog bag dispensers. This report outlines the work currently being undertaken and other options for tackling this problem that councillors may wish to consider.

Current Situation

In partnership with St Peters School and Team Wem, four banners were designed to encourage dog owners to clean up after their dog. One banner is permanently located on the Recreation Ground another is on Drawwell Walk. The other two banners move around the Town. In the past year they have been placed in the following places.

Mill Street

Roden Grove

Pathway behind the co-op

Noble Street

Trentham Road play area

The Wheatfield Play area

Wem Business Park

As soon as the Town Council is made aware of areas where dog fouling is a problem of concern we endeavour to relocate a banner to that area as long as there is a fence we are able to attach it to.

Supply of free dog bags on lamp posts

At the December meeting of The Clerk was asked to investigate this suggestion. In the past Shropshire Council has supplied free dog waste bags in packs of about 20 bags that the public could call in and collect from reception, but this ceased several years ago due to budget cuts. The option of locating dispensers on lamp posts was discussed with Environmental Maintenance at Shropshire Council as it could involve the use of a number of their lampposts which are located in the main problem areas. The following response was received

Shropshire Council has never trialled putting bag dispensers on street furniture but it has been discussed in the past. Due to the following factors, we would not be comfortable with dispensers attached to Shropshire Council street furniture:

- It could encourage dog walkers not to carry bags and then what would happen if the dog fouls before they get to an area with bags?
- It will incur additional expense in time and materials to supply the bags and keep the dispensers stocked.
- If people become reliant on the dispensers, they will have no method to clean up after their dog if the dispensers are empty. They may then try and blame the TC (although legally they would still be responsible).
- The dispensers could be targeted for vandalism or create a litter problem if the bags are removed and left as litter, maliciously.
- This proposal encourages the use of single-use plastics (some bags are more environmentally friendly than others, although these are generally more expensive).
- Most dog owners are responsible and carry bags with them anyway. Irresponsible dog owners will still probably not pick up after their dog, unless someone is watching.

Cost - Glasdon produce a model for £87.20 however there are examples of dispensers being made from plastic drinks bottles.

Other options

There have been a number of other suggestions made by the public relating to dog fouling and enforcement

Enforcement and Foot patrols – The Town Council is only able to patrol its own land so this option would not do anything to tackle the problem of dog fouling on pavements. Whilst the Town Clerk has been trained in the issuing of an environmental crime report the Groundsman has not and neither members of staff have the power to give out fixed penalty notices. This is not something that I would recommend the Town Council pursuing as it would involve putting Town Council staff in potentially confrontational situations something, they would need appropriate training and equipment for. In addition to this most of these incidents occur in the evening under cover of darkness when there are no staff working and the Town Council does not have enough staff to carry out patrols on its land.

DNA testing – It is my understanding that this service is only being offered out by one company in the UK. For DNA testing to work it is reliant on dog owners having their dogs recorded on the database at a cost of approx. £30 per dog and it costs in the region of £80 to have a DNA sample taken. It is difficult to collect the DNA as it degrades on contact with the air. In addition to this staff time would be needed to collect samples and this raises several health and safety concerns. Market Drayton Town Council investigated this procedure but did not pursue it on cost grounds.

Highlight the problem – run a Pink Poo Campaign

In 2016 The Town Council purchased tins of bright pink biodegradable spray which were used to highlight dog fouling on the recreation ground so users could avoid it. This method does work to a limited extent in that it highlights where the problems areas are and can shame dog walkers into cleaning up after their dogs. However the bright colour could also be attractive to young children who could inadvertently pick it up therefore this was not progressed on the recreation ground.

A simple way to involve the public in dealing with this problem and raise awareness of the issue could be to run a Pink Poo Campaign similar to the one run in Cheshire (Appendix A). A campaign of this nature would be reliant on volunteers to come forward to act as pavement marshalls (ideally 1 to cover different areas of the town) and for the Town Council to supply each volunteer with a set of gloves, a can of biodegradable spray to enable them to highlight the problem areas in their allocated area.

This would also require the volunteers to be given a clear set of guidelines along with a risk assessment and would also be dependent on Shropshire Council giving permission to allow the pavements to be sprayed. If a volunteer does not come forward for a particular area then that area would not be covered.

This would be a relatively short term, low cost option that would involve the community in self-policing this problem.