

**COMMITTEE:** EXECUTIVE      **REF NO:** E/24/57  
**DATE:** 8 APRIL 2025  
**SUBJECT:** SCRUTINY TASK & FINISH GROUP  
- TOWN CENTRE CLEANLINESS  
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** COUNCILLOR PHILIP SMART  
**SENIOR OFFICER:** HANNAH LEYS

***Short description of report content and the decision requested:***

This report sets out the recommendations made by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee through its Town Centre Cleanliness Task and Finish Group.

***Ward(s) affected:***

All

***List of Appendices included in this report:***

None

*This report has been prepared by Hannah Leys, Assistant Director of Operations.*

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***This report was prepared after consultation with:***

***Internal consultees:***

***Members of the Task and Finish Group***

*Councillors Frost (Chair), G Forster, T Grant, R Pope, T Lockington, L Reynolds and R Downes.*

*Members of Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

*Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport*

*Head of Service and Operations Managers for Waste*

*Corporate Management Team*

*Communications Team*

***External consultees:***

None

The following policies form a context to this report:

*(all relevant policies must also be referred to in the body of the report)*

*Corporate Strategy – Proud of Ipswich: Championing our Community and Revitalising our Town*

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW**

*(papers relied on to write the report but which are not published and do not contain exempt information)*

**1. None**

## **OTHER HELPFUL PAPERS**

*(papers which the report author considers might be helpful – this might include published material)*

- 1. OS/23/05 – Work Programme – Proposal Form on Town Centre Cleanliness - Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 31 August 2023**
- 2. OS/24/14 - Report of Town Centre Cleanliness of Task and Finish Group - Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 21 November 2024**

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## **1. Executive Summary**

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- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that its land, or land for which it is responsible, is, so far as is practicable, kept clean of litter and refuse.
- 1.2 The Council discharges that duty through its award-winning in-house Street Cleansing team consisting of 34 people, utilising 16 specialist vehicles, operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year across the entire Borough, with the outcomes of that activity resulting in a 99% achievement on required levels of street cleanliness.
- 1.3 Following the establishment of a Town Centre Cleanliness Task and Finish Group by the Council's Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Task and Finish Group have made a number of recommendations on Town Centre Cleanliness for the consideration of Executive.
- 1.4 Executive is asked to note both the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group as set out in this report and the subsequent actions implemented.

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## **2. Background**

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- 2.1 Ipswich Borough Council has a duty under EPA 1990 S89(1) to ensure that its land, or land for which it is responsible is, so far as is practicable, kept clean of litter and refuse.
- 2.2 The Council's Street Cleansing team consists of 34 people, utilising 16 specialist vehicles, operating 365 days a year across the entire Borough, with a 24 hr call out system.
- 2.3 Annually the team empty 44,000 litter bins, collect 728 tonnes of litter, and undertake 8,000 miles of sweeping on pavements and highway.
- 2.4 The team are mobilised on average over 200 times each year out of normal working hours, to respond to requests for collection of deceased animals, drug related litter, glass litter and cleansing of body fluids from streets.
- 2.5 Across the year ending March 2025, the inspections undertaken for street cleanliness showed that street cleanliness was at satisfactory levels in 99% of those inspections.
- 2.6 In addition to the scheduled activities the street cleansing team will spring into action following major events in the town to collect litter and return the public realm to its usual high standard of cleanliness. Recent examples of this include Ipswich Music Day, Christmas Lights switch on, the town centre celebrations following the final ITFC match in the 2024

season and the subsequent open top bus tour and celebrations in Christchurch Park.

- 2.7 The Street Cleansing team have been nominated as finalists for the APSE Best Service Team: Waste, Recycling and Streetscene of the year award in both 2023 and 2024.
- 2.8 The Street Cleansing team was awarded the Outstanding Service Award 2025 by Keep Britain Tidy for its innovative Ipswich Town Football Club gateway project where 21 vibrantly wrapped, football and recycling themed bins were installed in readiness for Ipswich Town's return to the Premier League in August 2024 with the aim of reducing litter around Portman Road on match days.
- 2.9 The Council is one of only 8 local authorities across the country that have successfully applied to the Chewing Gum Task Force and been awarded funding three years in a row as a result of the high standard of work delivered.
- 2.10 The service has an Education Policy and Performance team who pro-actively visit schools and attend events to promote a cleaner Ipswich, through the town's Love your Street Litter campaign incorporating Digby the blue octopus litter mascot who encourages people to get involved and love their street by taking part in organising community litter picks. There were an estimated 15,000 in-person interactions through the year at all events attended, with a considerable additional impact achieved through online activity.
- 2.11 In the Town Centre there is a dedicated team of 7 cleansing staff working over a 15 hour period from 05:00 to 20:00 daily, to keep the town centre clear of litter, collecting drug related litter, removing chewing gum, removing graffiti and steam cleaning the pedestrianised areas.

#### Town Centre Cleanliness - Task and Finish Group

- 2.12 At its meeting on 31 August 2023 the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a proposal regarding Town Centre Cleanliness and resolved to establish a Task and Finish Group.
- 2.13 Councillors Cathy Frost (Chair), Gary Forster, Tracy Grant, Richard Pope, Tim Lockington, Lee Reynolds and Roxanne Downes were appointed to the Task and Finish Group, which met on 28 November 2023, 11 January 2024, 22 February 2024, 28 August 2024, 3 October 2024 and 16 October 2024.
- 2.14 At their first meeting, Councillor Frost was elected as Chair. Councillor Frost introduced the topic and explained that the proposal had been put forward to consider the perception of cleanliness in the Town Centre. One of the priorities of the Corporate Strategy 2023 is for a thriving town centre. Therefore, it was necessary to identify what residents meant by

cleanliness and what could be done to feed into the strategy for street cleansing.

- 2.15 The scope of the review was discussed, and the following elements were raised:
- It was necessary to identify what the resident's perception was on cleanliness.
  - To concentrate on street cleansing.
  - Communicating to residents who was responsible for what services.
  - Educating businesses when bin collections took place.
- 2.16 This Task and Finish Group reported back to the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 November 2024 and that committee approved the recommendations proposed by the Task and Finish Group, set out below.

### Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group

- 2.17 Below are the recommendations of the Group, some of the early discussions of the group have progressed during the cycle of meetings therefore some action has already been taken by officers and recommendations are to support outcomes. Where action has been taken this is noted below.
- 2.18 The recommendations are broken down into four key areas of Communications, Waste, Waste Enforcement, and Additional Actions.

### Communications

- 1) That a 'This is Your Town' Comms Plan is adopted with the aim of encouraging the public towards a change of perception and providing consistent messaging about the work IBC already does.

Campaign objectives:

- Increase public awareness of the negative impact of littering and the importance of maintaining a clean environment.
  - Encourage personal responsibility for disposing of waste.
  - Create community pride and promote community action.
  - Collaborate with community groups/volunteers/Ipswich (Central/SCC/Residents/businesses/schools)
- 2) That an annual activity plan of Communications is adopted to include:
- Regularly social media contact to keep the message current
  - Event activity – Ipswich Events, ITFC home games seasonal activity
  - Clear messaging which highlights the yearlong efforts to keep the town clean
  - Digital content to support initiatives
  - Quarterly reporting to measure successes

- Collaborative communications with SCC around weeds and detritus

*Action taken: A Town Centre Cleanliness communications campaign is being developed. This campaign's purpose is to develop a sense of ownership and pride among residents, and to encourage everyone to take responsibility for the cleanliness of their surroundings. By utilising the strapline "This is Your Town," the campaign aims to inspire community participation and collaboration in keeping Ipswich clean, litter-free, and welcoming.*

- 3) An initial pilot of 'Report it' bin stickers has been undertaken on bins in the Town Centre and the Waterfront. These stickers encourage the reporting of problems with bins and provide a QR code which takes users to directly to the report it page. If successful, then the recommendation is to extend the stickers across other locations and bins.

*Action taken: This has been trialled and the level of reporting from these stickers has been extremely low, therefore this is not being recommended for additional rollout at this time; however, this will continue to be monitored.*

- 4) That the new additional bin collection service for excess waste and contaminated bins is made a permanent service if the trial is successful. This is a service to compliment the current bulky collection service supporting residents struggling to remove excess waste and providing residents who cannot get to local household recycling centre the option to pay for a collection.

*Action taken: The service is now fully operational with the ability for residents to book online or through the Customer Service Centre. It has now also been expanded to cover Brown bins and will support as an additional option alongside the Brown bin subscription service.*

- 5) That opportunities are pursued to investigate additional streams/grants available to assist in the purchase of new equipment or machinery for the Town Centre or which focuses on funding for specific cleansing schemes or projects. This would include any opportunities to collaborate with ITFC, SCC and Ipswich Central.

*Action taken: This is accepted and will be an ongoing exercise expected to continue for the foreseeable future. A bid has already been submitted for funding for Chewing Gum removal focused on areas of cultural interest which will include the Town Centre.*

- 6) That options are explored around seagull proof bags and the costs associated with this and opportunity for the use of MAD or other funding.

*Action taken: The main action is associated with treating the root cause of the issue, which is that businesses place bags on the street for extended periods, rather than considering when their actual waste collection will take place. Improvements can be achieved through*

*ongoing waste enforcement action. Impacts will be monitored, and alternative options explored if required. It is confirmed that the use of MAD money is not a viable option.*

- 7) That there is an increase in enforcement in the town centre, and this is publicised – focusing on general enforcement but including a specific focus on Business waste in the town and issues with bin bags left out too early or on the wrong days as this was a key message and concerns arising from group discussions.

*Action taken: Officers are focusing on enforcement across the Town Centre and will monitor for improvements with bin bags left out.*

- 8) To explore options with the enforcement and planning teams on the use of a Business Zone Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), these are intended to deal with persistent anti-social behaviour in a local area that is detrimental to the community's quality of life and can include detail on how and when waste should be presented and enforced.

*Action taken: A review has been undertaken on options around a specific Business Zone PSPO and it has been determined that this is not required as there is already sufficient legislation around businesses and how they deal with their waste.*

Additional suggested actions – not in scope of the working group

- 9) Investigate opportunities for using vinyls for empty shop windows with the planning team. This could create an improved visual appearance across the town centre.

*Action taken: Officers from across Council departments will seek to progress and involve Ipswich Central, although it should be noted that this is out of the original scope and a challenging area due to the need to work across building owners.*

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### **3. Relevant Policies**

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- 3.1 Corporate Strategy – Proud of Ipswich: Championing our Community and Revitalising our Town. The 'Financially Sustainable Council Providing Good Quality Services' priority within the Proud of Ipswich.

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### **4. Options Considered / Under Consideration**

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#### **Option 1**

- 4.1 That Executive note the recommendations of Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 2.18 of this report.

*This option is recommended as recommendations are reasonable and actionable and will support in achieving awareness and improvements around perceptions of the Town Centre Cleanliness.*

## **Option 2**

- 4.2 That Executive does not note the recommendations of Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 2.18 of this report.

*This option is not recommended as it fails to provide the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a response to the recommendations it made about this subject.*

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## **5. Consultations**

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- 5.1 No external consultation has taken place in relation to this report.
- 5.2 Internal and external consultation was undertaken by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group as set out in report OS/24/14. This included input from officers across Public Protection and Environmental Health, Communications and Marketing and Waste. Reflections were also received from Councillor John Cook, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Sport, and Councillor Philip Smart, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste.
- 5.3 A question set was developed by the Task and Finish Group and issued to Ipswich Central for response. Lee Walker the Chief Executive of Ipswich Central attended a meeting of the Task and Finish Group to respond to the questions raised.
- 5.4 Consultation with the Portfolio Holder has been undertaken to ensure that the proposed responses meet with the expectations for the service.

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## **6. Risk Management**

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Risk Description	Consequence of risk	Risk Controls	Probability of risk occurring taking account of controls (scale 1-6) 1 – almost impossible 6 – very high	Impact of risk, if it occurred taking account of actions (scale 1 – negligible; 4 – catastrophic)	Actions to mitigate risk
Not noting a response to the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee	<p>Suggests a lack of priority being given to the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>Lack of improvement in perceptions around town centre cleanliness and actions to improve the Town Centre.</p>	Draft response prepared for approval.	2	2	Note a response to the recommendation.



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## **7. Environment and Climate Change**

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- 7.1 The Council has declared a climate change emergency and has resolved to start working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030. All Council decisions should take into account and respond to the potential impact that they will have on the climate and wider environment.
- 7.2 The decision to note the response to the recommendations from the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Town Centre Cleanliness will see the implementation of actions which will have a positive impact on the environment within the immediate vicinity of the Town Centre by targeting littering and waste disposal in the town centre and promoting positive action and enforcement with waste.

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## **8. Equalities, Diversity and Community Implications**

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- 8.1 Under the general equality duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 8.2 The protected grounds covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. The equality duty also covers marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination.
- 8.3 The law requires that this duty to have due regard be demonstrated in decision making processes. Assessing the potential impact on equality of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is one of the key ways in which public authorities can demonstrate that they have had due regard to the aims of the equality duty.
- 8.4 The approval of the response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Town Centre Cleanliness does not have any direct impacts in relation to Equalities.

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## **9. Crime and Disorder Impact**

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- 9.1 The decision to note the response to the recommendations from the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Town Centre Cleanliness is envisaged to have a positive impact on crime and disorder as improvement of the street scene and waste enforcement can have a positive impact on the wider environment and tackling of nuisance behaviour.

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## **10. Financial Considerations**

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- 10.1 Some costs were established as part of the communications plan including advertising, branded signage and the school outreach programme which totalled approximately £4,500. Budget across the areas identified already exists within the Waste budget therefore these costs can be covered within the budget and resource already in place through reallocation of programmes and priorities.

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## **11. Legal Considerations**

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- 11.1 There are no additional legal considerations to those already mentioned in the report.

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## **12. Performance Monitoring**

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- 12.1 Providing this response will allow the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee to monitor the implementation of the recommendations it has made.

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## **13. Conclusions**

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- 13.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that its land, or land for which it is responsible is, so far as is practicable, kept clean of litter and refuse.
- 13.2 The Council discharges that duty through its award-winning in-house Street-Cleansing team consisting of 34 people, utilising 16 specialist vehicles, operating 365 days a year across the entire Borough, with the outcomes of that activity resulting in a 99% achievement on levels of street cleanliness.
- 13.3 It is concluded that the recommendations put forward by the Task and Finish Group are appropriate and Executive is therefore able to formally report this to the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 13.2 Executive are asked to note that actions have already begun to be implemented which include:
- The planned Town Centre Cleanliness communications campaign will help develop a sense of ownership and pride among residents, and to encourage everyone to take responsibility for the cleanliness of their surroundings.
  - A further bid for funding for Chewing Gum removal has been submitted and this is focused on areas of cultural interest which will include the Town Centre.
  - The additional one-off waste collection service is now fully operational with expansion to now include a brown bin collection

supporting the introduction of the paid for subscription service for infrequent users of the service.

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## **14. Recommendations**

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### **14.1 That Executive note the recommendations of the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in Option 1 of this report.**

Reason: In order to provide a formal response to the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations.