

Frome should be consistently clean and welcoming – with everyone playing their part

Background

There are a number of organisations involved in the cleaning, maintenance & general upkeep of the town, including Frome Town Council (FTC); Mendip District Council (MDC); Somerset County Council (SCC); the Somerset Waste Partnership; and the Environment Agency.

Of these organisations, MDC has perhaps the single most significant role, being responsible for almost all of the street cleansing & maintenance in Frome. Indeed although FTC is responsible for looking after most of Frome's parks & green spaces - and SCC has responsibilities linked to the drains and the road network – these are limited in comparison with MDC's responsibilities.

Necessarily, MDC has a detailed and exemplar contract in place to cover this service – and this contract is delivered by The Landscape Group (TLG).

But...

This joint *but split* responsibility can be challenging and problematic; at the very least it can mean delays working out who is responsible for any given area of land. Arguably this is one of the reasons that previous efforts to improve the overall cleanliness of the town have fallen short.

To address this, the **Keep Frome Clean Panel** was setup to lead and organise the **Keep Frome Clean** campaign, working with all of these organisations – as well as residents, businesses and other local groups.

The Keep Frome Clean Campaign

Our campaign to Keep Frome Clean means organisations working *together* to make things better.

It also means everybody doing their bit, whether that's businesses sweeping outside of their shops; people putting litter in bins or community groups tidying unloved areas.

The overall aim of the campaign is make sure that Frome is *consistently* clean, tidy & welcoming throughout the year.

Within this overall aim, the Panel suggested four general objectives:

- Promote a better understanding of who does what in the town; and the standards we can expect
- Review & report on the cleanliness of the town
- Identify ways in which the town can be made cleaner – and how everyone can play their part
- Identify ways in which we can encourage recycling across Frome



October Watch

As an important first step, the Panel launched **October Watch** to get as full & detailed a picture as possible of what's going on across the town, encouraging everyone to report problems, concerns & observations throughout the month of October. This would form part of the review of the cleanliness of the town.

Coincidentally, MDC & TLG also undertook a (Mendip) district-wide customer satisfaction survey focusing on the Core Services of the Council's contract with TLG. They received 74 responses during the six-week period.

It's serendipitous that two public consultations have run so closely, since it gives us the opportunity to consider and review the key findings of both consultations.

Key Findings – October Watch

- The Panel received 94 distinct reports during October Watch, with reports coming in steadily throughout the course of the month
- Although a greater sample would have provided a more detailed picture, nearly 100 reports in a single month from residents, businesses & visitors confirmed the *general feeling* shared by the Panel that the town isn't as clean, tidy and well-kept as it should be
- Reports came in in respect of streets and areas across the town; *they were not limited to certain areas*
- Nearly a third of the reports were concerned with 'General litter' (30 reports)
- Specific problems and concerns were reported at Rodden Bridge (pigeons) and Vicarage Street (graffiti)
- Seasonal problems like weeds and leaves were reported. Specifically, leaves were a concern where they were becoming slippery and hazardous
- Blocked drains were reported 7 times
- Very surprisingly, only two reports came in on dog's mess

Key Findings - MDC & TLG's Core Services Survey

Although the structure of the survey meant that discrete analysis of the contract here in Frome was impossible, it's notable that the three elements relating to the routine cleanliness of the district all scored below 65% - **and all three were the lowest-scoring elements of the contract.**

- Litter picking: 61%
- Street sweeping: 63%
- Weed control: 53%



Summary of Findings

At the first Panel meeting it was generally agreed that the town wasn't as clean as it should be – people mentioned the feeling that dirt and litter were endemic across the town centre.

This feeling has been confirmed by the number and variety of reports received by the Keep Frome Clean Panel during October Watch. It's also notable that the three elements of the contract that relate to the routine cleanliness of the district all scored below 65% in MDC & TLG's joint survey - **and that all three were the lowest-scoring elements of the contract.**

Although it wasn't identified as much as expected during October Watch, dog's mess continues to be a significant blight across the town as well. In fact outside of October Watch this is reported regularly – and often proves to be particularly emotive.

Very simply, anecdotal evidence and the findings of both surveys support the view that the town isn't always as clean as it should be – or as clean as MDC's contract requires.

However the fact is that reactive 'fixing' works generally happen quickly – and they are generally effective in bringing areas back up to standard.

It was also the case that a concerted and dedicated joint effort between FTC, MDC & TLG before The Academy of Urbanism judging tour saw a marked improvement in the cleanliness of town.

This all suggests that the town can be consistently clean and welcoming – and that working together more closely and effectively might be the best way of achieving this.



Thoughts from the Panel

- Does TLG's team on the ground have sufficient resources allocated to Frome to deliver MDC's contract on a day to day basis?
- Does TLG's team here in Frome have the right equipment for the work?
- Does FTC have sufficient resources in place to maintain the town's parks & green spaces?
- Is MDC's contract enforced strictly & effectively when standards aren't met?
- Without strict enforcement will standards be allowed to slide?
- Are dog owners and walkers aware that they can use regular litter bins for bagged dog's mess?
- Are there enough bins across the town and are they in the right places?
- Is there enough civic pride in the town?
- Are community litter picks and clean-ups working?
- Can graffiti be removed from bins? Or painted over – perhaps as a community initiative?
- There seems to be lots of damaged or old & unloved bins around the town - can these be replaced more quickly and to an agreed schedule?

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Recommendations

- a. FTC to regularly update the information on its website, providing clear and current information about who does what in the town
- b. FTC to send out this information in community newsletters, emails and via social media to promote simple ways of keeping Frome clean
- c. FTC & MDC to promote effective reporting of problems – providing clear sets of contact details and the fixmystreet app
- d. FTC to employ an additional full-time or part-time Ranger focused on the town centre to deliver work including seasonal work & emergency support
- e. MDC to ensure effective monitoring of its contract so that standards are met consistently and that faults or problems are addressed
- f. FTC & MDC to work together on joint contract monitoring at least once a month
- g. FTC & MDC to work together on a fixed period of intensive contract monitoring to bring the entire town back to standard
- h. FTC to identify locations for new litter bins on an annual basis leading in to the Council's budget setting processes
- i. FTC to continue discussions with SCC about additional gully & drain cleansing in Frome
- j. FTC to work with SCC in an annual review of the gully & drain cleansing schedule
- k. FTC & MDC to launch a number of joint promotions & publicity campaigns, including an 'Any bin will do' reminder for dog owners and a 'No butts!' campaign aimed at smokers
- l. FTC to promote household recycling via regular tips on social media
- m. FTC to work with local schools in promoting the Keep Frome Clean campaign and providing advice about recycling
- n. FTC to establish and promote community clean-ups, including a big annual town clean-up tied to the Keep Britain Tidy campaign
- o. FTC to tie the Keep Frome Clean campaign to the Government's new & developing national litter strategy
- p. FTC to encourage businesses and shopkeepers across the town to sweep and tidy their frontages with an awards scheme: the Frome Broom!

