

Thanet District Council Coastal Waste Scrutiny Review 19 April 2022

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Executive Summary and Recommendations

Thanet District Council serves the beautiful coastal towns and villages in East Kent; including Broadstairs, Margate, Ramsgate and Birchington. With 19 miles of stunning coastline, how the Council ensures its promenades and beaches are kept clear of rubbish and litter is of great importance to both the Council and both residents and visitors.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed to carry out a Scrutiny Review the purpose being to look at the Council's coastal waste practices and recommend improvements where appropriate.

It was clear that an enormous amount of work is being undertaken by both the Council, volunteers, Parish Councils and local businesses to ensure that Thanet's beaches and promenades were kept clean. However, concerns were highlighted to the review that this work was not always as joined up as it could be and that there was a need to strengthen communications between the Council and the variety of local organisations.

The Review Panel hopes that its recommendations will act as a useful catalyst to further and better engagement between all of the groups and organisations with an interest in keeping Thanet's promenades and beaches clean. A digest of recommendations is set out below and the full conclusions included in the full report.

Digest of Recommendations:

1. Thanet District Council should re-evaluate its corporate priorities to better reflect that beaches and coastlines are fundamental to the identity of Thanet as a tourism destination and as a result funding for their preservation and cleanliness should be prioritised.
2. To expand our resource base to enable Recommendation 1, we should explore a broader range of funding options, partnerships and models of delivery.
3. We should consider introducing bylaws and/or licensing conditions to control use of polystyrene containers, cardboard chip boxes & other frequently littered items.
4. TDC should look to promote a plastic free regime in Thanet.
5. TDC should develop flexible staff roles for beaches and the coastline
6. TDC should consider approaching voluntary litter picking groups first when recruiting extra seasonal staff
7. An annual litter bin survey should be carried out with the help of parish & Town Councils (and volunteer groups if appropriate)
8. Current work on modernising our bins - phasing out dog waste bins, reducing aperture size when bins are replaced, fitting the size of the bin to the location and making all bins 'smart', for example - should be progressed with all speed.
9. TDC should monitor use and effectiveness of dog waste bag stations.
10. TDC should set and publicise challenging performance indicators for beach & coastal cleanliness and establish a schedule of Council & public reporting on these.
11. TDC should adopt stronger public messaging on litter.
12. We should set up '2 minute beach clean' stations during peak visitor periods to encourage individuals and families to help, supported by paid Rangers.

13. TDC Operational Services should meet at least annually with coastal/seafront businesses to address issues relating to keeping seafront areas clean.
14. We should explore introducing bylaws and/or licensing conditions to require all businesses selling food to provide & service their own bins outside their premises.
15. TDC should conduct regular and spot checks on Commercial Waste contracts and publicise that this happens
16. TDC should prioritise building mutually supportive relationships with Town & Parish Councils to collaborate on litter & waste eg via regular focused meetings.
17. TDC should acknowledge, support & celebrate the work of litter picking volunteers e.g. by providing bags/ equipment, helping with insurance/ health & safety advice, offering funding where possible and hosting an annual 'Thank You' event.
18. TDC should consider establishing a Thanet-wide Litter Forum involving voluntary groups and where appropriate Town/ Parish Councils.
19. TDC should establish a hotline/ single point of contact for litter groups to call for action eg to arrange pickup of bags, request supplies etc
20. TDC should invest in the "Fix My Street" app again

Foreword



I wish to thank my small group of fellow councillors who were members of the Coastal Review Working Party, also the individual volunteers and volunteer litter picking groups and Parish and Town Council representatives who attended the various sessions where the working party was taking evidence that was then used to come up with this report.

It's been a really interesting exercise for us as councillors to get an insight into the mammoth effort that council staff and the many volunteers undertake to keep our coastal areas clean and tidy. I would also like to thank Thanet District Council officers for their input to support this review project and officers from Democratic Services for their help in putting this report together. A number of ideas have been identified in this report which if implemented will successfully lead to a more effective approach for keeping our coastline clean and attractive to both our local communities and visitors to our district.

With budgets becoming tighter each year we feel that some of the recommendations can be implemented fairly easily with little or no cost and hopefully go to make a big difference. Once the report is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Members will forward the report and its various recommendations to Cabinet for action in due course.

Cllr Phil Fellows
Chairman Coastal Waste Scrutiny Review

Members of the Coastal Waste Review Working Party



Councillor Phil Fellows (Chair)



Cllr Trish Austin



Cllr Heather Keen



Cllr Marc Rattigan



Cllr Tomlinson

Introduction

As part of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's scrutiny review topics, and later the Work Programme, the Panel agreed to carry out a Coastal Waste Scrutiny Review and a working party comprising five Members of the Panel was established on 26 August 2021. The purpose of the review was to conduct a review of the council's coastal waste practices and recommend improvements where appropriate.

Original Scope and Methodology

The investigation was specifically asked to review how the Council ensures that its promenades and beaches are kept clear of rubbish and litter, compare this with other coastal authorities and make any recommendations that the Panel feel will improve the service.

The investigation was further asked to review the current replacement waste/dog bin process at Thanet Council, compare this with other local authorities and to make any recommendations that the Panel feel will improve the service.

The working party held a number of meetings in which they engaged stakeholders in discussion to get different views to the current problems affecting coastal waste in Thanet and the current efforts of Thanet District Council, various community groups and businesses that operate along the coastline. These stakeholders included the following groups:

- a. Community volunteer litter picking groups
- b. Local Businesses
- c. Parish Councils
- d. Thanet District Council

Community Volunteer Litter Picking Groups

Representatives from the following groups attended a meeting in the Council Chamber on 15 November 2021:

Friends of Botany Bay and Kingsgate;
Ramsgate Litter Forum (umbrella body for Ramsgate litter groups);
Rise Up Clean Up;
Broadstairs Town Team;
Birchington Anti-Litter Group;
Westgate Against Rubbish;
From Wilderness to Wonderland (Westbrook Litter Group).

Local Businesses

From the eighteen local businesses that were invited to attend a meeting with the working party only four accepted the invitation and the meeting was cancelled. The four businesses that agreed to take part in the review were as follows:

The Bus Cafe;
Broadstairs Chamber of Commerce;
Broadstairs Tourism and Leisure Association;
Your Leisure.

Parish Councils

A virtual meeting was held on 4 November 2021 and two representatives from each of the following Parish/Town Councils attended:

Birchington Parish Council;
Broadstairs Town Council;
Ramsgate Town Council.

Thanet District Council

The working party engaged the Council's lead Cabinet Members and officers on the subject through two virtual meetings held on 21 October and 10 November 2021. The following Council officials took part in the discussions:

Councillor Bob Bayford, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Special Projects;
Councillor Reece Pugh, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development;
Director of Communities;
Director of Regeneration;
Director of Operations;
Education Officer;
Tourism Manager.

Key Questions

The working party used a series of key questions to initiate discussions and gather feedback responses from the attendees of the various review sessions. The questions included the following:

Questions for TDC officers, managers and Cabinet members:

1. What did we learn from this year that we will do differently next season? Which locations/ aspects of coastal waste management this year are we most pleased with and why? Which locations/ aspects of coastal waste management have caused the most challenges this year, and what do officers plan to do to address them next year?
2. Have we gathered any successful or innovative ideas from other authorities?
3. Does patrolling/handing out litter bags/ reminding people to take litter home have positive results? Do we plan to hand out beach clean kits in future?
4. Did we have the extra bins at the right places and enough of them?
5. What role will recycling play in our coastal waste management strategy in future?
6. What single change, within existing budgets & circumstances, would help us manage coastal waste better in future?

For voluntary groups, town and parish Councils:

1. What types of beach cleaning and related activities do you undertake, how often and why? Do you do this under the auspices of TDC (e.g. via a formal contract) or otherwise?
2. How do you obtain information from TDC about coastal waste management issues? Is the information you receive adequate and timely? If not, how could this be improved?
3. Which aspects of coastal waste management do you feel are working well and which are not? Do you have suggestions for how to build on the positives and/ or address the less satisfactory aspects? What would it take to achieve these?

4. Do you have other partnerships, sponsorships or ways of working that are worth sharing with other groups and/ or TDC? What are the benefits of these?
5. What single change would you like to see take place to help us all manage coastal waste better in future?

The working party also studied a number of TDC policy and beach management documents that included the following:

The Destination Management Plan

Summer season in Thanet: Statistics show impact of Beach Management Plan

[Summer season in Thanet: Stats of impact of the Beach Management Plan](#)

Beach Management Plan 2020

[Beach Management Plan 2020 - Thanet](#)

Rubbish bag dispensers installed

[Rubbish bags dispensers installed along Thanet beaches](#)

Council prepares for Summer 2021

[Council prepares for summer season to start three months early - Thanet](#)

Evidence heard by the Scrutiny Review

The working party heard evidence from various groups of witnesses through sessions held on the dates below. These sessions were a mixture of virtual and in person meetings:

- 06 October 2021
- 21 October 2021
- 04 November 2021
- 10 November 2021
- 15 November 2021

Evidence from TDC officers, managers and Cabinet members:

At the working party's first meeting that was held online, Members heard from the Director of Operations, Corporate Director of Communities and and Cllr Bob Bayford, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Special Projects. Members heard of the excellent work operatives had done throughout the two previous seasons under extreme circumstances caused by the covid-19 pandemic and budgetary constraints faced by Thanet District Council. This included the following:

- Beach litter picks had taken place on a daily basis;
- Each of the main bays received a tractor beach rake every day;
- The promenade was litter picked by two teams of two people from 6am to 6pm everyday;
- There were on site beach cleaners at the 4 main bays who did an early shift and a late shift;
- Bins were emptied by a vehicle twice a day. Sometimes a domestic round waste vehicle was also required to provide additional capacity, in order to collect the volume of waste;
- 40% more rubbish had been collected than previously recorded;
- There had been 42 bins for recycling available on the beaches, however contamination of these bins was a problem. There was also an additional cost to collection of multiple types of waste from the beach, as a separate recycling collection vehicle was required.

The above activities should be viewed in the context of the Service having an annual budget of £125,000. This had been supplemented last year by one-off Covid support funding of around £61,000. Council staff faced a number of challenges in conducting their work activities, particularly during the peak summer period. They included the following:

- The abuse of toilet cleaning staff and beach cleaners by beach users;
- The amount of littering had been extreme;
- Traffic around beaches made access difficult for vehicles to get where they needed to be;
- It was difficult to retain seasonal staff towards the end of the season as they were looking for winter employment elsewhere;
- The bins needed to be in areas of high footfall, but also where there is easy vehicular access for emptying. The number of bins was limited by resources available to empty them;
- Bulky waste left by the beach bins was a problem. Beach goers needed to be educated and informed to tackle this behaviour;
- Funding was severely limited. Without the Covid support funding it would not have been possible to offer the service seen during this summer.

The same service could not be offered into 2022/23 without additional funding, therefore tough decisions needed to be made about what services were a priority for the Council.

The Corporate Director of Communities advised of strategies that had been lined up for 2022/23:

- In 2022/23, bins would be GIS mapped, with a QR code on. This would allow outlying bins to be left until a member of the public advised that they needed emptying before a team was sent to empty it, and would avoid trips to empty bins that were not full.
- The team was considering fixed aperture bins to protect contents from wind and seagulls.

The enforcement team explained about the new coastal Public Space Protection Order (PSPO):

- There had been positive engagement with the Police, the RNLI, Southern Rail and other partners resulting in improved intelligence gathering and sharing.
- Several public awareness sessions had been held to raise awareness of PSPO provisions.
- There was currently only one officer who could issue a PSPO; however this would change if the role was added to the job description of parking enforcement officers;
- The PSPO may be amended in future to include extra provisions eg feeding of seagulls;
- The Council received money from PSPO fines (£80 reduced to £60 if paid promptly).

In addition:

- Covid Ambassadors had been visiting properties to offer advice, and Covid Marshalls were present in high footfall areas to advise about Covid restrictions;
- Joint working with the Multiagency Task Force had been successful. At the start of the season, it had stopped a gang related drug and antisocial behaviour incident that could have continued over the summer;

The group heard from the Council's Education Officer about activities that took place in 2021/22 that were expected to continue next year, and new strategies and projects being formulated:

- Anti-littering events were a success, and merchandise with the anti-littering message were available to purchase from the Visitor Information Centre. New signage had been erected,

including about the PSPO, particularly regarding dogs on beaches. Beach stewards had issued black sacks to beach goers to encourage them to pick up their rubbish;

- Volunteer litter pickers were supported through provision of bags, storage space, waste collection and social media support. Awards for volunteers were also under consideration;
- There were now 62 dog waste bag stations in the District. A tree was planted for each to offset the carbon impact. Individuals and organisations can sponsor the bag distribution points at a cost of approximately £230;
- There is a new Litter Lotto on bins. This is discreetly funded by McDonalds via an app;
- Work was done with schools to combat littering.

The Education Officer confirmed that the 2022 Great British Spring Clean would focus on beaches and TDC staff would be encouraged to take part.

The meeting with Tourism officers brought up a number of issues. In particular:

- cleanliness is one of the foundations that is high on visitors' lists when considering a destination to visit. Visitor surveys were last conducted 3 years ago and unfortunately there is no current data on what visitors' views are on cleanliness based on recent visits;
- mention was made of a Beach Liaison Group that used to meet and had been useful.

Evidence from Town and Parish Councils:

Discussions with Town and Parish Councils were interesting. A number of views were conveyed through a virtual meeting.

- All expressed willingness to do more with TDC to clean up coastal areas around the district. This included willingness in principle to consider using/ raising precepts to give additional services to 'pick up some slack' where TDC street cleansing services fall short. Town and Parish Councils were already undertaking tasks voluntarily, some more than others - for example, Westgate and Ramsgate have their own operatives out daily cleaning rubbish and litter where needed. All sponsor litter groups with grants and equipment.
- Towns and Parishes need to be included in conversations and need to be consulted. Some felt their work was taken for granted and decisions imposed rather than discussed, although they knew their areas best and might have constructive ideas to offer.
- Towns and Parishes felt TDC needed to improve its information sharing with the public about coastal waste initiatives. Social media campaigns are cheap & effective, and more use should be made of these.
- There were many concerns about seafront bins:
 - Some areas of seafront (eg in Birchington & Ramsgate) are without any bins.
 - In some areas bins are constantly overflowing. There were different opinions here: some contributors felt these need replacing with bigger bins; others felt the very large Euro bins on the seafront are unsightly and do not give a good impression.
 - Schedules of bin emptying seem to be sporadic.
 - Timescales to replace worn, used and broken litter bins are poor, giving seafronts the appearance of being uncared for. Painting and cleaning of bins is also poor. Ramsgate Town Council technicians undertake painting and jet washing of bins in their area.

- Winter bin provision is poor. We have visitors here now for winter season, and walking is a lot more popular since covid. Seafront litter is now an all year round issue.

Evidence from volunteer litter groups:

Members heard many thoughts from the litter and interest groups the working party met with, who came from all over the isle. An in-person meeting was held in the Council Chamber. The key messages from all were similar, including:

- Volunteers are keen to improve their local environment and are an untapped free workforce. All groups were prepared to do more if there was more interaction & support from TDC;
- Many groups had no formal communication with TDC and felt unacknowledged and unappreciated, which was disappointing. With greater recognition and encouragement, a culture of civic pride could be achieved, and more volunteers recruited;
- Some stated they had stopped making reports to the council (e.g. of fly tipping, overflowing bins etc) as they found it too difficult via the website or never received acknowledgement. Many asked for reinstatement of the Fix My Street app, which can be used 'on the hoof';
- Most groups operated on an ad hoc basis, with litter picking sessions advertised mainly via social media, while some had regular time slots and membership arrangements.

Some groups had developed new partnerships and ways of working - for example:

- Ramsgate has established the Litter Forum, an umbrella body which brings TDC, RTC and voluntary groups together to address issues and plan joint activities, including a full annual Spring Clean programme. On its action plan are bin surveys and work on 'grotspots';
- The Friends of Botany Bay and Kingsgate have established themselves as a Community Interest Company and employ a part-time beach cleaner (one of their volunteers), following serious litter issues which were too severe for volunteers to cope with. They have undertaken fundraising and obtained sponsorship from Southern Water to support this;
- Groups recommended taking on local volunteers, as FBBK have done, rather than agency staff to provide extra summer cover. Volunteers with their local knowledge would be more effective and committed, and not paying agency fees would free up budgets, allowing for more hours of work, and compensate for extra management time needed for initial setup.

Groups also recommended:

- undertaking bin surveys across the Isle and maintaining lists of where bins should be that are accessible to volunteers and Town/ Parish Councils;
- removing/ phasing out dog waste bins and replacing with ordinary bins;
- creating more flexible paid roles combining cleaning, litter and parking enforcement;
- exploring all avenues to bring in income to enhance beach/ coastal cleaning - eg
 - a levy towards general waste management on top of usual beach cleaning fees for film shoots and others using our beaches for commercial enterprises;
 - chargeable advertising banners on beach railings;
 - restitution/ compensation from Southern Water after several raw sewage spillages;
 - sponsorship from local firms (particularly developers of seafront homes);
 - installing extra income-generating beach huts, particularly in places that do not have them (eg Ramsgate Main Sands);

- TDC working with voluntary groups to bid for funding streams occasionally available to enhance e.g. recycling on the seafront.

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Review

The Panel then undertook a series of private meetings to carefully consider and evaluate the evidence it had heard and create its recommendations. In the process of doing this it identified many areas of excellent work that were already being undertaken in order to keep promenades and beaches clean.

In particular the Panel wished to acknowledge a number of areas:

- The commitment of the current operational services team was very good and they did an excellent job considering the level of resources available to them.
- The current education work and working with the local community is excellent.
- The local community contribution to the cleanliness of the isle was highly valued.

The panel have created 20 recommendations and have collated these into seven broad themes, these being:

- Prioritising and resourcing: Giving coastal waste management a higher priority.
- Preventing beach and coastal waste: Stopping the problem before it starts.
- Practicalities - Staffing: Flexibility + local knowledge = maximum effectiveness?
- Practicalities - Bins: The right bin in the right place
- Working in partnership: residents & visitors: Engaging public support
- Working in partnership: coastal businesses: generating mutual benefit
- Working in partnership: voluntary groups: appreciating committed residents

Prioritising and resourcing: *Giving coastal waste management a higher priority*

Recommendation 1: Thanet District Council should re-evaluate its corporate priorities to better reflect that beaches and coastlines are fundamental to the identity of Thanet as a tourism destination, and as a result funding for their preservation and cleanliness should be prioritised.

We are recommending this because:

Thanet's beaches are arguably Thanet's biggest tourist attraction and are a key part of its identity, therefore it is vital that they need to be kept pristine. The evidence that was presented to the review panel indicated that cleanliness is a key factor for visitors in deciding whether to visit the district. In addition, beach and street cleaning are also consistently the highest priorities for Council tax payers in annual residents' surveys. As such, it seems justified that the panel asks that the priorities of the Council are revisited to reflect those of visitors and residents. In addition further recommendations from later within this report will assist in maximising both the total budget and its use.

Thanet's coast is also a large area of Special Scientific Interest, so it is important, both for its intrinsic natural value and as a visitor attraction, that we protect and preserve it.

Recommendation 2: To expand our resource base to enable Recommendation 1, we should explore a broader range of funding options, partnerships and models of delivery

We are recommending this because:

There are many ways that the Council could use to increase the resources available that it does not currently routinely use. These include:

- Obtaining extra funding from sponsorship (see below) or bids to external sources;
- Ensuring the waste team is part of discussions with large-scale external beach users (eg film crews) and receives a share of fees received;
- Working with Town & Parish Councils and voluntary groups (see below) who may assist or lead on cleaning specific areas - eg Botany Bay now has a dedicated p/t beach cleaner, employed by Friends of Botany Bay & Kingsgate (FBBK) CIC.

The Panel did hear evidence and appreciates that the Council does not currently have the resources to produce and support bids for additional funding. However, if, as the panel suggests within recommendation 1, the corporate priorities of the Council are amended, then it would be reasonable justification for resources allocated to support bids for additional funding. Additionally if the Council worked more closely with our partners such as voluntary groups and Town and Parish Council additional funding could be unlocked as with additional support they could bid for/access streams of funding that were not open to the Council.

Preventing beach and coastal waste: *Stopping the problem before it starts*

Recommendation 3: We should consider introducing bylaws and/or licensing conditions to control use of polystyrene containers, cardboard chip boxes & other frequently littered items

We are recommending this because:

Polystyrene containers and cardboard chip boxes contribute substantially to beach and promenade litter, so controlling their use has the potential to reduce our litter problem at source. The Panel did hear evidence that other Councils (e.g. Oxford) have banned polystyrene containers successfully, this allows us to use existing peer knowledge, which should make the process easier and less likely to challenge. In addition, exploring other alternatives and working with vendors to move to these alternatives could help foster a culture of joint responsibility for keeping the area clean with our coastline businesses.

Recommendation 4: TDC should look to promote a **plastic free** regime in Thanet

We are recommending this because:

Plastics make up a high percentage of beach waste, and also represent a danger to marine and shoreline life. Thanet District Council has declared a climate emergency and becoming plastic-free would help us move towards our 2030 target. Broadstairs Town Council has already agreed a

Plastic-Free Broadstairs strategy which could be monitored for its impact/ act as a model for TDC to create its own strategy.

Practicalities - Staffing: *Flexibility + local knowledge = maximum effectiveness?*

Recommendation 5: TDC should develop flexible staff roles for beaches and the coastline

We are recommending this because:

The Panel heard evidence that TDC were considering plans for multifaceted roles incorporating beach cleaning, issuing fines for littering and monitoring parking etc. The Panel is encouraged by this and believes these could achieve best value & tackle several related problems at once. The Panel acknowledges that the current Bay Inspectors did a good job within a limited remit. The Panel feels that a multi faceted role a so called 'Beach Ranger' with knowledge of a particular beach/stretch of coast who could use local intelligence to catch offenders, but also develop relationships with local voluntary groups and support visitors taking part in 2-minute beach cleans would be a good way of implementing the suggested way forward.

Recommendation 6: TDC should consider approaching voluntary litter picking groups first when recruiting extra seasonal staff

We are recommending this because:

The panel heard evidence that using agency staff was very expensive as agency fees increased the hourly rate compared to permanent staff. Whilst hiring directly takes more management time initially, it is cheaper and more flexible. If voluntary litter pickers were used it would be more efficient as the volunteers know their area, have a high level of commitment and will appreciate the income and recognition that paid work confers.

The Friends of Botany Bay and Kingsgate (FBBK) runs this model successfully and is happy for local volunteers to be employed via their Community Interest Company (CIC) if casual employment with TDC is not possible for any reason.

Practicalities - Bins: *The right bin in the right place*

Recommendation 7: An annual litter bin survey should be carried out with the help of parish & Town Councils (and volunteer groups if appropriate)

We are recommending this because:

Given the overall reduction in funding for local government it is important to make best use of resources that the Council has and so it is important to know what the Council has, and what condition those assets are in. This knowledge would allow the Council to better and more efficiently respond to issues surrounding bins.

Ramsgate Litter Forum's two bin surveys have identified that there are anomalies in provision & inaccuracies in TDC's master list of bins. These surveys have generated valuable information and have helped to create improvement proposals. By involving town and parish Councils in the

undertaking of these surveys, TDC can maximise the town and parish Councils' knowledge of local patterns of use and can contribute to ensuring bins are sited most effectively.

Recommendation 8: Current work on modernising our bins - phasing out dog waste bins, reducing aperture size when bins are replaced, fitting the size of the bin to the location and making all bins 'smart', for example - should be progressed with all speed.

We are recommending this because:

Dog waste bins are unsightly and limited in their use; they are small and are not designed to hold other rubbish. Bagged dog waste can be put in any of the Council's litter bins, therefore replacing dog bins with ordinary litter bins will increase capacity and flexibility for dog walkers and the general public alike.

The Panel heard evidence that reducing aperture size when bins were replaced lowers chances of contamination and spreading of waste by wind and seagulls. Adopting new approaches and technologies such as this will in turn save significant staff time, allowing for those resources to be used elsewhere. Other examples the Panel heard as evidence that the Council should consider included:

- the ability to report full bins via a 'hotline' or QR code will reduce litter, help the public help us (see below) and send the message that we are a responsive Council;
- Use of smart bins that could remotely tell collection teams when they were full and so allowing for targeted collection of full bins rather than regularly visiting partially full or empty bins. This technology in particular has great potential for maximising the effectiveness of service, given the modest resources that are available.

Recommendation 9: We should monitor use and effectiveness of dog waste bag stations

We are recommending this because:

Dog waste bag stations are a service to the community but can be easily abused, however there is no current data on their use. As there is no data on their use it is difficult to assess their effectiveness and ways that this could be improved. The stations require regular refilling which requires extra staff time and empty bag stations are of no use and send a negative message to communities. TDC should also engage with the suppliers of the stations to reconsider their design (so only one bag can be accessed at once, as with e.g. tubs of wet wipes).

Working in partnership: residents & visitors: *Engaging public support*

Recommendation 10: TDC should set and publicise challenging performance indicators for beach & coastal cleanliness and establish a schedule of Council & public reporting on these

We are recommending this because:

Establishing & publicising performance data in this area will help improve standards, establish a culture of continuous improvement and ensure appropriate scrutiny of this work. This approach will encourage buy-in and commitment by reassuring both residents and visitors that TDC is prioritising cleanliness.

The Council could work with partner agencies (such as Southern Water) to see if performance data is already available on related topics that could assist. This transparency would assist in obtaining support and ideas from other partners who may be able to help in addressing issues that arise,

Having this data allows for successes to be publicised and used in future promotional campaigns.

Recommendation 11: TDC should adopt stronger public messaging on litter

We are recommending this because:

The Council should have a simple and easy to understand unified message regarding litter. The panel felt after hearing evidence there had been a wide variety of banners, posters and branding in previous years.

The panel felt that there were a number of different mediums that could be utilised to put across our message that leaving litter is antisocial & unacceptable:-

- The large, clear, simple 'the bin is over there' banners have worked well over the past year.
- Tannoy announcements on beaches.
- Advance information on social media and at visitor arrival points such railway stations;
- The Council should seek to obtain maximum publicity when fines are issued for littering, to deter other potential offenders and show we are serious about tackling litter.

Recommendation 12: We should set up '2 minute beach clean' stations during peak visitor periods to encourage individuals and families to help, supported by paid "Beach Rangers" (if recommendation 5 is agreed).

We are recommending this because:

Litter picking can be a fun activity, particularly for children and families, especially if small rewards, child-friendly features are involved. Seeing other visitors beach cleaning helps establish a culture of shared responsibility for keeping the beach as we would wish to find it and will make other beach users think twice about dropping or leaving litter and potentially encourage others to join in with beach cleaning. By getting children involved with beach cleans at an early age they are more likely to grow into teenagers and adults who dispose of waste responsibly, thus hopefully addressing the issue of littering before it can start.

Working in partnership: coastal businesses: *generating mutual benefit*

Recommendation 13: TDC Operational Services should meet at least annually with coastal/seafront businesses to address issues relating to keeping seafront areas clean.

We are recommending this because:

It is in all of our interests to keep seafront areas in pristine condition throughout the year. Seafront businesses are ideally placed to monitor and help pinpoint where problems arise and suggest solutions. Having at least an annual meeting where this and other information can be shared between businesses and the Council would be hugely beneficial to both parties. Businesses can

be encouraged to contribute e.g. by providing bins outside their premises and/ or sponsoring seafront bins as Blueberry Homes plan to in Ramsgate.

Recommendation 14: We should explore introducing bylaws and/or licensing conditions to require all businesses selling food to provide & service their own bins outside their premises

We are recommending this because:

Food waste and packaging from takeaways & food businesses forms a significant part of beach and coastal litter and is attractive to seagulls, which shred and spread it. All businesses have a responsibility to ensure they do not generate extra litter and it is also in businesses' interests to help keep their surroundings clean and pleasant as this will make their business more attractive to potential customers. The Panel understood from the evidence received that rubbish taken off a premises is no longer the responsibility of that business; however there were many examples of businesses going above and beyond their basic responsibilities. Codifying this best practice as additional conditions would help to ensure that this positive behaviour was embedded across the isle.

Recommendation 15: TDC should conduct regular and spot checks on Commercial Waste contracts and publicise that this happens

We are recommending this because:

It is important to be clear that many businesses demonstrate responsible waste disposal practices, this shouldn't preclude the Council from ensuring businesses have appropriate waste contracts & adhere to contract conditions. Checks can reveal misuse and inappropriate siting of commercial bins and a regular regime of checks can promote dialogue between the Council and traders. In addition the dialogue between the Council and traders can also serve as an opportunity to raise awareness of and to promote the Council's own commercial waste service. The Panel were also aware of a number of satisfied customers of the Council's waste service that were happy to assist in promoting the service and this could be really beneficial.

Working in partnership: Town & Parish Councils: *supporting each other*

Recommendation 16: TDC should prioritise building mutually supportive relationships with Town & Parish Councils to collaborate on litter & waste eg via regular focused meetings.

We are recommending this because:

The Panel heard evidence from Town & Parish Councils that they can and do want to help TDC with this issue, and in some cases were already undertaking work previously done by TDC. Town & Parish Councils also often hold hyperlocal information that is valuable to TDC, but is not necessarily known at a district level. Town & Parish Councils may have greater flexibility of operation and/ or access to different sources of funding which can usefully be pooled such as not having the 2% cap on Council Tax increases. The Panel also felt that the Investment of officer time in building these synergistic relationships can save time and greatly expand available resources in the longer term.

Working in partnership: voluntary groups: *appreciating committed residents*

Recommendation 17: TDC should acknowledge, support & celebrate the work of litter picking volunteers by continuing to provide essentials such as waste bags, but also by providing basic equipment such as bin rings, gloves and litter pickers, helping with insurance/ health & safety advice, offering funding where possible and hosting an annual 'Thank You' event.

We are recommending this because:

TDC relies heavily on the excellent regular work of litter picking groups and individual volunteers across the Isle who give up their time to improve their environment. These residents are the community's eyes and ears on the street; their local knowledge and ideas for improvement are invaluable and free. Currently there is no official thank you outside of informal ad-hoc arrangements. Through providing official acknowledgement and publicity we can help litter pickers feel valued and encourage new volunteers to join in.

Recommendation 18: TDC should consider establishing a Thanet-wide Litter Forum involving voluntary groups and where appropriate Town/ Parish Councils.

We are recommending this because:

A Thanet wide Litter Forum would greatly improve information flows and relationships, as the Ramsgate Litter Forum has done during its 5 years of operation. TDC's Education Officer already runs a "Sustainable Partnerships" group and if the Litter Forum could evolve from this it should not require additional TDC staff time. Such a group would help to increase community participation & engender greater pride of place.

Recommendation 19: TDC should establish a hotline/ single point of contact for litter groups to call for action eg to arrange pickup of bags, request supplies etc

We are recommending this because:

The Panel heard evidence that voluntary groups regularly came to rely on an individual member of staff, but if roles change they were left without support and information. This is not helpful and could be improved by use of a specific number that could be answered by multiple members of staff. It was up to TDC to make volunteers' efforts as easy for them as possible. Volunteer time is not free, but can often be treated as such, inconveniencing and disillusioning those who are already giving up their time to help improve our environment. By making a relatively small change to be more responsive, we improve mutual efficiency and build positive relationships.

Recommendation 20: TDC should invest in the "Fix My Street" app again

We are recommending this because:

The Panel heard evidence from residents and voluntary groups that the Council website was difficult to use, particularly 'on the hoof' when out and about, while Fix My Street was much easier to use.

An easy-to-use app is likely to be used more often and more promptly, thus enabling more timely & efficient clean-ups where problems arise. Whilst the set up of the app will involve investment, it will enable quicker and more efficient response, saving the extra beach & street cleaning a late response often requires.