

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 15 November 2021

Title: Open Spaces Infrastructure

Contact Officer: Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer - Angus Whitburn

Background

The Council's Open Spaces Strategy was formally adopted on 28th June and reference IS5 (Improving and investing in our infrastructure provision) of the associated Action Plan is to *'undertake an audit of current litter bins, dog waste bins, signage, seating, fencing, bus shelters and other associated infrastructure with a view to drawing up a corporate replacement and upgrade plan, to include policies relating to the installation and adoption of infrastructure on non-WTC land.'*

The creation of new policies for memorial benches and tree planting request's have been finished and are attached for consideration prior to adoption by the Council. Certain elements of these could be drafted across to further developing policies to help with the unity of all infrastructure requests.

Current Situation

Dog Waste Bins

Except for the Lake and Country Park, the dog waste bins across the rest of the Town Council's estate and Witney were installed and are emptied by West Oxfordshire District Council via their contractors Ubico.

All requests for new or additional bins from residents are forwarded to the Town Council regardless of the proposed location, as it has the power to install waste bins as town/parish Council. The Town Council is then responsible for installation and ongoing emptying costs – these currently cost the council £417.26 (excl. VAT) and £667.00 per annum to empty.

There are currently two dual purpose bins installed on non-Town Council land, Woodford Mill and Newland/Court Gardens where it pays the above emptying costs. There are currently four old requests and two new ones on hold to the Town Council, all for dog waste bins also not on Town Council land.

A policy should list out clear criteria for a request to be considered such as the following;

- Multiple residents individually request a dog waste bin within a set area.
- Those requests are all received within a set period.

- The Town Council will only consider a request for installation on land owned by the Town Council.

Further detail then needs including to give officers clear guidance on where dog waste bins are best suited and if alternative solutions can be found for requests.

- Waste bins are available but need correct signage needs retrofitting and a review is set in place to see if it elevates the problem.
- Are dog waste bins already in place near clear walking paths and would moving one help.

The Town Council's waste and recycling bins are not signed correctly do take dog waste. The next order of bins has been requested to include this signage.

Waste & Recycling Bins

The Town Council's current process is replacing all single-stream waste bins with dual-stream recycling and waste bins, this process is almost complete across Town Council land. Additional bins have been installed in certain locations and areas have been condensed down, for example, Burwell recreation ground has been reduced from three single waste bins to two waste and recycling bins, more strategically placed.

Bins have been installed based on prior location, requests from residents, sports teams and noticeable litter problems raised by councillor's or officers. Again, clear points need defining for a request to be considered additionally points that need council discussion and direction if to be included are.

- Should bins be a set distance from each other.
- Proximity to seating.
- A number should be available in a certain square meterage of recreation grounds and play areas.
- If the current bin model/design needs reviewing.

Benches

Most new benches installed are memorial benches which the memorial bench policy covers. Additional detail is needed around available seating in a set area and definition on when a bench needs refurbishment or replacing. Some recommended points are below for council consideration.

- A flat area of hard standing is installed by every bench for wheelchair users. Or should this be based on 50% of all benches installed in an area that will have a hard standing area for wheelchair users.
- The direction a bench should face.
- The installation process, Root fixed to avoid the use of concrete, reduced size concrete pads or a form of tiling.

- Style of benches installed. Currently, the council install Eastgate benches which are hard wearing and easy to refurbish but should wooden benches or recycled plastic benches be considered in certain areas.
- Benches will only be installed adjoining footpaths to make them as accessible as possible.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

To avoid wasteful practices policies should be directed in a way that encourages refurbishment and relocation of what we currently have in place.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The cost of installing additional dog waste/litter bins is considerable and any request should be carefully considered.
- There is a street furniture replacement budget that covers roughly three bins and two benches each year. If policies are directed in such a way to increase the number of benches and bins this needs to be reviewed.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Councillors are asked to have their input and guide officers on how they would like infrastructure policies drafted and,
2. Councillors are asked to decide that if it is the responsibility of the Town Council to install and maintain street furniture, not on its land referencing dog waste/litter bin requests and,
3. Review the Memorial Bench policy and Memorial Tree policy and discuss any additions or changes required before adoption.