

Place Select Committee
Review of Planters in Residential Streets
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review will support the delivery of the Council Plan 2019-2022 in the following areas:

Environment and Housing

- Our vision is to make the Borough a better place to live and a more attractive place to do business with clean streets, carefully tended parks and open spaces, affordable and desirable housing.
- Key objective: Deliver effective environmental services.

Community Safety

- Our vision is to make the Borough a place where levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime are low and people feel safe and secure.

Health and Wellbeing

- Key objective: All people in the Borough live in healthy places and utilise assets within their communities.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

For the purpose of this review, planters are defined as fixed brick and concrete, (usually) rectangular structures in residential streets. This review will not focus on other forms of planters, such as flower tubs/buckets or baskets attached to railings.

There is currently no dedicated funding set aside in Care For Your Area's budget for the maintenance of street planters. Some residents have complained that the planters make their street untidy, due to the lack of maintenance. When they were regularly maintained with flowering plants they presented a very attractive feature. However, in many cases now, they present the opposite effect. Some of the planters are very overgrown with weeds, some with nettles and thorny plants, which could create a risk of injury to children playing nearby. Many attract antisocial behaviour such as rubbish dumping and vandalism. Dog faeces and more sinister items, such as needles, have also been dumped in the planters. On a few isolated occasions, bricks have been removed from the planters and thrown at properties and vehicles in the street.

Some ward councillors have used CPB to fund the removal of these planters at the request of residents. However, many are finding that there are higher priority needs that take up the CPB. Also, the cost of removing these planters can represent a significant proportion of the annual budget.

CFYA are required to intervene to carry out some maintenance on these planters if they become damaged, particularly where they become unsafe. They would also have to deal with any resulting anti-social behaviour. For example, an increase in litter on the public highway and the possibility of vermin being attracted to overgrown planters, requiring funding from their already restricted maintenance budget.

This review will investigate the options for retaining, maintaining or removing planters in residential streets.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- Mapping the location of planters across the Borough and identifying who has maintenance responsibility (SBC or Thirteen or any other third party)
- Are any planters being maintained by residents and/or community groups?
- What condition are planters in, regardless of who maintains them?
- What is the current maintenance regime for planters which are the responsibility of SBC?
- What might be the economic or social impact of any anti-social behaviour associated with planters?
- How many requests have been received via the CPB (actioned or not) to remove planters?
- How many requests have been received to improve or maintain planters, through CPB or CFYA?
- What costs might be involved in removing planters?
- What are the potential impacts of removal?
- Is there an economic and social benefit in removing some of these planters?
- What costs might be involved in repairing and replanting planters?
- What are the economic and social benefits in keeping some of these planters?
- What do local residents think should happen with the planters in their streets?
- How much interest and appetite is there within the community to take responsibility for some?
- What lessons can the community offer in terms of past success and failure in maintaining planters?
- What scope is there for other third parties to take over responsibility? (For example RSLs, local businesses, brownies, guides, scouts or cubs, youth clubs etc.)

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, Council.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

6 months

Approve scope and project plan – July 2020

Receive evidence – September – October 2020

Draft recommendations – November 2020

Final report – December 2020

Report to Cabinet – January 2021

*Original dates have been amended due to the impact of Covid-19.

What information do we need?	
Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):	
Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2018-21, Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan 2019.	
Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)	What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?
SBC Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background information. • Maintenance and repair costs. • Evidence of previous planter removals and costs. • Role of street cleansing in maintaining planters. • Evidence from Community Safety on anti-social behaviour around planters. • Evidence from Environmental Health on vermin caused by untidy planters.
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success/failure of planters in their area. • Examples of any community maintained schemes. • Impact/examples of vandalism to planters and related anti-social behaviour.
Officers from other councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of planter maintenance or removal schemes. • Evidence of planter adoption schemes
Staff from Housing Associations with stock in the area, eg Thirteen, NorthStar, Accent etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might they be interested in taking any more on where they have stock in terraced streets?
How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)	
Committee meetings, reports, case studies, research. An email will also be sent to all councillors to request feedback on problems and successes in their wards. The Targeted Action Zone Facebook groups may be utilised to ask residents for their opinions on planters in their area.	

How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?

Committee meetings, information submissions.

Following the review, residents will be consulted via ward councils on their views about the maintenance of planters by community groups. Representatives from community groups will be able to provide evidence of successes and learning outcomes from previous community engagement schemes. Information on current schemes which can be utilised to support the maintenance of planters will also be provided to residents.

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics (including – but not limited to – age, gender, disability, ethnicity), and advance equality of opportunity for those with Protected Characteristics. Public bodies must have due regard to the need to encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023: All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places – and sustainable communities – health and wellbeing are influenced by the environment in which people grow up, live, work and spend their leisure time.

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

This review will determine whether maintaining planters in residential streets is cost effective – and whether the balance between costs and benefits is currently right. It will examine whether the removal of planters would provide savings and reduce anti-social behaviour or whether a new approach, seeking third party or community involvement with a larger number of planters could give them a new lease of life.

Project Plan			
Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	4 March 2020	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	9 March 2020	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	20 July 2020	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed		Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence		September 2020 October 2020 (reserved if necessary)	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	16 November 2020	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	November 2020	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	November/December 2020	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	14 December 2020	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	19 January 2021	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	21 January 2021	Cabinet / Approving Body