

REPORT FROM: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL SERVICES

TO: BARROWFORD AND WESTERN PARISHES COMMITTEE

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FOOD WASTE DUMPING IN VICTORIA PARK, BARROWFORD

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members on the food dumping blight in the vicinity of Victoria Park Lake, Barrowford.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Park Friends, Council Officers and elected Members actively monitor cases of food dumping to narrow down key windows of opportunity for enforcement.
- (2) The Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee be recommended to be mindful of the varying types of environmental offences causing concern within the Borough's greenspaces during future discussions around enforcement options.
- (3) To continue local education programmes within Schools, places of worship and community groups regarding food waste.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To ensure efficient targeting of resources.
- (2) To deter offenders from fly tipping and dumping food waste.
- (3) To actively promote bird health and consequences of dumping food.

ISSUE

Historically, the lake within Victoria park has had issues with dumping of food waste for many years in troughs and peaks.

Peaks in the volume of food dumping directly correspond to sightings and complaints of rats in the area due to the volume of food available to them.

The main issue is not that of families feeding crumbs to the wildfowl, but large piles of food such as loaves of bread, cooked rice and chapatis, often in a mouldy state. This food waste tends to be tipped in piles on the path surrounding the lake adjacent to Park Avenue.

Signage has been updated over the past 2 years to encourage feeding only of correct feedstuffs such as bird food, peas and sweetcorn. Recent signage has been translated into three languages and information shared on council social media pages

The Friends of Victoria Park supply bags of seed, available from the pavilion café available for a small donation.

In summer 2023 the Friends of Victoria park hand delivered a leaflet to all local residents advising them on correct bird feeding and the issues of food waste. This follows on from a previous leaflet drop in 2021. An educational video has been produced by the Friends of Victoria Park, and requests have been made to Imams in local Mosques and surrounding schools to help communicate the message. This is planned to continue in the near future by the friend's group and also PBC communications unit.

An external company (*Feed Ducks Initiative*) has contacted the council during September 2024 offering to install a standalone solar powered contactless payment seed dispenser adjacent to the lake. There is no charge to the council for this facility, and a 10% income will be provided to the friends group from all sales received. This may help to alleviate incorrect feed issues, but not dumping of bulk waste. The friends' group are supportive of this proposal and officers are investigating further.

Parks Officers have requested that any observed food dumping is reported to try and narrow down timings for enforcement staff to patrol efficiently

Discussions with members of the public note that there is an extremely low presence of council officers within the park, higher levels of visibility could possibly act as a key deterrent.

The Council Environmental crime team routinely visit all Pendle Parks whilst out on patrol. It should be noted there are only 3 officers in post for this type of task for the entire Borough and as such available resources are extremely limited.

The Council has previously employed a 3rd party enforcement provider to focus on lower levels of environmental crime such as enforcing the Councils Public Space Protection Orders within parks and greenspaces.

This provider was required to spend 10% of their officers working time specifically within green spaces providing visible deterrent of offending. This agreement was ended in September 2023 at the request of the service provider. No formal discussions have been held regarding finding an alternative provider or solution

Temporary CCTV is an option as acting as a deterrent to dumping food waste within the park but is not liable to produce traceable perpetrators due to lack of visible identification such as vehicle registrations.

The issue has been relatively quiet during September and October, if it resumes over winter, it would be worth removing the current educational signage and replacing it with more aggressive fixed penalty warning notices. It should be noted that too many signs of varying types within a park can create an undesired effect of them all being ignored due to park users being overwhelmed.

The Friend's Group have been requested to report any cases of tipping as soon as possible in order to create effective windows of opportunity for the Environmental Crime team to Patrol the park and apprehend offenders.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: None arising directly from this report.

Financial: None arising directly from this report.

Legal: None arising directly from this report.

Risk Management: None arising directly from this report.

Health and Safety: None arising directly from this report.

Sustainability: None arising directly from this report.

Community Safety: None arising directly from this report.

Equality and Diversity: None arising directly from this report.

APPENDICES: None.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS: None.