

# Park Life, Street Life:

Managing demand in the public realm



**KEEP OFF  
THE GRASS**



**PLEASE KEEP  
TO THE PATH**







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**Managing demand in the public realm**

August 2015



**The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE)** is a non-for-profit local government body working with over 300 councils throughout the UK promoting excellence in public services. APSE is the foremost specialist in local council frontline service provision in areas such as waste and refuse collection, parks and environmental services, leisure, school meals, cleaning, housing and building maintenance and energy services.



**New Local Government Network (NLGN)** is an independent think tank and collaborative network of leading edge local authorities and dynamic private sector thinkers. We connect members of the network to each other through our high level events programme and creative research work.

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### **Methodology**

This research project involved a call for evidence, a literature and practice scan, two roundtable discussion seminars with councillors and council officers, a range of telephone interviews, and three in-depth case studies.

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# Foreword

As council budgets remain tight, but demand for public services increases, it is timely to look at alternatives to simplistic and often crude cuts. It is no longer sustainable to believe that we can square this circle by simply thinning out ever decreasing resources. Radical new approaches to address the demand side of the public services equation are needed.

In 'Park Life: Street Life: Managing demand in the public realm' we look at alternative options to simplistic cuts by exploring whether there is greater scope to address demand side issues by applying behaviour change tools and techniques in a public service environment. We also explore how local residents, businesses and community groups can become powerful actors within our public realm, helping to secure not just volunteer hours but access to funding streams, and playing an active role in the management of local spaces.

Whilst this research report concentrates on the scope of behaviour change theories within the public realm, there are certain lessons which could apply to public services more generally. Whether it be changing the way in which correspondence is written to promote certain responses, such as timely bill payments by residents, or trialling engagement on keeping to appointments, these techniques can bring about positive results; improving local services and reducing costs or generating more efficient use of limited public resources.

Many private sector companies, such as major retailers, use behavioural psychology to shape the behaviour of consumers or to nudge them towards particular channels of communication. This helps them manage demand for their services or to encourage customers to behave in a certain way. In the context of the public realm we need to embrace these practices to help us achieve a fundamental shift towards preventative measures to reduce demands such as littering and dog fouling on our streets, graffiti in parks, or to encourage residents to recycle more. We can learn valuable lessons from behavioural sciences which will help us to 'nudge' or 'budge' the way in which residents and business respond to our public realm in a more responsible and engaging way.

Equally, the public's understanding of the way in which they can contribute to the local public realm is changing, and councils can gain much by embracing this. This is not to advocate the handover of parks to businesses, or a retreat of overall council management. This would not work for councils or the communities they serve. But widening the breadth, depth and volume of community involvement for local places can help increase the sense of pride, ownership and respect that local people have for their areas - which can reduce issues like litter in itself. And it can help create and sustain vibrant and flourishing public spaces in challenging financial times.

We commend this report to you and hope that it will prove to be a timely and provocative document to inform local thinking about our treasured public realm.

**Paul O'Brien** *APSE, Chief Executive*

**Simon Parker** *NLGN, Director*

# Introduction

A good public realm – parks and pavements, and roads and roundabouts – is vital to our wellbeing. When well-managed and looked after, it provides us with spaces to reflect and play; routes to walk to shops, school or work; ways of maintaining wildlife; and places to exercise. These spaces play a very significant role in improving our mental and physical health, our social and cognitive development, and supporting our local economies.

But despite improvements in the last few decades, environmental problems like littering and dog fouling continue to blight our footpaths, and present significant costs to society and local councils. What is more, councils' ability to respond to these issues, and ensure the public realm is fit for purpose, is under serious threat. Further budget cuts are looming, and we know that the vast majority of the funds that remain will necessarily be diverted to social care and other critical areas.

This presents a worrying outlook for the public realm. No council wishes to see dirty streets or barren parks. However if existing services continue to be reduced without the adoption of more creative and preventative strategies, these will become a reality for many more communities.

This is a bleak picture, with significant implications for local politics, people, and places. However there is another way, and in this report we outline two approaches that can help councils meet the challenges they face. The first of these involves moving from cleaning up after people to preventing littering and other similarly antisocial behaviours from happening in the first place. The second involves embracing, allowing, and encouraging far greater contributions from local people to the upkeep of their local public realm spaces.

In practice this means residents treating their surroundings with respect and care, and for councils to be nudging them in this direction through careful consideration of communications and of matters such as the design of bins. It means new expectations to be placed on businesses about how they contribute to their local environments, and new ways for them to contribute. It also means harnessing and respecting the passion and determination that committed community organisations and residents across the UK feel towards their local areas through new forms of local involvement.

Drawing on a range of sources, in this report we survey current practice and find that while some councils are pioneering and pushing the boundaries of these approaches, many more are not taking advantage of the tools at their disposal. There is too much focus on 'education' or 'enforcement' as the only options for changing behaviours and preventing decay. And there is not enough considered thought going into properly understanding actions such as littering or fly tipping, and using insights from behavioural psychology to design effective approaches to tackling them.

Similarly in many places, councils' approach to community engagement is not bold or smart enough. Few places have undertaken wholesale initiatives to truly enable and encourage local people, businesses and institutions to be more directly involved in their local parks and public realm beyond consultative involvement in decision-making processes.

Councils' approach to the public realm has to change. This report uses examples from pioneering councils to give practical insight into what can be achieved and to shed light on lessons which can help other councils translate their appetite for change into successful action.

While we don't assume that these approaches will solve all councils' public realm problems, they do offer some solutions. What is more, they are at our fingertips. Councils now need the awareness, guts and support to put them into practice.

# 1. The case for change

## Unfulfilled potential

The quality of our parks, pavements, streets and green spaces are vital to our wellbeing. As shown in Box 1, well designed and maintained parks and public spaces have a range of positive impacts. They contribute to physical health and mental wellbeing; they support social interaction and community cohesion; and play a key role protecting residents from climate change and ensuring the biodiversity and sustainability of our habitats.

Councils have been doing a good job of improving the quality of our parks and reducing the amount of litter on our streets. Public satisfaction and local environmental quality surveys have generally been positive in recent years, and parks have seen a reversal in the steep decline in quality that were observed between the 1970s and 2000s.<sup>1</sup> This is supported by data from APSE performance networks, which has shown that despite the pressure on budgets, user satisfaction with parks remains high.<sup>2</sup>

Yet while they have been improving, our parks and pavements are still far from achieving their full potential. At present less than 40 per cent of local sites meet the 'good' (grades A and B+) standard in the Local Environmental Quality Survey for England.<sup>3</sup> Problems relating to broken pavements, pot holes, dog fouling, business waste, and poor planting remain in many areas and are objects of public concern. Discarded cigarette butts, confectionary wrappers, and non-alcoholic drink containers remain the most prevalent form of litter<sup>4</sup>, and fast food waste and roadside waste from passing vehicles have increased in prevalence in recent years.<sup>5</sup> Additionally the benefits of beautiful gardens and clean streets are far from equally distributed, and clean and green spaces are much less prevalent in deprived areas.<sup>6,7</sup> There is clearly scope for improving the consistency and quality of our public realm so that it supports all residents to live healthy and happy lives.

Beyond the impacts on health and wellbeing, poorly maintained public realm spaces have wider implications. They impact on growth, with businesses locating in areas which are nice to live and work in. Additionally to many people these spaces are very visible markers of a councils' performance and relationships with their citizens, and if poorly maintained they risk undermining the trust and confidence that people have for their local public services and councils more generally.

## Progress threatened

Yet as councils' budgets are cut substantially, their ability to maintain, let alone improve, the quality of their local places is drastically threatened. While council budgets for 2016-17 have yet to be finalised the budget cuts councils have faced in recent years are predicted to continue. As a result, environment budgets are highly likely to suffer disproportionately. Resources will certainly be diverted to try and maintain core areas such as social care which face dramatically rising demand as our population ages.

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1 Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (2006) 'Paying for Parks: Eight Models for Funding Urban Green Spaces' p.1 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/paying-for-parks.pdf>; Heritage Lottery Fund (2014) 'State of UK Public Parks: Renaissance to Risk?' p.5 <http://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks>

2 <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-28-local-authority-parks-and-green-space-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

3 Keep Britain Tidy (2014) 'Written Evidence Submitted to Communities and Local Government Committee – Litter and Fly Tipping in England' p.3 <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/litter/written/14236.pdf>

4 Keep Britain Tidy (2014), 'How Clean is England? LEQSE 2013-14', p. 15-16 [http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Documents/Files/LEQSE%202014/KBT\\_LEQSE%202014\\_Online%20Final.pdf](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Documents/Files/LEQSE%202014/KBT_LEQSE%202014_Online%20Final.pdf)

5 Keep Britain Tidy (2014), 'How Clean is England? LEQSE 2013-14' p. 15-16 [http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Documents/Files/LEQSE%202014/KBT\\_LEQSE%202014\\_Online%20Final.pdf](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Documents/Files/LEQSE%202014/KBT_LEQSE%202014_Online%20Final.pdf)

6 Public Health England (2014) 'Local Action on Improving Health Inequalities: Improving Access to Green Spaces' [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/355792/Briefing8\\_Green\\_spaces\\_health\\_inequalities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355792/Briefing8_Green_spaces_health_inequalities.pdf)

7 Keep Britain Tidy (2014), 'How Clean is England? LEQSE 2013-14' p. 14; Research unpicking this relationship is unclear, however the difference appears to be linked to the demographic factors of households in deprived areas, the services provided in these areas, and also the high housing density in deprived areas – with high housing density posing a risk for poor cleanliness whatever the deprivation level of the neighbourhood – Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2009), 'Street Cleanliness in Deprived and Better off Neighbourhoods: A Clean Sweep' p.6 <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/neighbourhood-street-cleanliness-full.pdf>



## Box 1: Social and economic benefits of parks and the public realm

### Health and wellbeing

Keeping green spaces and streets clean and cared for has obvious benefits for basic aspects of public health by reducing germs and other hazards such as broken glass. However the health benefits of these areas are much more widespread – positively impacting on physical activity levels, diets, and mental health. For example ‘green exercise’ has been shown to be better at improving mood, reducing fatigue and reducing stress than exercise in ‘grey environments’ such as gyms<sup>8</sup>, and clinical evidence suggests that exposure to an outdoor green environment reduces stress faster than anything else.<sup>9</sup>

### Social interaction, recreation and child development

Parks and outdoor public areas are important spaces where we socialise and play, bond with family and friends, and meet new people. Outdoor play areas – particularly those which are ‘wild’ – improve children’s motor development skills such as balance, strength and coordination.<sup>10</sup> By presenting opportunities for problem solving, risk taking, overcoming challenges, resilience-building and calm reflection, these spaces also improve children’s social and cognitive development.<sup>11</sup>

### Climate resilience and biodiversity

The increase in hard surfacing and reduction of green spaces is contributing to higher temperatures in towns and cities compared to the surrounding countryside. This is known as the ‘heat island effect’. Vegetation and trees can help redress this, and parks especially play a key role in cooling the air, providing shade for workers and residents, and absorbing atmospheric pollutants.<sup>12</sup> Vegetation and green spaces can also improve absorption of excessive rainwater and reduce surface water run-off caused by increase hard-surfacing, reducing the likelihood of floods and sewage overflow, while also protecting biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems.<sup>13</sup>

### Economic growth

By improving development, health and wellbeing, and by improving the attractiveness of local areas, clean streets and well managed parks provide tangible economic benefits. Greener, cleaner and well managed public spaces help businesses attract customers and valued workers, and can help bring in further investments to local places.<sup>14</sup>

8 Seaward, T. (2015) ‘Partner Briefing Paper’, pp. 3; quoting: Thompson Coon, J., Boddy, K., Stein, K., Whear, R., Barton, J., Depledge, M. (2011) ‘Does participating in physical activity in outdoor natural environments have a greater effect on physical and mental wellbeing than physical activity indoors? A systematic review’, *Environmental Science and Technology* 45 (5) 1761-72

9 Ibid., pp. 23

10 Fjortoft (2004) cited in The Design Council (2014) ‘The Value of Public Space’ <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/report/value-public-spaces>; Sustainable Development Research Centre (2009) ‘Children in the Outdoors: A Literature Review’ [http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/images/Children%20in%20the%20outdoors%20literature%20review\\_tcm4-597028.pdf](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/images/Children%20in%20the%20outdoors%20literature%20review_tcm4-597028.pdf)

11 8 Taylor, A. F., Wiley, A., Kuo, F. E. and Sullivan, W. C. (1998) ‘Growing up in the inner city – green spaces as places to grow’. *Environment and Behaviour*, Vol. 30(1), p2-27.

12 The Design Council (2014) ‘The Value of Public Space’ <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/report/value-public-spaces> p.17

13 Public Health England (2014) ‘Local Action on Improving Health Inequalities: Improving Access to Green Spaces’ [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/355792/Briefing8\\_Green\\_spaces\\_health\\_inequalities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355792/Briefing8_Green_spaces_health_inequalities.pdf) p. 5

14 City of London (2013) ‘Green Spaces: The Benefits for London’ <http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/business/economic-research-and-information/research-publications/Documents/research-2013/Green-Spaces-The-Benefits-for-London.pdf> p 17-19; Indeed, a report by the Natural Capital Committee recently argued that ‘carefully planned investments in natural capital, targeted at the best locations, will deliver significant value for money and generate large economic returns. These are competitive with the returns generated by more traditional infrastructure investments’. Source: Natural Capital committee (2015), ‘Investing in Natural Capital’ <http://www.naturalcapitalcommittee.org/investing-in-natural-capital.html>

These cuts to environmental budgets look to be widespread: State of the Market research by APSE found that 93% expect to reduce their revenue expenditure and 71% their capital expenditure in the public realm in the next year alone.<sup>15</sup> And in terms of depth, some councils we have spoken to report preparing for cuts of around 20% to street cleaning budgets, and around 50% to their parks budgets in 2016-17, with further reductions likely to follow.

To meet this challenge, council environmental teams are making efficiencies, for example by optimising street cleansing routes and re-organising teams to reduce some management layers. They are also attempting to increase revenue to cover costs by introducing or increasing charges for sports pitch hire or car parking, and granting licenses for more events such as festivals in parks. Some places with capital to spend are investing it so that it brings in a return for their parks - for example by building café facilities or renovating historic buildings so they can be hired out to businesses. Councils are also partnering with Business Improvement Districts to diversify their funding, starting to look for corporate sponsorship for things such as roundabout flower displays, and offering cleaning and waste services to the private sector for a charge.

15 APSE (2015) ‘State of Market Survey 2015: Local Authority Parks and Green Spaces Services’ <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-28-local-authority-parks-and-green-space-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

However efficiencies are unlikely to meet the whole funding gap, and while revenue generation is important, it has to be balanced with the negative impacts it can have – such as noise nuisance from more events or declines in accessibility as a result of charges. Additionally it may still not make up the dramatic shortfall to budgets, particularly in places with more limited footfall or commercial potential.

As a result many councils are also starting to take more drastic measures such as cutting back on activities like grounds maintenance and street cleansing and some councils are considering partially or fully closing or selling parks and open spaces in order to cut costs or gain income.<sup>16</sup> For example evidence from APSE's recent surveys of local authorities found that:

- 80% of respondents mentioned that maintenance of park grounds will be reduced<sup>17</sup>
- 75% mentioned that bedding and floral displays will be reduced<sup>18</sup>
- 71% said that they would be reducing service standards for parks<sup>19</sup>
- 51% of respondents reported plans to reduce the frequency of street cleansing, particularly on rural roads<sup>20</sup>
- 51% of respondents believed that the street cleaning service would be reducing levels of street cleanliness<sup>21</sup>
- 41% of respondents stated that they would be reducing litter picking in parks<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, a recent Heritage Lottery Fund survey found that in the next three years, 45% of local authorities were considering disposing of some green spaces and 19% of local authorities specifically mentioned disposing of parks as opposed to other green spaces.<sup>23</sup> As these statistics demonstrate, the impact of budgetary constraints on the public realm are likely to have a dramatic impact on the quality and quantity of our public spaces. This is a clear worry for council officers. As one officer stated, “the future is extremely worrying. The council still steps in to collect waste and keep parks clean now. In the future, we might have to stop providing these services altogether”.

## Need for new approaches

A trajectory of cut backs and closures is going to have significant impact on all our lives. Already 85% of APSE survey respondents believe that standards of cleanliness on our streets will either stay the same or decrease in the next year rather than improve.<sup>24</sup> There is a significant risk that service reductions will lead to spirals of decay and decline if no other action is taken.

Councils must urgently embrace more creative strategies to prevent demands such as litter that are unwanted, and find more creative ways to meet needs that are inevitable. We believe that there are two such approaches which are under-utilised by councils, and deserve far greater focus.

These are:

- Behaviour change to prevent issues like littering and irresponsible dog fouling happening in the first place;
- Better drives to harness community assets and capacity to meet demands that are inevitable.

The next two chapters will explore these approaches in more depth.

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16 Heritage Lottery Fund (2014) 'State of UK Public Parks: Renaissance to Risk?' <http://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks>

17 APSE (2015) 'State of Market Survey 2015: Local Authority Parks and Green Spaces Services' p.17 <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-28-local-authority-parks-and-green-space-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

18 APSE (2015) 'State of Market Survey 2015: Local Authority Parks and Green Spaces Services' p.17 <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-28-local-authority-parks-and-green-space-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

19 APSE (2015) 'State of Market Survey 2015: Local Authority Parks and Green Spaces Services' p.17 <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-28-local-authority-parks-and-green-space-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

20 APSE (2015) 'State of the Market Survey 2015: Local Authority Street Cleansing Services' p.12 <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-15-local-authority-street-cleansing-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

21 APSE (2015) 'State of the Market Survey 2015: Local Authority Street Cleansing Services' p.12 <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-15-local-authority-street-cleansing-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

22 APSE (2015) 'State of Market Survey 2015: Local Authority Parks and Green Spaces Services' p.17 <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-28-local-authority-parks-and-green-space-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

23 Heritage Lottery Fund (2014) 'State of UK Public Parks: Renaissance to Risk?' p.6 <http://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks>

24 APSE (2015) 'State of the Market Survey 2015: Local Authority Street Cleansing Services' p.4 <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2015/15-15-local-authority-street-cleansing-services-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

## 2. Behaviour change for prevention

### Current practice

In Britain our primary approach to keeping our public realm clean and fit for purpose has increasingly become one of cleaning up after others. Keep Britain Tidy estimate that public sector land managers spend over £850m each year keeping our streets, parks and public spaces clean and tidy and improving local environmental quality.<sup>25,26</sup> With continually decreasing budgets, this approach is clearly unsustainable. It is crucially important that councils move to a preventative approach to littering and other behaviours such as irresponsible dog fouling and graffiti.

Councils have preventative strategies. However success has often been episodic, needing on-going campaigns or resources, and there are opportunities for councils to be smarter in their approach to changing behaviour.

To date most approaches tend to focus on changing behaviour by changing people's minds and relying on reason or 'rationality'. For example programmes typically inform people of the impact of their behaviour on the environment, or try and incentivise or dis-incentivise behaviours through things such as points-based rewards schemes for recycling or fines/enforcement for anti-social behaviours.

Enforcement in particular appears to remain a popular strategy to prevent behaviours such as irresponsible dog fouling. APSE's 2015 State of the Market survey found that 56% of respondents thought that there will be an increase in enforcement/notices issued in the next 2-3 years, and this was supported by our case study interviews and roundtables. Our respondents felt that enforcement has become more publicly and politically acceptable in recent years. It is assumed by councillors to be an effective way of changing behaviour and a popular way of demonstrating that they are taking a 'strong stance' on tackling an issue. As one council officer mentioned in relation to dog fouling, "for the past six months it has been a very high priority, we've had a lot of councillor complaints and input, and there is a pressure to 'do something about dog fouling' and particularly to do more enforcement." However strategies such as this are not always the most effective, let alone cost-effective, way of bringing about sustained change for many behaviours, especially when used alone.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast to many assumptions, research shows that people do not always behave 'rationally'. They do not weigh up the information they know about the costs and benefits of their actions to themselves, the environment and society, before deciding how to act. While information can help to shape people's 'personal norms' or views about what they 'should' do – these do not always dictate behaviour. Instead recent insights from behavioural science and psychology show that people's behaviour is strongly influenced by a range of factors in their immediate 'choice environment' and a range of unconscious 'heuristics' or mental 'rules of thumb'. These include, but are not limited to, those shown in Box 2.

### New approaches

Behavioural approaches have implications for the way we deal with everyday environmental behaviours such as littering. If councils fail to understand these drivers and to question assumptions about how people behave this means that many of their existing preventative interventions may be ineffective or even damaging, and that they overlook other more effective strategies.

For example signs seen in many public places prohibiting people from activities like littering may in fact prompt or prime people to do so. In one study, nicotine addicted participants were shown a number of photographs of street scenes. Those who were shown images with 'no smoking' signs hidden within them were more likely to show motivation to smoke compared to those who were shown pictures without the signs. Because people disregarded the 'no', the signs actually increased the salience of smoking, and primed the nicotine addicted individuals to want to smoke.<sup>28</sup>

25 Keep Britain Tidy (2014) 'Written Evidence Submitted to Communities and Local Government Committee – Litter and Fly Tipping in England' p.4 <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/litter/written/14236.pdf>

26 Keep Britain Tidy (2014) 'Written Evidence Submitted to Communities and Local Government Committee – Litter and Fly Tipping in England' p.2 <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/litter/written/14236.pdf>

27 Ipsos Mori (2011) 'The Effectiveness of Enforcement on Behaviour Change' <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Publications/sri-manchester-effectiveness-of-enforcement-kbt-2011.pdf>

28 Earp, Brian D et al 'Incidental Exposure to No-Smoking Signs Primes Craving for Cigarettes: An Ironic Effect of Unconscious Semantic Processing?' <http://www.yale.edu/yrurp/issues/Earp%20et%20al,%20No%20Smoking%20and%20Ironic%20Semantic%20Processing.pdf>



## Box 2: Some behavioural insights<sup>29</sup>

### Incentives:

We do not always respond to cost/benefits in purely 'rational' ways. For example when calculating cost-benefits, losses tend to loom larger than gains, meaning that fear of losing money may be more likely to have impact than incentives. Similarly we often 'live for today', and tend to be more influenced by costs and benefits that take effect immediately, rather than those delivered later.

### Social norms:

People tend to behave in the way they think their peers are behaving or expect them to behave. For example emphasising negative social norms like 'too many people are littering' may in fact mean that people litter more, rather than less, since it suggests that littering is what many people do.

### Social messengers:

We are heavily influenced by who communicates information. The perceived authority of the messenger (whether formal or informal) affects how we take on board information. For example research suggests we often give more weight to information from experts or 'people like us' than from other sources.

### Affect:

Our emotions and moods powerfully impact decision-making. For example people in good moods tend to make unrealistically optimistic judgements or engage in

more pro-social behaviours, while those in bad moods make unrealistically pessimistic judgements or act in more anti-social ways.

### Salience:

Our attention is drawn to what seems novel, simple, accessible or relevant to us. How information or objects are presented or designed impacts on how we use them. For example we tend to respond best to letters with simple messages, or which are personalised to us.

### Planning:

There is a substantial gap between intentions and actual behaviour. To overcome this it often helps to prompt people to identify the barriers to action, and develop a specific plan to address them.

### Priming:

Similarly our actions are influenced by sub-conscious cues, such as sights, words, or sensations – which can 'prime' us to behave in certain ways. For example the size of bins, the smell of an area, and situational cues such as footsteps to bins have been shown to prime people's behaviour in relation to littering.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Adapted from Behavioural Insights Team MINDSPACE and EAST frameworks. Behavioural Insights Team (2010) 'MINDSPACE' <http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/mindspace/>; Behavioural Insights Team (2014) 'EAST: Four Simple Ways to Apply Behavioural Insights' <http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/east-four-simple-ways-to-apply-behavioural-insights/>

<sup>30</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2010) 'MINDSPACE' p.25 <http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/mindspace/>

This insight has implications for the greater use of persuasion strategies where the behaviour you want is emphasised, rather than the one you do not want (called 'affirmation based persuasion strategies'). But more broadly, better understanding of how people's behaviour is influenced by their immediate environment has wider implications that councils could be drawing on when designing their public realm and marketing materials.

Indeed, insights or tools cannot just be picked off the shelf and applied, but need to be part of a wider process of defining and fully understanding the behaviour you want to address, before designing a solution or range of solutions that might work, and ideally testing and evaluating this before rolling them out. This process of local research and solution development is important because while many insights will be the same across different sorts of groups, some are culturally variable. Similarly insights that have proven effective in one environment or context may work differently when applied elsewhere or in a different way.



## Overcoming challenges to innovation

Councils know that these new approaches to managing the public realm are necessary, and there are some pioneers who are applying these insights in their local areas and achieving positive results.

For example a number of councils including Wirral Borough Council trialed different behavioural-insight informed posters to prevent dog fouling. These posters were informed by the idea that people behave in more socially conscious ways if they feel that they are being watched. The posters reduced the average number of dog fouling incidents at target sites by 46% across all councils. Similarly Rochford Borough Council developed a scheme where they offered a social incentive if people used high street rubbish bins more, which led to significant reductions in on-street litter.

These and other examples of how pioneering councils are putting behavioural insights into action are shown on Pages 12 and 13.

### Challenges

However there are a number of challenges that are preventing the majority of councils from attempting this sort of activity, and hindering others from doing so successfully or embedding it across their work. These are outlined below, followed by suggestions for how councils can overcome them.

#### *Lack of understanding of principles of effective behaviour change, especially behavioural psychology, and how to design and test interventions*

There is a tendency for officers and councillors in particular to fall back on well-known approaches such as enforcement or education, and make assumptions about what works. This appears to be linked to a lack of knowledge of new techniques, and about behavioural insights in particular. One interviewee noted that:

*“There is relatively little conscious use of behavioural insights by councils. Councils are starting to do little things, and ‘direct marketing’ is helping to put the approach on the agenda. But I don’t think this is applied consistently everywhere. One of the main barriers is a lack of awareness.” (Council officer)*

Consultation respondents mentioned that they “don’t have the information on behavioural science – we need some local data/studies” (Head of Operations, District Council). They also said that they didn’t know where to find insights and thought that “greater emphasis and support needs to be given to local authorities in the development and use of nudge techniques” (Demand Management Officer, Metropolitan Borough Council).

Similarly many staff are not familiar with the principles and methodology needed for rigorous testing and are thus either unsure about how to design evaluations such as controlled trials well, or are not fully aware of the importance of doing so. This is problematic because being able to root new ideas for solutions in research, and then rigorously test if interventions do in fact change behaviour, is a crucial part of rolling out effective strategies to change behaviour.

This testing must be done rigorously. Yet often councils – and even often those with external support for evaluation – fall into similar sorts of problems when undertaking evaluations of behaviour change interventions that impact on the usefulness of their findings. For example they may collect data on indicators which don’t fully measure the intended outcome, underestimate the importance of sample sizes, forget to communicate fully with frontline staff about data collection, or underestimate the time taken to prepare and plan interventions. This issue is clearly seen in the case study of Edinburgh City Council presented in Case Study 2, where short timeframes hindered their innovative work testing different approaches to tackling fly tipping.

## Box 3: Examples of behavioural insights in action

### 1. Copenhagen: Salient bin design

There is evidence that the design of bins has a large impact on littering. More salient designs, such as bright colours which people associate with litter rather than the environment (such as orange or yellow rather than green or black) may attract bin use, and some research suggests people often prefer to 'drop' litter into open bins rather than to 'post' it through slots in covered bins.<sup>31</sup> This appears to be linked to the perception that small slots mean people have to put their hands closer to dirt, and alternatively the innate satisfaction or 'fun' that dropping or throwing litter into a target brings.

In Copenhagen they took this into account and have designed bins that are open and yellow coloured, and some are slightly angled to make putting in litter as easy as possible – especially for the many cyclists in the city.<sup>32</sup> After a trial which indicated that painted footsteps leading up to bins reduced littering, they also introduced bright yellow footprints leading to many of the city's bins. The trial involved handing out sweets to residents on two occasions – once before the use of the footprint markers, and once after, and counting how many wrappers were on the floor after the experiment. They found that there was a 46% decrease in wrappers ending up on the streets on that day, and that three months' later there was still a 26% decrease.<sup>33</sup> As well as making the bins more salient and obvious to people, this intervention likely also uses the power of norms since the footprints suggest to passers-by that other people have taken this route to the bin, and thus that they should follow suit.

### 2. Wirral Borough Council: Social norms to encourage responsible dog ownership

Wirral Borough Council partnered with Keep Britain Tidy to trial a number of posters to prevent people letting their dogs foul on the pavements. Research showed that dog fouling incidents tend to be worse at night time or in areas which are not overlooked, such as alleyways – suggesting that this could be because some dog owners behave irresponsibly when they think they aren't being seen by others. Other research has shown that people behave in more socially responsible ways if they are primed to feel like they're being watched, and that highlighting positive social norms – that most people do a desired action – can be effective in encouraging more people to behave that way too.

As a result Keep Britain Tidy designed laminated A3

31 Keep Britain Tidy (forthcoming), on non-alcoholic drink littering. NB The costs of dispersion of litter from open bins by animals or wind must be offset by the greater use of open bins – and it may be that a mixed model with semi-closed bins with large openings are the most cost-effective overall.

32 iNudgeyou (2012) 'Anti Littering Nudge #4: Why litter bins should be orange! Not green' <http://inudgeyou.com/anti-littering-nudge-1-why-littering-bins-should-be-orange-not-green/>

33 iNudgeyou (2012) 'Green nudge: Nudging litter into the bin' <http://inudgeyou.com/green-nudge-nudging-litter-into-the-bin/>; Lu, V 'Nudge here, Nudge there, can bring behaviour change' in The Star Business [http://www.thestar.com/business/2013/04/05/nudge\\_here\\_nudge\\_there\\_can\\_bring\\_behaviour\\_change.html](http://www.thestar.com/business/2013/04/05/nudge_here_nudge_there_can_bring_behaviour_change.html)

posters for dog fouling hotspots which featured glow in the dark eyes and text reminding people of what is socially acceptable. They found that the average change in incidents of dog fouling across all councils was a 46% decrease per site. While all versions of the poster were effective, the reinforcement message using positive social norms was the most effective in decreasing incidents of dog fouling (an average 49% reduction overall).

*A more detailed case study of this intervention can be found on page 27.*

### 3. Rochford Borough Council: Social incentives for bin use<sup>34</sup>

Rochford Borough Council partnered with Keep Britain Tidy and the Wrigley Company to try and reduce litter on their high street. Research from elsewhere suggested that social incentives – which reward social causes rather than individuals – may be particularly effective in motivating behaviour. To test this they designed a trial where bins on the high street were covered in 'wraps' indicating that the more litter in the bin compared to on the street, the more money would be given to a local charity that month. On average over the three months of the trial the proportion of litter on the street decreased by 42% from the baseline month. Additionally litter levels progressively decreased each month and continued to do so even once the wraps had been removed -reaching an impressive decline in litter of 63%.<sup>35</sup>

### 4. Greenwich Council: Baby faces and anti-social behaviour<sup>36</sup>

After the 2011 riots, Greenwich Council partnered with Ogilvy Change to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour on their high streets. To tackle this issue Ogilvy designed a nudge using the power of 'affect'. Research suggested that babies' faces create an innate caring response and reduce anti-social behaviour. Therefore international artists were commissioned to spray paint the faces of local babies onto shop shutters. This primed people to feel and behave in a different way. Because the babies reflected the people of the area, and the art was of high quality, the nudge also aimed to enhance people's sense of social responsibility, and community pride and ownership. A year after the event, police and local residents reported that crime and anti-social behaviour in the area had decreased. This intervention is now being tested elsewhere in the world.<sup>37</sup>

34 Keep Britain Tidy Innovation Centre (2015) 'Bin it for good: Incentivising people to reduce littering through charitable giving – case study' <http://keepbritaintidy.org/news/1952?newsId=2246>

35 Source <http://keepbritaintidy.org/news/1952?newsId=2246>

36 Image: [http://www.offlimit.co.za/video-2/power-cute/attachment/poweroffcute\\_new/](http://www.offlimit.co.za/video-2/power-cute/attachment/poweroffcute_new/)

37 BBC News Magazine 'Could babies' faces reduce crime?' 29 August 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19398580>; Ogilvy Change Case Studies 'The Babies of the Borough' <http://www.ogilvychange.com/casestudies/>

## Behavioural insights in action



### *Insufficient capacity to overcome knowledge gaps or to design and trial interventions*

Many councils feel that they lack the capacity to get to grips with secondary research about behaviour change in order to address their knowledge gaps. As one consultation respondent noted:

*"The emphasis on looking at more innovative approaches is restricted due to the cutting back in services and the requirement to deliver the core services without the perceived time/resource to concentrate on 'new' methods"*  
(Waste Policy and Performance Officer, District Council)

Additionally they also feel they lack the capacity to conduct meaningful research to understand local behaviours, and to design and test new solutions. Even some of those who had been part of pilots, with assistance from external bodies Keep Britain Tidy, mentioned that they felt it would be difficult for them to do the same sorts of trial again without this external assistance, given the uncertainty about the outcome of the trials and their strained capacity.

*"Unfortunately, as many council budgets have been cut, and a lot of waste and enforcement teams have been reduced, I don't think that we always have the resources to carry out full proper investigations into reasons and behaviours and causes."*  
(Team Leader for Waste Prevention, Council)

Similarly while external assistance can be helpful in overcoming design and evaluation skill gaps for individual projects, these skills are not then embedded with those councils. Some staff who had been part of pilots mentioned that they did not have the capacity to easily apply the same sort of frameworks to other areas or new projects.

### *Cultural fear of failure*

A commonly cited challenge to embracing a more scientific approach to behaviour change in the public realm was a culture of lack of innovation and risk aversion within local councils. Part of this relates to limited funding and attitudes to risk – particularly amongst middle managers who are sometimes wary of investing in trialing new approaches without the vocal backing of senior leadership, fearing that it may reflect badly on them if trials do not achieve the desired outcomes:

*“Even though every trial adds to the evidence, for councils who are under pressure and who must be accountable in how they spend money, fear is a real barrier. That is why we see councils sometimes not being involved with initial pilot trials but only rolling out ideas once they are proven elsewhere – this is particularly amongst the middle management, whereas senior management are often more willing to take risks ... Lower down people tend to have less time/perhaps have more risk of losing their jobs if there is a change to focusing on prevention. It’s almost shocking how much it relies on strategic directions set by managers to get these things off the ground ...”*  
(External stakeholder)

### **Structural barriers dis-incentivising prevention**

A number of respondents mentioned that outsourcing of contracts meant that some contractors “have no incentive to decrease demand or innovate” (council officer). Similarly given the delineation of officer roles very much linked to particular sorts of activities, for example ‘enforcement officers’ and ‘education officers’. There is often not an incentive for these officers to focus on more holistic preventative strategies which are outside their specified roles or outputs.

## **Practical recommendations for change**

To overcome these challenges and seize all opportunities, we make the following practical recommendations:

- **Seek outside expertise and funding.** External sources of support and sometimes funding are often invaluable to help design trials, develop materials, fund data collection and undertake analysis. Councils should continue to seek external support from a variety of partners, including local businesses.
- **Develop internal knowledge and skills.** Internal knowledge and leadership are important too. External partnerships do not always lead to increased capability and capacity to undertake behaviour change techniques internally. Councils with an individual committed to leading on behaviour change within an environmental team or centrally within a policy or strategy role can utilise their own expertise and also spread their capacity internally. To develop this knowledge and avoid some of the common pitfalls involved in designing and evaluating behaviour change interventions, interested councils make use of available resources about behaviour change and designing and implementing behaviour change initiatives. This includes the list of ‘Top Tips’ which can be found at the end of this report, and very useful resources available from Keep Britain Tidy’s Centre for Social Innovation, the Behavioural Insights Team, and APSE’s Performance Networks and their newly developed Land Audit Management System.<sup>38</sup>
- **Where a service is outsourced or is going to be outsourced, councils should consider the impact of this on reducing demand, and possibly negotiate with contractors to build demand reduction into contracts.** Councils should consider negotiating outcomes (such as percentage reductions in littering) rather than actions (such as cleaning the streets a prescribed number of times) with contractors, and hold them to account.
- **Political interest and enthusiastic senior leadership is key.** To overcome fear of failure or

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<sup>38</sup> Keep Britain Tidy Centre for Social Innovation website provides very useful case studies, toolkits and information provided on this newly launched website from Keep Britain Tidy. The centre’s focus is on behaviour change for prevention, and it provides useful guidance on design and evaluation of solutions. <http://www.innovate.keepbritaintidy.org/design-hub/1948>; The Behavioural Insights Team’s publication ‘EAST – Four Simple Ways to Apply Behavioural Insights’ is a short and easy to understand publication introduces a simple framework to help public organisations understand behaviour change. It features advice from their advice based on the Behavioural Insights Team’s work and the wider academic literature. It also provides advice about how to rigorously evaluate and improve initiatives by testing, learning, and adapting them. [http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/sites/default/files/BIT%20Publication%20EAST\\_FA\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/sites/default/files/BIT%20Publication%20EAST_FA_WEB.pdf)



cultural resistance there must be buy-in from senior management and leading politicians. They should be vocal in their support of initiatives, and give managers license to innovate. Case study partners mentioned the importance of political interest in tackling environmental issues, and service managers who were “forward thinking, with lots of ideas” in spearheading their councils’ involvement in behaviour change trials.

- **Engage volunteers and students to support councils with specific public realm behaviour change projects.** Training trusted volunteers to help collect data, and seeking partnerships with universities, could help overcome skills gaps and give final year or masters’ students valuable opportunities to design and help implement useful and interesting trials as part of their studies.
- **Councils should be linking digital technology with behaviour change to a greater extent.** For example if councils develop or purchase free apps about their local park, trials could be developed where residents are sent push notifications when they enter the park to remind them that ‘The majority of people help keep [name of park] nice for everyone by putting rubbish in the bin. Thank you to everyone who has put their picnic litter in the bin today’. Similarly investment in some ‘smart’ infrastructure, such as bins that notify control rooms when they are full<sup>39</sup>, would allow councils to use data to create more responsive services.

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<sup>39</sup> For example as is being explored in Milton Keynes for their recycling bins ‘MK: Smart – Helping Deliver the Internet of Things in Milton Keynes’ (23 May 2014) <http://www.mksmart.org/blog/2014/05/23/mksmart-helping-to-deliver-the-internet-of-things-in-milton-keynes/>

# 3. Harnessing community and business assets

## Current practice

Behaviour change strategies help to prevent ‘avoidable demands’ such as littering and fly tipping. However councils also need new ways to fund this, and to meet ‘unavoidable demands’ such as grounds maintenance and horticultural work that will always be necessary if we want our public areas and green spaces to thrive. Local communities benefit from a thriving public realm in many ways, and they also possess many assets – such as time, funding or expertise – that can contribute to its sustainability. We believe that councils need to be bolder and more concerted in the way in which they harness these reserves of support for local benefit.

At the moment a number of councils do try to get the public involved in their local public realm. For example, it is not uncommon for councils to involve residents in decision-making forums such as ‘Friends of Parks’ groups. Similarly in the last few years more councils including parish councils, have attempted to encourage local residents to become involved in carrying out specific activities such as gritting pavements during the icy weather through ‘Snow Angel’ schemes, or litter picking through community clean up days.

However in most councils, community involvement is usually a discretionary ‘add on’ rather than something which significantly contributes to the long term viability of our parks or open spaces. We believe there are opportunities for councils to increase the depth, breadth, and volume of local involvement. This has intrinsic benefits to local people. But by increasing people’s pride, care and contribution towards local public spaces it can also help safeguard these places in the face of the drastic cuts to budgets.

## New approaches

### Depth of involvement

There are examples of parish and community group led involvement, on both a small and large scale. However much of this is often just about ‘informing’ or ‘consulting’ which does not necessarily give residents the chance to play a more direct role in shaping ideas or action, and is towards the lower end of the ‘Ladder of Participation’ shown in Diagram 1. Where citizens have greater and more genuine involvement – for example where sports pavilions or buildings have been transferred to community management – these are usually isolated examples and not part of a wider strategy.

Diagram 1 - Ladder of Participation<sup>40</sup>

<b>Citizen empowerment</b>	Stakeholders have the idea, set up the project, and come to facilitators for advice, discussion and support. Facilitators do not direct, but offer advice for citizens to consider.
<b>Delegated power</b>	The goal is likely to have been set by the facilitator but the resources and responsibility for solving the problem are passed to the stakeholders. There are clear lines of accountability and two-way communication with those giving away the power.
<b>Partnership</b>	Stakeholders have direct and joint involvement in the decision making process and actioning the decision. Each stakeholder has a clear role, set of responsibilities and powers – usually to achieve a common goal. Two-way communication is vital.
<b>Involvement/placation</b>	Stakeholders have an active role as shapers of opinion, ideas, and outcomes, but the final decision remains with the facilitators. Two way communication is essential.
<b>Consultation</b>	Stakeholders opinions and views are sought but the final decision remains with the facilitators.
<b>Informing</b>	Stakeholders are kept informed of what is going on but are not offered the opportunity to contribute themselves. Communication is one way.

40 Source: Adapted from S Arnstein and VK Bray’s Ladder of Participation <https://slamtwigops.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/arnsteins-ladder-of-participation.jpg>

In contrast to more superficial consultative approaches, more in-depth community involvement offers various benefits. For example Lambeth Council's Community Freshview work is helping to increase residents' wellbeing and sense of neighbourhood pride by giving them the tools and freedom make small improvements to their local streets, and their Co-operative Parks Programme is helping to provide better social and economic value than traditional outsourced models by involving communities to a much greater extent.

## Box 4: Lambeth Council Community Freshview

Community Freshview is a locally led initiative which brings Lambeth residents together to rejuvenate local places. Working with community groups, local residents develop plans for improving a space, recruit volunteers through door knocking and leafleting, and then carry out activities such as litter picking, painting, weeding, tidying overgrowth and building planter boxes over a weekend with tools and some support provided by the council's Environmental Services and Highways Team.

This approach is effective because it is community led and directed, with the council playing only a supportive

role. The scheme has been found to enhance community capacity, improve people's perceptions of, and pride in, their areas, and to improve their sense of their own wellbeing. What is more, by improving the visual appearance of the areas and making them look cared for, the scheme was found to reduce the littering and improve the cleanliness of the area immediately after the refresh, and for two months' afterwards.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Keep Britain Tidy 'Community Freshview' <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/community-freshview/2460/2/1/906/12>; Love Parks 'Community Freshview case study' <http://www.loveparks.org/communityfreshviewcasestudy/1460>

## Box 5: Lambeth Council Co-operative Parks Programme

Lambeth became a Co-operative council in 2013, meaning they are committed to working more collaboratively with the community to achieve local outcomes. As part of this they established their Cooperative Parks Programme. The programme aims to enable the local community to become more involved in decision-making and the direct management of parks. It involves a three tier model, which began to be implemented in 2014.

**Tier 1: Council-led management / Status Quo:** traditional Council managed approach; limited community involvement

**Tier 2: Cooperative management / Partnership Parks:** setting up a representative partnership between the Council, community, councillors, and other partners who jointly make decisions about their local park or open space

**Tier 3: Community-led management / Pioneer Parks:** community-led group/s is/are responsible for managing the park or facility and the services delivered; the Council adopts a purely monitoring role

In contrast to the simple 'top slicing' of existing council-wide grounds maintenance contracts with private companies, both the council and local community groups believe that more flexible, park-based, and not-for-profit local management of parks offers the following benefits:

- A more preventative and responsive approach delivering a higher quality environment. For example if a fence needs fixing, the presence of on the ground local staff means this can easily be arranged before it gets worse.

- Staff and volunteers are more motivated and dedicated owing to greater, more local control and greater sense of buy-in.
- The local economy gains through commitments to use local suppliers and support other social enterprises.
- Local organisations can lever in more national and local philanthropic and voluntary support as the schemes are closer to the ground and have a different charitable status than publically owned and managed estate.
- Intrinsic benefits to residents and communities involved in them, such as a strong sense of achievement following from improvements, enjoyment of participation, physical activity, being outdoors and feeling useful, and community capacity and cohesion.

So far the council have transferred management of The Rookery, a historic landscaped garden in Streatham, to Streatham Common Co-operative (SCOOP), a group newly formed by the Friends of Streatham Common. A number of other community groups such as Myatt's Fields Park Project are also in the process progressing to 'Pioneer Park' status. Other parks retain council overall management, depending on local capacity, and the council retains ownership and oversight for all parks. However across the board there is a commitment to increase local involvement.

A full case study of Lambeth's Co-operative Parks Programme can be found on page 31

## Breadth of involvement

### *Widening stakeholders*

Councils could be encouraging and involving a broader range of stakeholders in the public realm. It doesn't just have to be down to councils and residents to look after local places, and local businesses and national organisations have an important role to play too. This is especially important given the local environmental impacts of businesses (for example when packaging from fast food takeaways and supermarkets are disposed of antisocially this leads to externalised costs to the council and society), and given the benefits that other companies gain from well maintained public realm spaces. Businesses should be contributing more to this by directly cleaning up their areas, displaying smarter communications, or contributing funds or other resources.

For example in Lambeth, while involving community groups, they are also considering how some parks might be run in partnership with local schools or sports clubs, as these institutions already employ grounds maintenance staff and have existing infrastructure such as electric lawn mowers that could be extended or shared between areas.

Similarly there is much greater scope for other partnerships where businesses contribute charitable investments to local areas. For example in Sheffield the city council are working with the National Trust (and with the support of Funding from NESTA, HLF and Big Lottery Fund's Rethinking Parks Programme) to try and develop an endowment model for the city's parks. An endowment model is an investment fund where the principal amount is kept intact while the investment income is used for charitable efforts. The project is attempting to gain contributions to the fund from a broad range of local stakeholders, including those in the health sector, philanthropists, and corporate partners.<sup>42</sup> By doing so it hopes to secure a sustainable income stream for the upkeep of these areas.

### *Widening activities*

Councils could also broaden the activities that local communities are involved in. For example, currently activities tend to be restricted to participating in litter picks, helping with horticulture and gardening, and fixing and brightening up their local streets. However, there are plenty of opportunities for volunteers to collect data for evaluations, be trained to open park gates, and help spread behaviour change campaigns - for example by putting up stickers or posters in their windows or sharing content online. Similarly there is certainly scope for encouraging greater public financial contributions, for example through crowd-funded campaigns for public realm projects.



42 NESTA 'Endowing Public Parks for the 21st Century' <http://www.nesta.org.uk/endowing-public-parks-21st-century>



## Box 6: Ealing crowd-funding

Ealing Council have established an 'Ealing Hive' on the crowd-funding website Space Hive. It allows community groups to post ideas for projects needing funding, and for others to pledge money towards them. To encourage residents to get involved, in 2014 Ealing launched Transform Your Space– a £625,000 pot of money to help fund projects aiming to improve outdoor areas in the

borough that were posted on the forum. This has funded projects to transform a local cemetery, and create a green oasis for a community in a heavily industrialised area. The fund continued in 2015 with a £410,000 pot of money.<sup>43</sup>

43 Ealing Hive – Space Hive <http://www.spacehive.com/initiatives/ealing>; Ealing Bubble 'Transform Your Space 2' <http://www.dosomethinggood.org.uk/funding/transform-your-space-2>

### Volume of involvement

The volume of involvement across all sorts of participation could be extended if councils make better use of some of the behavioural science insights highlighted in the previous chapter. For example the Behavioural Insights Team have been testing how to increase charitable giving. In one trial they worked with Deutsch Bank to increase the number of employees who were willing to give a day's salary to charity. It showed that personalised emails from the CEO were more effective than a generic email. But when personalised emails were combined with the giving away of sweets to people (using the idea of reciprocity, and salience) they more than tripled donation rates compared to the normal email.<sup>44</sup>

This sort of experimentation with different sorts of communication and strategies of engagement can be explored much more broadly by councils and local park management groups to increase donations or volunteering. For example there are opportunities for councils to employ the idea of reciprocity – the idea that 'I will if you will' – by only funding community projects if they receive a certain amount of funding from the community first.<sup>45</sup>



This emphasis on encouraging community contributions to local areas is not to deny that councils have, and will continue to have, an important role or that local parks and pavements would not benefit from greater state investment. For example, councils need to be mindful that the ability for communities and businesses to contribute may be different in different parts of a local authority depending on deprivation or affluence, and councils need to play a care taker role to ensure gains benefit all areas. Yet given that budgets are being cut and will continue to be in the foreseeable future, and the intrinsic and added value of greater local community and business involvement in managing or supporting these initiatives, a greater emphasis on using behaviour change and engagement with residents to reduce and help meet demand will be a vital element of retaining high quality public realm.

### Overcoming challenges to innovation

By increasing the depth, breadth and volume of engagement in public realm management through smarter and more concerted approaches, councils have a chance of keeping parks and gardens alive

44 Cabinet Office 'Applying Behavioural Insights to Charitable Giving' (2013) [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/203286/BIT\\_Charitable\\_Giving\\_Paper.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/203286/BIT_Charitable_Giving_Paper.pdf) p.20

45 Image source: Myatt's Field Park Community Greenhouse <http://www.brixtonblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/greenhouse-people.jpg>, and Friends of The Rookery at community planting day <http://www.londongardenstrust.org/features/Rookery.htm>

and thriving, despite reducing budgets. As we have seen there are some places pioneering smart and concerted approaches to do this. However most councils are still sticking to ad hoc approaches and very limited community engagement. Places such as Lambeth who have well established community involvement projects, and Sheffield who are exploring new endowment models for parks, are relatively rare. Additionally these places are not all finding change plain sailing.

Our research identified a number of issues as to why this is:

### **Knowledge, skills, and resources**

The key challenges holding councils back from harnessing community capacity are similar to those impacting on their adoption of behaviour change tools, and relate to knowledge, skills and resources. While 'community engagement' is a buzzword, people felt unsure about what new approaches to engagement might look like. "Cynicism and traditional approaches/mind-set to commissioning services" were also mentioned as a barrier, particularly when staff have often been encouraged to see community involvement as a risk rather than as an asset. Similarly, shortages of staff capacity to implement new approaches effectively is an issue. In our case study areas progress had been slower than initially hoped, because building community capacity can be resource intensive. In Lambeth, developing the partnership parks model, with facilitation and flexibility for each park, requires significant resources at a time when this is in short supply in councils.

### **Perceived lack or fragility of resident capacity**

Relating to community involvement in particular, their perception of risk was informed by their fear that there is not enough community interest or capacity in their areas, and that community involvement is not sustainable and cannot be relied upon to deliver outcomes for local places. Previous research by APSE supports this. In *'Governance, neighbourhoods and service delivery II'* a key issue identified is that resident engagement can be episodic and transitory based on age, family life and work-life balance issues for would-be volunteers.<sup>46</sup>

*"An issue is that these things are dependent on individuals. You need a long term plan to keep them sustainable. But the bottom can still fall out" (Councillor)*

### **Funding challenges – upfront costs and future certainty**

Even in places with external funding, local government budget uncertainty and reductions pose a serious risk. Community groups who took on more responsibility in Lambeth found this a particular challenge stating that "we are a real business, and we need cash-flow certainty. We need to know the budget for next year in advance". Insufficient clarity, and a lack of communication about the source of budget uncertainty, does threaten to disengage community groups and dissipate good will.

Similarly red-tape and reductions to funding risk disengaging resident and community groups from taking on greater responsibility. Community groups we spoke to believed that even with significantly reduced budgets they could provide a better service than external contractors. However if cuts are so steep that community groups feel they cannot achieve the basic quality they would want for the area, there is a risk that they would rather not take up the challenge and would prefer to leave the responsibility for decline to the council or contractors.

*"The biggest problem we have now is that the cuts are way worse than what I could have imagine... Right now, we are budgeted and sorted. But from April 2016, we will need a new budget and we simply don't know if it will be doable because of the further cuts. For our organisation to go ahead with that sort of money, I'm not even sure that it is worth delivering bad and very basic services ... it might be better then to let the council struggle. Do I really want to set myself up to fail?" (Chair of pioneer park board)*

Timing of cuts and consultation is especially important, and ideally there is a need for some sort of bridge funding to support new community groups just taking control of their parks. This is a challenge for councils, who find it difficult to plan in advance given uncertainties about their budgets. And sadly, the impetus for change has come at a time when councils have less money to carry out transformation programmes.

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<sup>46</sup> Griggs, Roberts, Bramah, APSE/De Montfort University (2009) 'Governance, Neighbourhoods And Service Delivery II: The Ensuring Council' <http://apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/research/current-research-programme/the-ensuring-council-governance-neighbourhoods-and-service-delivery/>

*“The timing is awful - having the budget cuts at the same time as they launched the new scheme. Because now, anyone willing to bid for cooperative management is coming in at a time where there is virtually no budget left and it is therefore very difficult to start running a park in this context” (Community group chair)*

### **Contracts, workforce matters and structural challenges**

Clunky council-wide service delivery contracts can be a challenge to greater involvement of residents in creating sustainable public realm services. In Lambeth they had to roughly estimate disaggregated budgets by park when preparing business cases, and then make sure that the roll out of the programme matched up with the end of their existing large contracts. They are currently exploring how to enable a pioneer park approach alongside an overall council maintenance service for the remainder of its parks – with current options including: park-by-park rather than borough wide contracts with their outsourced provider; taking grounds maintenance in-house; or disaggregating the existing services amongst other service areas and providers - for example the highways team undertaking the maintenance of paths in parks. As TUPE is by operation of law rather than an ‘option’, councils need to be very wary of any inadvertent workforce impacts as a consequence of new delivery models.

### **Communication and resident dissatisfaction**

Councils who do engage in community involvement projects sometimes struggle to get communication with residents right. There is a fear of phrasing things in terms of budget cuts, and that certain communication mediums will invite criticism from residents. However residents sometimes feel that communication is one-way, defensive and closed, or is too late. As a respondent mentioned:

*“In our council they are doing the current consultation too late. It is transparent enough but it has come too late.” (Consultation respondent)*

## **Practical recommendations for change**

The following practical recommendations and lessons from our case study areas can help councils overcome these challenges:

### **Develop an overall vision and culture of involvement.**

Having a clear strategic vision and culture of resident involvement was mentioned as helpful in the areas we observed who were doing pioneering work in this area. For example in Lambeth the council’s vision was to become a ‘cooperative council’, spearheaded by senior political leadership, and this was considered a fundamental factor in the development and also the continuation of their cooperative parks programme since it was something residents and staff could refer back to when obstacles were encountered. This vision should be shared by councillors who need to be comfortable with a certain amount of risk and uncertainty, and be willing to trust residents with devolved power. As two respondents stated:

*“We do come across blocks, but as a council we need to be able to accept risk.”  
(Councillor)*

*“It makes a difference if there is a strong leadership and strategy to make broad change as a whole; rather than small examples; you need them to fit into an overarching vision” (Council officer)*

### **Have faith in communities.**

Having this level of trust means having faith in communities ‘stepping up’. Whilst all councils were clear that you cannot just rely on volunteers to undertake important work, communities can be sustainable sources of local capacity, even in areas where this has previously not been acknowledged. As one council officer we spoke to said:

*“I was told it would never work in my county; that there was something special about the demography of my previous council. That they were young, dynamic, progressive; prospectors and pioneers, whereas the residents where I am now were more socially*

*conservative. But I felt that if I got the right question/community of interest, it would work. And it does.” (Head of Service, County Council)*

Other councils have also been finding that residents are stepping up to take responsibility, when faced with the stark alternative: “Before residents didn’t do it [supporting the management of their local park], there was no interest in getting involved. But when it matters, now they have come forward.” (Roundtable respondent).

Similarly, community groups are often less fragile than assumed. In Lambeth, as part of their parks contracts with community groups the council ensure that there is a cessation plan in place should the service become unviable or key individuals leave. Yet both the council and community groups felt that unsustainability was no more of a problem for the community group than it would be for the council – where big personalities also often drive change. While key individuals are instrumental in the establishment of local groups, once these are up and running this is less of a problem - particularly since the groups make sure to employ paid permanent members of staff as well as volunteers, and provided they have a strong and active board of trustees. Additionally interviewees felt that since key volunteers put their time and reputation into establishing groups, they have a vested interest in their survival: “I am motivated to make it work because of the effort I’ve put in” (community group member).

However ensuring community capacity does require volunteers to be acknowledged and respected. Part of a culture of involvement should include efforts to boost the morale of volunteers, and funding and income mechanisms which mean that groups feel that income gained from park improvements is fairly shared and recycled back into their parks, reflecting the effort they have put in.

Similarly, councils need to do their best to be open and transparent rather than defensive and closed, and efforts to devolve responsibility to community groups must be accompanied by continuous, and consistently open and respectful personal communication before and during (not just after) the development of new plans.

### **Don’t forget businesses and other local institutions.**

Businesses can contribute to local public realm improvements in many ways. This can span proven mechanisms such as Business Improvement Districts where local businesses may club together to help fund capital projects or ‘deep cleans’ of high streets, through to new models outlined in this chapter.

### **Adopt a flexible yet concerted strategy.**

While more ad hoc activity can be rewarding and flexibility is needed, often a concerted programme is required to gain momentum and enable the smartest use of council resources. In Knowsley Council for example a comprehensive green assets review facilitated the treatment of all their parks and green spaces as assets to be exploited for the good of local people. This approach provided a new deal for engagement with residents and local groups. As well as enabling friends of parks groups to bid for lottery funding, the council has been successful in accessing health funds to get the community, schools and local businesses active and engaged in its parks and green spaces whilst using them as an anchor for future funding streams.

Similarly whilst having a clear vision of resident engagement, it is important to start gradually and with low hanging fruit. As one respondent mentioned:

*“The concept [of community co-production] is very challenging for many people, they assume they are there to deliver public service rather than deliver facilitators ... You need to build confidence as many councils have spent a long time telling people [residents and staff] they can’t do things. So you have to try and create a more permissive way of doing things.” (Director of Communications, County Council)*

### **Use existing resources and examples from pioneer areas.**

Learn from the work of our case study areas, and NESTA’s forthcoming Rethinking Parks programme pilot reports which are exploring a range of models to ensure the sustainability of parks.<sup>47</sup>

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47 NESTA Rethinking Parks Programme <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks>

**Try and build flexibility into contracting.**

Where contracts are outsourced, councils should align any plans for changes to park or grounds management with contract renewals or renegotiations. These changes could range from delivery by community groups, to the building in of new mechanisms to involve residents in contract management – for example with comment boxes or monthly ‘walk-arounds’ with the contractors.



## 4. Conclusion and recommendations

Councils do not want to reduce the quality of, or access to, local parks or clean and beautiful streets. However they are in a difficult position. Budget cuts handed down by central government are forcing them to think differently about these places. Efficiencies are rightly being looked at across the board, and many places are also considering closures and service reductions in addition to charges and commercialisation.

This report urges councils to think beyond these initiatives and seize the opportunity to shift to a more preventative rather than reactive approach to cleansing and maintenance. By focusing on behaviour change to reduce demand and emboldening and harnessing the capacity of local communities, councils can help sustain the environments that make our areas worth living in.

These approaches have clear potential benefits: they offer better long term value for money, and improved social value and local wellbeing. And they are of course mutually reinforcing: increasing the local sense of ownership over areas helps to foster pride and thereby reduce littering, and insights gained about how to reinforce positive behaviour change can be used to help increase the volume of community involvement.

Yet as we have found out, fully embracing these approaches presents councils with challenges. Common to them both are challenges surrounding a lack of current knowledge and proven examples; cultural attachment to old ways of working and fears about new ones; clunky or uncreative external contracts; and limits to council capacity, funding and resources which make embarking on transformation a challenge even for the most committed areas. By making the case for these approaches, and presenting practical advice and examples from pioneering areas, we hope the previous chapters have dispelled some of these qualms. We believe councils, local organisations, and residents owe it to each other to embrace these initiatives, and work together to sustain our public realm.

In addition to the recommendations relating to each approach outlined in the previous two chapters, below we outline some overarching recommendations and untapped opportunities.

### Overarching recommendations

#### Key messages

- Councils and central government should **recognise the value of the public realm**. They should celebrate the positive impact that these spaces have on the wellbeing of their citizens, and recognise that these areas must therefore remain a priority if we are to save money and improve lives.
- Councils should embrace evidence-based **preventative approaches to issues like littering and fly tipping, which are informed by insights from behavioural science**, rather than simply cleaning up after these behaviours take place.
- Councils should **increase the breadth, depth, and volume of community involvement** in the public realm. More local stakeholders, from a wider array of different local organisations, should be engaged to contribute to their public realm through a wider array of activities.

#### Overcoming knowledge gaps and cultural resistance to change

In order to overcome gaps in knowledge and cultural resistance to change, we make the following recommendations:

- Central government should help establish a **Public Realm Behaviour Change Academy** to embed behaviour change and evaluation knowledge and skills within the local government workforce at low cost to councils. This would allow councils to go beyond applying behaviour change insights solely to one off projects or trials. As part of this we also recommend a **'Dared to Trial Award'** in order to help develop a culture of learning from tests and trials in local government, and reward those who put effort into growing the evidence base even if their experiments perhaps did not achieve the hoped for results.
- Central government needs to be clear on who **holds responsibility for litter and public**

**realm.** At the moment this sits between DCLG and DEFRA, and councils and third sector organisations working within this field are unsure where to go for advice and support relating to litter and the public realm.

- In order to overcome cultural resistance and fear, council leaders and managers must **articulate clear visions and strategies for their local areas which incorporate an openness to community empowerment, and experimentation with regard to changing local environmental behaviours.** These should be articulated in local plans, but must also be backed up and articulated verbally by councillors so that all staff and residents are aware of them.
- Councils should consider-reskilling enforcement or education officers who currently have more defined roles to help them to become **'public realm behaviour change officers'**. Councils should also make sure that they have team leaders or directors in environmental or parks departments whose role it is to coordinate and drive local preventative behaviour change initiatives and community and business involvement, and who have a responsibility to develop overarching **Clean and Green Behaviour Strategies** for the public realm with clear plans, outcomes and milestones.

### Collaborative working and resourcing change

In order for change to occur, councils must ensure that there is sufficient capacity and resources for implementation of new initiatives. Council budget cuts are only going to continue. We urge local authorities across the UK to act now before service reductions reduce quality substantially and it becomes harder to engage residents and foster local pride. However, to make this easier we recommend that:

- If cuts to park budgets are necessary then these should be slowed while more innovative approaches are embedded. While it is tempting to save money quickly, we urge councils, who are cutting parks budgets, to **gradually phase cuts to parks budgets** to enable behaviour change approaches and greater community engagement to be embedded and for demand to be effectively reduced.
- Councils should **encourage businesses to contribute to local public realm and street scene improvements** to a greater extent. This might include the use of local levies, use of acts such as the Street Litter Control Notices Order 1991 which requires shop owners to keep their street fronts clear of litter, or voluntary schemes and mechanisms that involve residents and businesses and enable them to contribute funds. Councils must play an overall role to ensure business and community interests relating to the public realm align.
- Councils should **collaborate with each other, and with local and national partners, on these issues to a greater extent.**
  - Where appropriate councils **should join forces with other councils to design and test new approaches to behaviour change across council borders** in order to achieve more robust results. Similarly councils should collaborate with each other when designing waste strategies and purchasing public realm architecture such as bins to evaluate the most effective solutions, and then to ensure consistency, avoid resident confusion, and benefit from economies of scale.
  - There should also be greater cross-organisation collaboration within local areas. This should include **liaison with those in public health, health, planning and development, regeneration, the voluntary and community sector, housing, transport and education** to make sure that behaviour change and community involvement activities and knowledge are embedded and consistently applied across these organisations. For example planning policies should be considering how the design of any new business, streetscape or housing developments will impact on issues such as litter or flooding. There is also a case for a more holistic approach to funding for the public realm across local public services, given the wide benefits that these places have on matters such as health and local economic growth, and we encourage the continued establishment of local mechanisms to support this.

## Box 7: Behaviour Change Evaluation Top Tips

In addition to the overall good practice lessons presented in this report, the following top tips should also help environmental teams overcome some of the common pitfalls involved in designing and testing behaviour change trials:

**Remember to use different techniques such as intercepts and observation to understand the issue you are seeking to change** before jumping to conclusions about why people might be doing a particular behaviour and designing your solutions.<sup>48</sup>

**When designing solutions remember to consider both insights gained from research into the behaviour**, and insights from behavioural science.

For example when designing posters, try and consider factors such as the simplicity and salience of the message, how it might relate to social norms, or if it depicts the behaviour you are trying to achieve or the one you are trying to discourage.

**Spend time thinking through practicalities** such as how long it will take to get direct debits set up, purchase any new equipment or communications materials, or gain approval for aspects of the trial, at the beginning and build this into your plan so that these are all ready when you start the trial.

**Make sure that everyday data collection systems are up to scratch.** Making sure that data is collected digitally for everyday activities and processes will help you understand citizen's behaviour and how this changes. Use service information and data about where litter or fly tipping incidents are generated, what sort of rubbish this is, or how demands change over time. This makes it easier to understand what specific behavioural change is required, where to target it for greatest impact,

and the impact of new initiatives. While everyday monitoring and reporting data often needs to be backed up with other data collection in tests, it is a useful to gain a sense of an issue.

**Spend time communicating with frontline staff.**

Make sure the designs for the trial and monitoring includes direct engagement with council and contractor staff such as refuse and street scene staff who will be implementing and collecting data for the schemes. If frontline staff have not been fully briefed or are not on board with the principles and purpose of the trials, mistakes can occur or important aspects are neglected, which can limit the usefulness of the evidence gained.

**Measure baseline levels before the trial and/or measure a control area during the trial.** Measuring at a control area will help you understand what would have happened if no action had been taken and can account for things such as fluctuations due to weather, or the impact of national campaigns happening in those weeks.

**Make sure your indicators measure what you are trying to change.** For example if you are trying to reduce dog fouling, make sure to gain an objective measure (e.g. how much dog fouling there is on the ground) and not just reported behaviour (e.g. how many complaints you got about dog fouling). In this instance it is the issue itself rather than the complaints about it that you are primarily attempting to change. Similarly do not take what residents say about how they have changed their behaviour as evidence that they have done so: there is often a gap between self-reported behaviour and what people actually did.

**Think about how best to gain an objective measure of behaviour.** For example when measuring littering, measure what goes in the bin as well as what is on the floor. Changes in the ratio of items in the bin to floor will give the best evidence of changes in littering behaviour.

<sup>48</sup> See Keep Britain Tidy Centre for Social Innovation 'Understanding Your Issue and It's Behavioural Context' toolkit sheet at <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/design-hub/1948>

## 5. Case studies

### Case study 1: Wirral Borough Council and Keep Britain Tidy dog fouling behaviour change trial

#### Background and aims

In 2013 Wirral Borough Council were facing pressure to deal with dog fouling in their area. While it has always been high on residents' priorities it became more of an issue for local residents and a political priority owing to complaints to councillors. This is possibly owing to a reduction in the frequency of street cleansing due to cuts to the council budget.

Previously the council had primarily taken a reactive stance, following reductions to their dog patrol team and enforcement over the last few years. However in 2013 they heard of a behaviour change campaign being developed by Keep Britain Tidy (KBT) and applied to be part of the initial pilot to test the intervention. The campaign was developed after research which found that incidents tend to be worse at night time or in areas which are not overlooked, such as alleyways – suggesting that this could be because some dog owners behave irresponsibly when they think they aren't being seen by others.

KBT were aware of research elsewhere which showed that people behave in more socially responsible ways, for example by putting money in an honesty box or not stealing bicycles, if they are primed to feel like they're being watched. They were also aware how using other insights from behavioural science – such as the use of 'descriptive social norms' – in posters can make big differences in behaviour.

Keep Britain Tidy designed laminated A3 posters for dog fouling hotspots which featured glow in the dark eyes reminding people of what is socially acceptable. They developed four posters, each with different versions of text beneath the eyes – testing different messages and insights from behavioural psychology.



#### Activities and outcomes

KBT recruited 15 local land manager partners, including Wirral Borough Council, to trial these posters in different dog fouling hot spots. In Wirral this meant counting dog fouls at each of their 20 target sites for three weeks before the installation of the posters, and then for another three weeks after installation. They also monitored numbers at nearby sites with no posters, to identify any occurrences of 'displacement' which might suggest that the posters had just pushed the problem elsewhere. Across all the councils involved, KBT gained data for 240 sites.

The results were analysed by KBT. They showed that the 'watching eyes' posters were highly effective in reducing dog fouling at both the target sites and potential displacement sites. The average change in incidents of dog fouling at target and displacement sites (taking both increases and decreases into

account) across all councils was a 46% decrease per site. Average dog fouling incidents fell from 17 to 9 incidents per site per week following the installation of the posters.<sup>49</sup>

While all versions of the poster were effective, the reinforcement message using positive social norms (Poster 3) was the most effective in decreasing incidents of dog fouling (an average 49% reduction overall). And while dog fouling decreased at all land use types tested, the posters were significantly less effective when used at social housing and public footpath sites.

In Wirral the trial was very effective. Overall dog fouling incidents had decreased in the target areas owing to the posters. The installation had been easy and the materials robust, and the trial had also gained a lot of political and public support and interest. Following the trial the council agreed to roll out the campaign to more areas. Because the results had been rigorously evaluated, senior management were willing to invest in the Campaign Pack provided by KBT after the experiment, which incorporated feedback and advice from all their partner sites – for example advice on how to involve the community more in the campaign.

*‘Our cabinet member is passionate about improving local environmental quality and sees dog fouling as particularly detrimental and unsociable. She was really excited about the new innovative posters designed by Keep Britain Tidy that glow in the dark and the results that were demonstrated from the trial. Senior management too – they thought ‘we need to try something different and this has been proven as having a positive impact’ (Waste Prevention Lead).*

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## Case study 2: Edinburgh City Council fly tipping behaviour change trial

### Background and aims

In April 2014 Edinburgh City Council moved to a new CRM asset management system which allowed them to log, geo-code, and analyse complaints and issues relating to the public realm. This system highlighted the large number of fly tipping reports the council had to deal with, particularly relating to unwanted furniture around the city’s high rise tenement flats and especially by the communal bins. From the introduction of the system to the end of February 2015, there had been 6,808 incidents of fly-tipping reported in the city, 90% of which were bulky household items. Zero Waste Scotland estimated that the cost of dealing with this was around £149 per incident, or around £1m in total.<sup>50</sup>

This prompted the council’s Open Space Strategy Manager to rethink how the council could better deal with this issue. Their previous strategy involved one vehicle collecting illegally dumped bulky goods. But given the large number of items collected, they were struggling to collect items within their five day target. Accordingly other staff were being diverted from regular street cleansing to remove items that were fly tipped, which had a knock on effect on street cleanliness.

While they have so far faced less severe cuts than most English authorities, within the council there was a strong recognition that their current responsive rather than preventative approach to fly tipping was unsustainable:

*“Obviously everything we are doing is being scrutinised to be done more efficiently and so as to make savings. So having identified that we were being bombarded with calls, it made us think about how we could stop people doing it, and then how we deal with it operationally.” (Open Space Strategy Manager)*

### Activities and outcomes

This focus on fly tipping coincided with the publication of the Scottish Government’s National Litter Strategy which focussed on prevention. After the council approached Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) for advice on how best to tackle the problem, it emerged that there was a dearth of evidence relating

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49 Keep Britain Tidy ‘Keeping an Eye On It: A Social Experiment to Combat Dog Fouling’ (2014) [http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Documents/Files/KBT%20Network/11.%20Keeping%20an%20eye%20on%20it\\_Final%20report.pdf](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/Documents/Files/KBT%20Network/11.%20Keeping%20an%20eye%20on%20it_Final%20report.pdf)

50 From April 2014 when the system was introduced to the end of February 2015, there have been 6808 incidents of fly-tipping reported, 90% of which are bulky household items up. Broadly this equates to £149 per incident, which given the 6,808 incidents reported in Edinburgh, indicates the annual cost of removing fly-tipping could be as high as £1 million. Source: Edinburgh City Council Zero Waste Scotland Final Report.



to fly tipping prevention. ZWS agreed to work with Edinburgh Council to fund a trial to test different approaches to this issue.

With the support of ZWS, Edinburgh City Council designed a trial to test three different approaches to preventing fly tipping behaviour:

- **Education** – to inform residents of the correct means of disposing of bulky waste. This involved testing the use of information letters, stickers on bins, posters on stairwell doorways, and an event which informed residents of the appropriate means of disposing items via the council's Uplift Service or National Re-use Phone line. They also reinforced the message that illegal dumping was subject to a fine.
- **Enforcement** – to raise awareness of the fine and increase resident's perception of the risk of being caught. CCTV cameras were installed along with posters indicating that the area was under surveillance. Posters on stairwells stated that those dumping unwanted furniture would be subject to a £200 fine if caught. Wardens undertook additional patrols, and their vehicles were equipped with magnetic strips saying 'Fly Tipping Patrol' which highlighted their presence. Stickers were put on the dumped items stating that they were illegally dumped and had been reported to the council, and stencils saying '*Dumping items is illegal! £200 fine*' were put on the ground near bins. Finally a RIPSAs application – to allow plain clothes monitoring of the sites and thus increase the catching of offenders – was put in, although this was not approved within the timeframe.
- **Infrastructure** – to make recycling easier in comparison to leaving goods by bins. Changes were made to the area by the bins where items were often left, including the installation of 'green footsteps' on the ground leading to the bins, stickers indicating what could be disposed of legally in the bins, posters on columns, and increases in the number of recycling banks and decreases in landfill bins.

*Examples of the poster used in education intervention and floor stencil in enforcement intervention*



The team chose four similar tenement flat areas – one for each approach, and one as a control area – which received the interventions over seven weeks from February 2015. These were chosen to be similar in demographic makeup yet far enough apart so that there would not be overlap in influence of approaches.

An evaluation framework was agreed between the partners, and data was collected by the council. This consisted of:

- Household surveys before and after the trial to gauge local views about fly tipping.
- Adapted Local Environmental Audit Management Survey (LEAMS) to observe state of the ground.
- Reported incidences of fly tipping to the council before and after the trial period.
- Number of special uplifts booked before and after the trial period.

Initial results were somewhat inconclusive as to which was the most effective approach. Reported incidents of fly tipping by residents neither increased nor decreased in any areas, increases and decreases in uplift bookings were not large enough (under 5) for changes to be robust, and no more FPNs were issued during the trials compared to normal.

However whilst they should be treated with caution because different people answered the before and after surveys, the household surveys did show that people's awareness of the fine was greater in all areas after the trial. Similarly it seems like the interventions that were noticed most in the 'after' surveys was the education and infrastructure interventions, with 74% and 75% of respondents stating that they noticed these; whilst only 55% mentioned that they noticed the enforcement activity. This may suggest confirmation of the idea that it is very difficult for councils to change people's awareness of enforcement and to increase their perception of risk enough to change their behaviour, and that in this instance awareness of the particular interventions did not necessarily lead to changes in behaviour.

Additionally by undertaking the trial the council learnt many valuable lessons which will inform their future work. Feedback from the survey interviews helped the council understand what sort of communication was effective in gaining residents' attention. They found that the posters on doors and stickers on bins was most effective, and that residents felt that more salient and simple communication would have improved the effectiveness of the letters. For example residents stated that they weren't aware of the national re-use hotline, perhaps because it was not highlighted well enough in communication and was 'buried' amongst other information.

Through their focus on the issue and time spent with the frontline teams they gained logistical insight, for example around the suitability of their fly tipping removal fleet, and about 'on the ground' practices of the operational staff and the way in which habits or patterns which may not be the most efficient can slip into activity.

Additionally, they learnt very important lessons about conducting a trial. These include insight into research methods – such as the necessity of having a much larger number of sites due to the low numbers of fly tipping incidents in each area over any period. In the future it was acknowledged that holding this sort of trial in more areas within the council or in more areas across different councils (as in the KBT 'We Are Watching You' trial) would have increased the overall numbers and changes in behaviours, and enhanced the robustness of the results.

They also include insights into the practicalities of research implementation and data collection. For example in the enforcement area reports for fly tipping actually increased, but it emerged that this was because prior to the intervention patrol staff commonly picked up more items than the public had reported, but had not always logged these onto the system – and that during the trial staff began recording every incident they picked up. From this they learnt the importance of thoroughly working through data reporting and collection methods and systems with all staff before starting the trial, to make sure that everyone was on the same page and data was being consistently collected in a way that would not interfere with the results. In this instance they are now distinguishing between staff reported incidents and resident reported incidents on the system.

All of these issues were related to short funding timeframes meaning that the trial was more rushed than the teams working on it would have liked, particularly given their unfamiliarity with the principles of undertaking a trial like this. Making sure to ensure enough time to think through the trial was considered to be the most important lesson overall. Whilst ZWS were also aware of this issue, owing to the inflexibility of their funding frameworks, they were unable to roll implementation of the trial into the next year.

*“One message that everyone could take away, is that we needed more time to design and get the trial set up, and to run it as well. That had an impact on everything we did.”*  
(Open Space Strategy Manager)

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## Case study 3: Lambeth Co-operative Parks Programme

### Background and aims

Lambeth became a Co-operative Council in 2013 - meaning they are committed to working more collaboratively with the community to achieve local outcomes. As part of this they established their Cooperative Parks Programme in July 2013. The programme aims to enable the local community to become more involved in the decision-making, and also the direct management, of parks.

The programme framework includes a three-tiered model of community involvement which, after successful borough-wide consultation and expressions of interest from 20 pioneer groups who were keen to play a greater role in managing their local parks, began being implemented in 2014.

- **Tier 1: Council-led management / Status Quo:** traditional Council managed approach; limited community involvement
- **Tier 2: Cooperative management / Partnership Parks:** setting up a representative partnership between the Council, community, councillors, and other partners who jointly make decisions about their local park or open space
- **Tier 3: Community-led management / Pioneer Parks:** community-led group/s is/are responsible for managing the park or facility and the services delivered; the Council adopts a purely monitoring role

The principle aim of the programme is to enable greater transparency, empowerment, and better quality services through community involvement and accountability. Yet owing to the potential for local management and accountability to provide more cost effective outcomes, it is also hoped that the programme will help to safeguard the quality of local parks despite planned reductions to their budget.

In contrast to the simple 'top slicing' of existing council-wide grounds maintenance contracts with private companies, both the council and local groups believe that this more flexible, park-based, and not-for-profit local management of parks offers more opportunities to grow more support from local volunteers; more responsive management and maintenance; better park business development; support to local supply chains; easier formation of socially beneficial partnerships with charities, and better social and economic value for money overall.

### Activities and outcomes

With funding secured from the Co-operative Investment Fund, the council's Co-Operative Parks Implementation Manager established a framework and support programme to help a number of 'pioneer parks' to transition to become community led. This involved the establishment of three support streams focused on growing local supply chains for parks, and providing capacity building or business development resources – which were tailored to the needs and maturity of each of the local groups.

So far the council have transferred management of The Rookery, a historic landscaped garden in Streatham, to Streatham Common Co-operative (SCOOP), a group newly formed by the Friends of Streatham Common. A number of other community groups such as Myatt's Fields Park Project are also in the process of bidding for greater management control of their parks.

A council officer mentioned that "so far there is a much better quality service on the ground [at The Rookery] because people care, and they are spending the funding that they do have more wisely". Similarly the Chair of the Friends of Park group told us how SCOOP have invested in preventative work such as drains clearance and repairs and have been able to more easily form partnerships with charities like MENCAP and gain local voluntary support. This includes a highly qualified and diverse board of trustees for the co-op. Staff are more motivated since they can now take ownership of, and receive praise for, change.

To increase the viability of pioneer parks, the council are now attempting cluster and 'hub and spoke' models. Here a set of parks will support and complement each other, and lead strategic parks (which have the ability to generate more support and revenue) will support other smaller parks or green spaces. For example SCOOP plans to also take on management of neighbouring Streatham Common

and Memorial Garden. It is hoped that this economy of scale and spend, and the flexibility to share resources and income, will help safeguard the viability of clusters, despite pressures on individual park budgets from April 2016.

Similarly partnerships are being sought with a wide range of local organisations – for example an academy are exploring developing a partnership with neighbouring community groups to manage a number of parks. By sharing back office support, grounds teams, and other infrastructure, the school hope to safeguard an important green space used by students, whilst offering children, people with learning disabilities, and other interested residents the opportunity to be more actively involved in horticulture and outdoor learning.

In Pioneer Parks such as these the council plays the role of facilitator, convener, overall strategist, and monitor – leaving day-to-day management and decision making up to local groups. Other parks without the community capacity or interest to become pioneer parks will continue to fall under council management arrangements, with ward councilors playing a pivotal role; taking the lead on setting priorities for the park and acting as the voice for local residents in the area.

To complement the Co-operative Parks Programme, the council has also established a Capital Investment Plan outlining how they will invest £9m in park infrastructure and green spaces in order to enable council and locally managed parks to generate sustainable income sources from events and concessions in parks.





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