



Clean & Green Strategy for Hartlepool  
2017 - 2020

**DRAFT**



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# Introduction

We all use public spaces every time we leave home. These include the footpaths and streets we walk or drive along each day, the parks where our children play and the outdoor areas we go to exercise or relax in.

Many of our daily decisions and activities are influenced by our perceptions of the quality and cleanliness of the public areas we encounter. The Council's Household Survey undertaken in 2013, shows that resident satisfaction with our front line services, such as refuse collection, recycling facilities, street cleansing, parks and open spaces, is generally high and that residents value the clean and green spaces of Hartlepool. However, residents indicated that they still feel improvements could be made to their local areas, and highlighted that the condition of roads, street cleanliness including dog fouling and litter/rubbish collection as being the highest priorities. Hartlepool Borough Council is committed to addressing these issues and creating a better environment for people to enjoy. As part of this commitment we have produced this Clean and Green Strategy.

The strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision for cleaner streets and well designed and maintained parks, green spaces and highways. It recognises that in order to be successful in creating a more attractive environment and delivering the aims of this strategy, we will not only have to work with our existing volunteers and other committed partners but will also need the support and active citizenship of the local community. With this in mind, this strategy also includes proposals to develop a new charter that outlines a voluntary partnership between the community, Council and other stakeholders. The charter will outline how we need to work together to achieve the cleaner, greener and more pleasant environment we wish to see.

The Borough is in a fortunate position of being well supplied with green and open spaces. From the long

expanse of attractive beach and coastline to the open countryside on the fringes of the town and the parks, recreation grounds and green spaces within, Hartlepool can boast a pleasant environment. The challenge is to keep the streets and areas of open space clean, uncluttered and well maintained whilst resources to fund such work become increasingly scarce.

The importance of clean and green spaces cannot be underestimated. Many benefits derive from a pleasant environment. The following are seen as particularly valuable and complement some of the wider aims of the Council and link to some of our other strategies.

Good quality parks and attractive areas of open space contribute an economic benefit to the town. As Hartlepool competes with others to attract growth, tourism and inward investment a clean, green and pleasant environment plays an important role in marketing the town as a place to live in, move to and visit. Businesses are drawn to places with good quality



environment as this in turn attracts customers, employees, and services into the town. In addition, a well maintained town has a positive impact on commercial and domestic property values and people are willing to pay to live in clean and well kept neighbourhoods.

The coastal area is an important tourist attraction that brings visitors and their money into the town. Hartlepool's waterfront is seen as a major asset and strategic master plans covering Seaton Carew and the Marina areas are well developed with some elements already at implementation stage. It is important to ensure routes into these and other key areas of the town are clean and tidy and do not leave a negative impression which could ultimately damage the visitor economy.

In Hartlepool some 41% percent of children aged 10-11 are overweight or obese and around 73% percent of adults. Both these figures are higher than the national average. The increase in obesity is linked to more sedentary lifestyles including low levels of outdoor activity. Patterns of exercise in adults are set early in life, so obesity and inactivity in childhood can lead to poor health in later years. Good quality public open space is required to encourage healthier lifestyles by providing opportunities for walking, cycling and other outdoor pursuits. The benefits of open spaces to mental health and well being are also important. Accessible areas of countryside, green spaces with natural views and other pleasant places to get away from stresses of urban living are recognised as being essential.

As well as providing exercise, play is vital for children's emotional and social development. Clean and well maintained play areas along with welcoming parks and open space will provide important beneficial opportunities for children to learn and develop as well as to stay healthy.

The Council currently delivers a variety of services aimed at ensuring the town is clean, green and well kept. Figure 1 on page 6 illustrates the key services involved. Some work is carried out with the help of dedicated volunteers and community groups. Other times we work closely in partnership with a range of organisations such as the Environment Agency, EDF Energy, Natural England, Teesmouth Field Centre and Northumbrian Water.



Figure I



# Current Position

Data has been obtained from a number of different sources to obtain an overview of the current position in respect of our clean and green service areas and to better understand the present climate in which we are operating.

## a) Public Consultation Responses

The Council's recent 'Your Say, Our Future' consultation has reaffirmed the importance of the local environment to residents as a key factor in making Hartlepool a better place to live, together with a willingness to work with the Council to improve the local area and reduce demand on services. Key themes emerging from the consultation include:

- Enhancing enforcement capabilities to tackle dog fouling
- Developing a campaign to highlight how addressing the issue of litter is everyone's responsibility
- Increased education around environmental issues including the education and involvement of schools
- Ensuring key messages are delivered to the community in relation to the level of waste dealt with by the Council and the costs of disposing of waste and street litter

The Council's Household Survey of 2013 indicated residents were generally satisfied with the Council's front line services that impact on environmental quality. However similar messages were received to the 'Your Say, Our Future' consultation in that survey respondents also felt that improvements could be made to their local areas. When asked what could be improved more than one third of respondents (39%) said the conditions of roads and street cleanliness including dog fouling. In addition, 28% of respondents indicated litter/rubbish removal was an issue and an area where they would like to see more action taken.

The National Highways and Transport Network Survey 2015 provided further evidence that the residents of Hartlepool place a high level of importance on the condition of highways and yet only 36% of respondents were satisfied with their current state. It should be noted that this figure was in line with the national average and reflects the lack of resources available across the country for works to address the maintenance backlog that has built up over a number of years.



b) Customer Contact Data

With a population of over 92,000 it is evident that the majority of Hartlepool residents respect and care for their environment and recognise the impact that their own behaviour can have on their neighbours' health, well being and quality of life. Customers who contact the Council with queries and service requests in relation to clean and green services are mostly directed through Hartlepool Connect, the Council's Contact Centre. The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system records information from all contacts and this provides a useful indication of the high demands placed on services. Records show that over 23,000 contacts were received by the Council in relation to clean and green services in 2015/16. An analysis of these contacts reveals that the greatest number of requests, and therefore demand for services, were in relation to:

- Removal of Bulky Household Waste
- Damaged Bins
- Requests to remove fly tipped materials (including side waste)
- Missed Collections due to incorrect presentation of bins
- Street Cleansing

These figures demonstrate that with just a little more care and attention taken by residents in relation to correctly recycling, ensuring bins are not overflowing and refraining from throwing out excess waste and placing it next to bins the demand on Council Clean and Green Services and therefore expenditure could be significantly reduced. Lifting loose bags of excess waste can also pose a risk to the health and safety of our operatives.

The Council has also worked hard in recent years to improve education and awareness within communities about the impact of their actions on the environment and others, but we continue to receive reports from the public about environmental offences. For example during 2015/16 there were:

- 124 abandoned vehicles reported and uplifted
- 138 dog fouling reports investigated with 14 fixed penalty fines issued
- 73 graffiti reports investigated and removed
- 110 reports of drug related litter investigated and removed
- 96 fixed penalty notices issued for littering

Continuing to address these matters through education and enforcement action including targeted operations, as well as encouraging greater resident involvement in caring for the environment are important elements of this strategy.





- Ranked 9th best out of 15 authorities in terms of tonnes of domestic waste recycled.

Analysing cost and performance indicators helps us gain a greater understanding of how Hartlepool's approach to service delivery compares and contrasts with that of the best performing authorities. It is anticipated that this benchmarking will help shape our action plans over the life of this strategy with the aim of enhancing performance and identifying further efficiency saving opportunities.

Research on cost and performance was also undertaken for the 'Your Say, Our Future' exercise. Several interesting statistics from the data collated were noted:

- In total the Council spends eleven times more collecting and disposing of waste than it does in recycling it (£3.3m pa against £300k.)
- 1,832 tonnes of rubbish was collected by our litter picking and fly tipping squads in 2015/16, a weight equivalent to 145 double decker buses.
- There were 96 fixed penalty notices were issued for littering offences in 2015/16 and a further 14 notices for dog fouling offences.

These findings further illustrate the impact that the behaviours of a minority of residents have on Council services and how such actions result in increased pressure on Council resources and expenditure.

### c) Cost and Performance Data

Comparative cost and performance data is available from several sources. The most relevant for clean and green services is that provided through our membership of the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE). APSE data is available which compares the Council's recent performance against around 12 to 16 other local authorities with similar characteristics and size known as a 'family group'. It is generally accepted that there will be inconsistencies in the way different Councils record and present their data however despite this, APSE data can provide some useful pointers as to how our services compare against others.

The following are headline findings from the latest APSE reports (2014/15). Compared to other local authorities in the APSE family group Hartlepool Borough Council:-

- Maintains the largest area of public open space per head of population.
- Has the highest cost per household for street cleansing.
- Is best performing in making high priority road and footpath defects safe.
- Has 3rd lowest number of local authority playgrounds per 1,000 children.

### d) Links to the Council's Corporate Plan and Other Strategic Documents

The Finance and Policy Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016 agreed a new service planning framework that reflects the Council's priorities and clearly sets out our approach to realising our vision of what we want Hartlepool of the future to be. As part of this ambition we want Hartlepool to be a place people want to live, study, work, visit and play and also a place where people feel included and safe, able to live active, healthy and happy lives. A clean, green and pleasant environment is an essential contributor to achieving these priorities.



The Hartlepool Local Plan preferred options consultation document contains a whole section relating to the protection, management and enhancement of the natural environment. Sites designated for nature conservation are defined on the Proposals Map. An undertaking is set out in this document that as well as safeguarding from inappropriate development, the Council will work with others to improve the quantity, quality and management and accessibility of green infrastructure. The Clean and Green Strategy will help guide this improvement work.

This strategy will also have links to a number of other key Council strategies including some within the Budget and Policy Framework. The most relevant of these are:-

- Local Transport Plan
- Community Safety Plan
- Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy
- Economic Regeneration Strategy
- Health and Well being Strategy



# Managing Budgets and Demand

Recent spending reviews and Government policy announcements confirm that significant cuts in funding for Councils will continue until at least the end of the current parliament. Significant reforms will also continue to be made to the system for funding councils and these are anticipated to increase financial risks for Hartlepool. In 2016/17 the Council will receive nearly £35 million (55%) less Government funding than it did in 2010/11.

The Council has so far been effective in managing very difficult financial circumstances but we recognise that we cannot do everything we would like to including maintaining and improving the town's environment. For example, budget reductions have meant that the core Street Cleansing service has seen its workforce cut by 40% (19 staff) over the past three years whilst it is estimated that it would take around £30 million to bring the town's highways infrastructure up to desired quality standards. Further reductions to budgets which support clean and green services are inevitable. In light of these diminishing resources, it is clear that the Council will need to find innovative and more efficient ways of delivering environmental services as well as developing new partnering arrangements.

We are very much aware that many of our clean and green services are demand led. Whilst much of this demand is inevitable it is also clear some of it is avoidable. This is perhaps best illustrated in the cleansing service where negative and irresponsible behaviour such as dropping litter in the street or allowing a dog to foul in a public area without cleaning up the mess has significant cost implications for the Council.



Demand management is a recognised approach to delivering improvements and managing down costs of local services by preventing negative, costly behaviour whilst at the same time encouraging and supporting positive action. The Local Government Association cites Southampton City Council as one authority that has had success in addressing demand in its clean and green services and in influencing behavioural change amongst residents. The published case study report highlights how the City Council embarked on a customer led transformation programme gaining insight into residents' preferences, needs and behaviours and using the information gained to facilitate collaborative working and

redesign services. The report states that the authority has saved over £1 million collectively on the cost of waste disposal over two years and fifty long term volunteers and community champions have been recruited.



Demand management will be a key element of our Clean and Green Strategy. Reshaping demand is however an extremely challenging process. It requires the root causes of demand on a service to be fully investigated and understood through in-depth research and analysis. The Council needs to be prepared to change its own behaviour where necessary and work to build relationships of trust with key stakeholders. Taking such steps will provide the best possible opportunity of reducing service demand and establishing a collaborative approach to tackling environmental issues with partners and residents.

Linked to this and to encourage and support active citizenship a new Resident Charter will be developed. Where negative behaviour does persist however, this will need to be addressed through an appropriate mix of education programmes and enforcement action.



# Our Vision

Our vision is **'To create a cleaner, greener, town with everyone taking part and which everyone can take pride in'**.

The Clean and Green Strategy is an opportunity for the Council, partners and communities, to work together to deliver improvements to our streets, open spaces and the environment; helping maintain and develop the Borough of Hartlepool as a place of choice for residents and business.

With the help of individual citizens, communities, voluntary bodies, local businesses, and landowners we will commit to contribute our resources to support the following aims:

- **Fostering partnership and a sense of shared responsibility**, a keystone to achieving the ambitions within the strategy whilst recognising the increasing constraints on services.
- **Facilitating change** within the context of finite resources; the council will champion its role supporting the combined efforts of partners and communities in which it operates.
- **Support citizens as active participants** in caring for their environment, and helping us address the increasing financial challenge and environmental impact of street litter, vandalism, graffiti and household waste disposal.

Underpinned by the active participation of our partners and the community our objectives are to create:

**A CLEAN TOWN** where our streets and public spaces are free from:-

- Litter.
- Fly-tipped materials.
- Clinical waste.
- Graffiti.
- Fly-posting, illegal signage and street clutter.
- Dog foul.
- Stray dogs.
- Vandalised and damaged street furniture and signs.
- Abandoned vehicles.
- Illegally tethered horses.

**A GREEN TOWN** that has:-

- Well kept parks and cemeteries.
- Trimmed and tidy residential grass verges and formal green spaces.
- Sports pitches and bowling greens that are sufficient to meet demand.
- Pleasant public horticultural displays like the wildflower planting scheme.
- Good public rights of way to the countryside.
- Places for nature.
- Good quality beaches.
- Policies which ensure the protection and management of the natural environment



**A WELL MAINTAINED TOWN** in which:-

- Reported highways and footpath defects falling within the defined intervention criteria are addressed without undue delay.
- Available resources are used efficiently for upgrading and maintaining the road network.
- Litter bins are maintained and where necessary replaced with suitably designed receptacles
- A Household Waste Recycling Centre remains available for public use.
- Household waste and recycling material is collected efficiently.
- Chargeable waste collection services are offered including tailored trade waste services to businesses and a bulky waste service for households to remove large unwanted items.
- An effective approach to managing and maintaining trees is in place.
- Children’s outdoor play equipment is inspected and maintained in a safe condition.
- New build infrastructure is well planned and its design supports the vision of a cleaner and greener town.
- Citizens actively participate with the Council and its partners in taking care of their environment.



# Resident Charter and Service Standards



As indicated elsewhere in this document, on its own the Council cannot deliver a cleaner and greener environment for residents. Through active citizenship we hope to see reduced demands on our services and more residents taking greater pride in, and ownership of their local environment. This is more necessary now than ever as public sector expenditure reduces at an unprecedented rate.

Collaboration between the Council and local community is essential. We propose to develop a resident charter to clearly set out the rights, responsibilities and expectations the Council and residents should have of one another. As well as referring to the Council's service standards the charter will also call on residents themselves to make a positive contribution to the cleaner and greener vision for the town. The Council will formulate the charter as part of its first year action plan linked to this strategy.

The Council already invests a significant resource towards achieving a clean, green and well maintained town, and to address those issues that can have a negative impact on our environment. But we want to be clear about our service promises, standards, and the response times we aim to achieve to ensure our communities understand what levels of service they can expect.

As part of our first year action plan we will also publicise our services and standards. This will ensure residents, and our public sector, private and voluntary sector partners know what to expect in relation to those Council services that impact on the environment from littering and fly-tipped materials to highways and footpaths; stray dogs; parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

# Partnership Working

## Neighbourhood Action Days

A key feature of partnership working to improve the quality of the environment since 2013 has been the roll out of Neighbourhood Action Days to tackle environmental crime. Endorsed by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership, these multi-agency 'Days of Action' are organised by the Council. Action days are primarily enforcement orientated, but also include measures to improve neighbourhood safety and resolve quality of life issues.

Neighbourhood Action Days are underpinned by a problem solving approach involving the analysis of community concerns, visual audits and partnership data. They operate one day per month, with all eleven wards within Hartlepool benefiting from the initiative on a rotational basis. From January to June this year a total of four Neighbourhood Action Days took place resulting in the following:

- 18 PCNs and 3 FPNs issued
- 5 untaxed vehicles removed
- 20 locations benefiting from dog foul signage
- 8 informal letters issued regarding rubbish at the front of properties
- 2 incidents of offensive graffiti removal
- 11 fire safety audits undertaken
- 1 dog foul bin installed

Other activities undertaken during Neighbourhood Action Days included street cleansing; litter picks; weed spraying and strimming, footpath edging, fly-tipping investigations and bulky waste removal.

Whilst Neighbourhood Action Days have been successful in targeting areas requiring additional attention and in providing a visible presence in those areas to reassure communities that agencies continue to work together on their behalf, perceived weaknesses in the adopted approach are the intensive planning and organisation of Action Day. Part of this strategy will therefore be to investigate an alternative to Neighbourhood Action Days that is less resource intensive in relation to planning and co-ordination but more effective in delivering clean streets to improve performance levels on the ground.



## Voluntary Sector

Hartlepool Borough Council has a long history of supporting and working with the voluntary sector to achieve its ambition of making the town a place where people want to live, study, work, visit and play and also a place where people feel included and safe, able to live active, healthy and happy lives. A clean, green and pleasant environment is an essential contributor to achieving these priorities. Through this strategy we will continue to support and encourage volunteers who wish to take a more active role in looking after the environment. We currently work closely with existing 'Friends Groups' who are involved in taking care of parks, cemeteries, green spaces and railway stations. We also support individual volunteers along with those from schools, resident groups and corporate businesses who offer to help with conservation activities, green space maintenance or litter picking at one of our regular events. These dedicated volunteers make a real difference and we want to build on the excellent work they do. We intend to explore further the opportunities for increasing community participation in clean and green activity and look to introduce an awards scheme that recognises and rewards voluntary work undertaken in relation to the environment.

## Environmental Apprentices

The Council works in partnership with the College of Further Education to deliver successful apprenticeship programmes which provide workplace training and experience to participants whilst delivering additional resources into frontline services. The Waste & Environmental Services section currently has three apprentices, two within Street Cleansing and one within Grounds Maintenance. For the September 2016 intake however there was funding for 10 apprentices but the scheme only attracted three suitable candidates. Issues with retaining apprentices have also occurred in the past. Ways to enhance and revitalise this programme are currently being explored.





# Making it Happen

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Action Plan to be included here.

# Measuring Success

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Performance Measures to be included here.



Regeneration and Neighbourhoods

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