

Clean Up Force

Colchester Borough Council

An ongoing objective of Colchester Borough Council is to be the 'cleanest and greenest borough in the country'. This is to be achieved partly through the work of the Clean Up Force which responds to calls made by the public and through unmarked cars patrolling the fly-tipping hotspot areas. Colchester Borough Council attends between 200 and 300 fly-tipping incidents per year, costing in the region of £8,000 - £10,000.

In December 2004 alone, there were 12 reported incidences of asbestos deposits in the borough, costing approximately £2,500 to clear. These incidents were publicised by the Environment Agency on the regional TV news. Since then, asbestos fly-tipping has virtually ceased, so future prosecutions will be publicised in a similar way.

Colchester Borough Council's Clean Up Force, implemented in 2003, is a rapid response team consisting of two street care officers, who were previously employed as a police officer and a senior housing officer. This team aims to have any fly-tipping removed within 24 hours and works closely with the Environment Agency to investigate and identify persons involved.

An example of the Clean Up Force in action was an Indian restaurant being identified as tipping trade waste in a rural location on the A12, in December 2004. Seven refuse sacks, 12 beer bottles and two large canisters of trade oil were found by the Clean Up Force. The Environment Agency was contacted and proceeded to gather evidence from paperwork and receipts, taking photographs of the fly-tip and the documents within. The Clean Up Force and the Environment Agency then made a surprise visit to the restaurant presenting the photographs and receipts to the manager. The restaurant was given the option of paying a £50 Fixed Penalty Notice and £200 charges for officers' time and clean up costs, or court proceedings. They paid the fine.

Other initiatives undertaken to tackle fly-tipping in this area include:

- Sending a standardised letter and photographic evidence of the fly-tipping, and any documentation within (e.g. a utility bill), to the potential offender with a Fixed Penalty Notice of £50. This is sent via recorded delivery to ensure there is documentation stating it has been received.
- Refuse sacks placed out at the wrong time are dealt with by a similar system. A warning letter notifying residents of the relevant legislation is posted to the affected area. If the problem continues, the offending properties will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- All supermarkets are being contacted with a standardised letter suggesting a voluntary code whereby the Clean Up Force will collect any abandoned trolleys and deliver them back to the relevant store at a cost. This will be in line with the legislation outlined in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

A steady decline in fly-tipping incidents has been noted over the last year. The posted Fixed Penalty Notice scheme has so far proven successful and, providing this continues to be the case, the council will slowly increase the number being distributed.

For further information, please contact:

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