

Southwark's Joined up Approach to Tacking Fly-tipping

London Borough of Southwark

Anti-social behaviour and enviro-crimes have been identified as major concerns for local people within Southwark. Residents surveys, community consultations, including community councils, Street Action Teams, Southwark Environment Forum, schools and Street Leader conferences, have all confirmed this concern. In the survey of residents conducted last year, crime and cleaner streets were the main concerns of the residents and they wanted to see action taken against people who damage the local environment.

There was clearly a need for the delivery of the cleansing services to be innovative, performance driven and have a different approach that would begin to change the behaviour, hearts and minds of the residents, tenants and businesses within the borough, along with those of the visitors to the borough. It was hoped that change to the services would bring about sustainable improvements to the local environment.

London Borough of Southwark's approach to tackling enviro-crime is to work together with local people, and to combine education with effective enforcement. Education and awareness-raising about enviro-crimes and the implications of people's actions, is currently carried out through poster campaigns, information leaflets, work with schools and community groups, and through schemes such as Street Leaders, Community Wardens, Street Action Teams and Community Councils.

The council takes enforcement action based on a zero tolerance approach. They use a wide range of legislative tools to achieve results in the most efficient way. They have also adopted a partnership approach, involving other agencies such as the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), Metropolitan Police, Environment Agency and Community Wardens.

The team successfully bid for additional funding from the Home Office to combat fly-tipping and other forms of anti-social behaviour in 2004. The aim of the bid was to secure funding for a police officer to be seconded to this joined-up working team for six months, and for the purchase of a high specification CCTV vehicle. The police officer is now a permanent member of the team and assists in operations relating to

enviro-crime. This secondment has been a huge success resulting in a high number of arrests following investigations initiated by the Street Care Enforcement Team.

A wide range of other actions to tackle fly-tipping have been adopted, including:

- **Targeting problematic areas with joint operations:** this included a multi-agency operation to blitz one of the borough's 'grot spots' in Camberwell. The area is affected by garages repairing vehicles on the highway, fly-tipping waste and generally causing a negative impact on the quality of the local environment. The Environment Agency, Metropolitan Police, DVLA, Community Wardens, Fire Brigade, Parking Enforcement, Street Care Enforcement Officers and the council's cleaning crews were all involved with this initiative. The result was a number of vehicles being seized, most of which were abandoned, untaxed or illegally parked. Section 34 (Environmental Protection Act 1990) notices were distributed to specific garages and fixed penalty notices were issued for littering. All fly-tipped waste was cleared, and the street was jet-cleaned by the cleaning crews once the cars had been removed. This cleared years' worth of oil and car-related fluids that had accumulated on the surface.
- **Targeting construction on building sites:** these operations are aimed at tipper lorries driving out of construction sites loaded with building waste. London Borough of Southwark has purchased two motorbikes equipped with radios and CCTV to be used by their officers during these operations.
- **Statutory notices requesting landowners to clear land of controlled waste:** in the first half of 2005, a total of 16 notices under section 59 of the Environmental Protection Act were successfully served on landowners.
- **Vehicle stops:** partnership operations involving the Police (Traffic Police, Automatic Numberplate Recognition Unit), Environment Agency, Benefits Agency, HM Revenue & Customs and the DVLA. These vehicle stops take place on a regular basis. Three spot-check operations have taken place over the last 12 months (in Old Kent Road, Albany Road and Lower Road). Most vehicles targeted were tipper lorries, refuse trucks and vans carrying or suspected of carrying waste. Some cars were stopped by the Automatic Numberplate Recognition Unit. For those vehicles found to be carrying waste, checks were

made as to whether the drivers had the relevant waste carrier documentation. Fuel testing checks are also carried out for non-duty fuel (which is for agricultural use only and has a red dye). No one was reported for waste-related offences but a number of people were reported and vehicles seized for other types of offences.

This type of operation has a very high visual impact (with up to 20-25 officers involved from different agencies) and contributes to raising awareness that waste issues must be taken seriously and that those who don't comply with the legislation could be arrested and have their vehicles seized.

- **Bounty hunters:** members of the Southwark cleaning crews are encouraged to collect evidence and report fly-tipping incidents. Staff entering the scheme receive basic training and are offered a monetary reward for every reported incident leading to a successful enforcement action.
- **Enviro-crime scene stickers:** these stickers are placed on any fly-tipped site being investigated. They are a way to attract the public's attention and raise awareness that fly-tipping is a crime.
- **'Owning the borough' scheme:** this scheme is directed at all council staff. Council employees are encouraged to report any type of enviro-crime, including fly-tipping, thereby encouraging ownership of the issues by the individuals. This is done through 'owning the borough' cheque slips. Every individual receives a statement outlining what actions are being taken. A table is produced every month for all departments of the council.

Results: In the last two years there has been a significant decrease in fly-tipping incidents as the table shows.

Fly-tipping incidents recorded

2003 2 nd half	17,506
2004 1 st half	14,435
2004 2 nd half	11,242

Reporting has been consistent since October 2003, and fly-tipping has shown a decline of approximately 36% for the second half of 2004/05, compared with the same period in the previous year.

At a time when there is general public dissatisfaction with the local environment, and an increase in concerns over crime and anti-social behaviour, London Borough of Southwark has managed to reverse the trend. The latest residents survey highlights vastly improved satisfaction in a number of key environmental areas, at a time when they are falling nationally.

The percentage citing cleanliness of the area as being poor has dropped from 22% to 15% in the last two years. There was an overall 14% net increase in satisfaction with cleanliness. A further 1% increase in satisfaction with parks ensured an all time high of 62% satisfaction and a move from 17% to 24% of people citing parks as a significant benefit within the borough. In addition to this, there was a 10% net increase in people feeling safe on the streets.

The multi-agency operation organised to blitz Camberwell station resulted in 34 penalty charge notices being issued; 15 vehicles removed for parking contraventions; 11 vehicles removed for being abandoned/stored on the highway; two vehicles surrendered, removed and destroyed; seven cars clamped; and 14 cars reported for no tax by the DVLA. There was also one stolen vehicle recovered, three fixed penalty notices issued (£50 fine) and four section 34 notices issued (requesting Waste Transfer Notices).

Articles and news stories have appeared in: The Times, the Southwark News, the South London Press, the Guardian, IDEA website, Number 10 website, Local Government Chronicle, ENDS, London Tonight, and Radio 4.

Further acknowledgement includes being awarded Beacon Status for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in April 2004, and being commended in the Local Government Chronicle's Joined-Up Government Initiative of the Year Award for Safer Southwark Partnership (March 2004). London Borough of Southwark was also commended by TOGETHER Academy for enviro-crime for their involvement with the TOGETHER programme pilot for removal of abandoned cars. This resulted in 1,164 vehicles being removed and destroyed. In addition to this, the borough has also been



commended by CABE for its work on the future design and management of streets and Visit London's Local Tourism Initiative Award.

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