

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/010/2007-08.
Date of meeting: 11 June 2007.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Community Wellbeing.

Subject: Removal of Graffiti Policy.

Officer contact for further information: Caroline Wiggins (01992 – 564122).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 56 4470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That consideration be given to the outcome of consultation with Parish and Town Councils regarding a new policy for managing the budget for graffiti removal;**
- (2) That the attached policy and procedural arrangements be approved; and**
- (3) That the Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing be authorised to amend the policy and procedural arrangements after considering any further representations arising from the Local Councils' Liaison Committee meeting on 13 June 2007, subject to any further changes not increasing the budget for this year.**

Report:

1. Graffiti is an illegal, anti social activity that creates a negative impression of an area and contributes to people's fear of crime. It can be any writing or picture scribbled or drawn on a wall without the owner's consent. There is no legal requirement for a local authority to remove graffiti.

2. The District Council has reacted to the need to deal with graffiti removal and has included specific provision within its budget for several years. However, as in most other local authority areas, the procedures for dealing with graffiti have tended to evolve in response to the developing situation rather than a policy being determined in advance. The Council has attempted to remove graffiti wherever it occurs in response to complaints from the public or councillors.

3. During 2006/07, the District Council set aside the sum of £30,250 for the removal of graffiti. Demand for removal within the District is almost limitless and in consequence there was an over spend of approximately £5000. An amount of £8000, identified from within the Safer Communities Budget, was transferred into the Graffiti Budget to make up the deficit and to provide for the continuation of the service until April 2007. There were also occasions in previous years when significant supplementary estimates were approved in view of increasing demand for the service.

4. The difficulty in containing this budget has resulted from a well meaning attempt to remove all graffiti wherever it occurs including locations which are properly the responsibility of private individuals or other public bodies. This has been found to be unsustainable in practice.

5. The incidence of graffiti is increasing significantly and there is no sign of any change in that trend. To prevent a repeat of the over spend in 2007/08 it is recommended that a new policy be introduced for prioritising removal of graffiti within available resources.

6. All parish and town councils are being consulted about the new policy (attached) and any comments received will be reported at the meeting. An item has also been placed on the agenda for the next Local Councils' Liaison Committee to receive any further comments. As this is two days after this meeting, it is recommended that the Portfolio Holder should be authorised to consider any further views and to amend the document, subject to no change being made which increases the budget requirement for the service.

Statement in Support of Recommended Action:

7. The Graffiti budget has been overspent over the last three years and there is an urgent need to formalise a policy, which matches the service to the available budget.

Other Options for Action:

8. To reject the policy as put forward or to approve the document with modifications as the Cabinet deems appropriate. Other options could arise if the budget is to be increased but the Portfolio Holder has been clear that a policy should only operate within the existing budget.

Consultation Undertaken:

9. Parish and Town Councils have been consulted. Comments received by the date of the Cabinet meeting will be reported at the meeting. Matters raised at the Local Councils' Liaison Committee will be considered subsequently by the Portfolio Holder.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: £30,250.

Personnel: Existing provision.

Land: The policy will mainly focus on District Council property.

Council Plan 2006-10/BVPP reference: Crime and Disorder element of Community Wellbeing Section and Street Scene element of Environmental Protection Section in BVP 2006/07.

Relevant statutory powers: The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

Background papers: Nil.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: Removal of Graffiti leads to an improved environment and thereby discourages further acts of graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

Key Decision reference (if required): None.