



WROUGHTON & WICHELSTOWE PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item 7 – Proposal for Action to Tackle Dog Fouling: Communications Plan

Purpose of the Report

Members are required to:

1. **NOTE** the contents of the communications plan for the campaign Poo Free Parish
2. **CONSIDER** the recommendations as set out below

Background

At its meeting on 20 May 2026, the Community Assets and Open Spaces Committee RESOLVED to approve that the Deputy Clerk develop a communications campaign to help tackle dog fouling across the parish. That plan is set out below.

Communications Plan

Campaign Name	Poo Free Parish.
Objectives	Reduce instances of dog fouling across the parish by encouraging behaviour change among dog owners.
Audience	Dog walkers, parish residents, local businesses and community groups.
Strategy	To use behavioural science principles to influence change over a long-term period.
Implementation	Use social media, the local press, newsletters and physical signage to communicate key messages.
Scoring	Monitor the impact of the communications through resident feedback.

Objectives

The primary objective of this campaign is to encourage behaviour change among dog owners, with the aim of reducing instances of dog fouling across Wroughton and Wichelstowe.

Best practice guidance from the Government Communication Service says that campaign objectives should follow the SMART template – they should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound.

Dog fouling is, by its nature, difficult to measure and quantify. The parish council relies on anecdotal reports made by residents, which can be hard to track. It has therefore not been possible to identify any SMART objectives for this campaign. The overall success of the campaign will therefore likely be measured by residents' general feelings that instances of dog fouling have reduced, rather than through quantitative data, and by positive sentiments towards the parish council for being seen to take the issue seriously.

Our objectives are:

- To reduce instances of dog fouling over a long-term period.
- To educate dog owners about the problems with dog fouling and the impacts it has on the local community.
- To ensure that residents know the parish council is taking this issue seriously and is actively responding to peoples' concerns.

Audience

Our primary target audience will be:

- Dog owners in Wroughton and Wichelstowe.

The majority of the campaign messaging will be aimed at influencing behaviour change among this primary audience.

Our secondary target audience will be:

- Members of the community negatively impacted by dog fouling (schools, sports groups, walking groups etc.).
- Responsible dog owners (encouraging dog owners who don't let their dogs foul to influence those who do may have a positive impact).

This secondary audience group will help the parish council in its messaging, highlighting why dog fouling is a problem and the negative affects it has on their activities.

Community groups who may be able to help us get our message across:

- Wroughton Youth FC
- Wroughton Wranglers Cricket Club
- Local schools
- Ramblers
- Vision 4 Wroughton
- The Wroughton Dog Rambler

Key Messages

Messages are stronger and better received by the target audience if they come from within the community rather than top-down from the local authority. Where possible we should be positive, seeking to encourage people to respect their local environment.

Dog fouling is, however, a punishable offence, so we should not shy away from sharing messages that threaten legal action if caught. But the focus should overwhelmingly be on affirming positive action rather than punishing offenders.

We should acknowledge that most dog owners are responsible and that it's only a minority who ruin it for everybody else.

Example messages

Affirming good behaviour	"Most dog owners pick up their mess – do you?" "Small actions. Cleaner fields. Happier walks"
Community pride	"Love your dog, love your parish" "We're a poo free parish. Help us keep it that way"
Habit-building messages	"Every walk. Every time." "Keys? – check! Wallet? – check! Poo bags? – check!"

The logo for the campaign will be:



It's bright, eye-catching and gives people the sense of what we're trying to achieve.

Strategy

Our strategy will be to apply behaviour change techniques to influence outcomes.

The tone of our messages should be positive, community-focused and non-accusatory. They should highlight the shared responsibility we all have to ensure Wroughton and Wichelstowe remains a lovely place to live.

The name of the campaign – Poo Free Parish – is aspirational and represents our ambition to live without the blight of dog mess. Where other dog fouling campaign names such as 'Bag it. Bin it' can come across as stern and demanding, encouraging people to make our area a poo free parish offers a softer approach that better represents the parish council's collaborative role in the community. We work with residents, not against them.

Practical measures we will implement:

- Make free poo bags available for collection at the Ellendune and at other locations throughout the parish
- Erect signs at the entrances to green spaces
- Update the parish council's website with campaign information

Implementation

We will undertake the following actions to help us achieve our objectives:

Timing	Comms Activity
W/C 22 June	Official campaign launch: press release and social media post with campaign materials and key messages. Flyers: put A5 flyers up on noticeboards around the parish, in the Ellendune and the library. Share flyers with community groups and ask them to give them to stakeholders.
W/C 29 June	Key messaging: social media posts highlighting our key messages, with links to the campaign page on the parish council's website. SBC reporting page: share links to the SBC webpage for reporting dog fouling. Poo bins: social media post with a map showing the locations of dog bins around the parish.
Saturday 4 July	Wroughton Carnival: put flyers on the parish stall to hand out to members of the public.
W/C 6 July	Key messaging: social media posts highlighting our key messages, with links to the campaign page on the parish council's website. Publish as a 'walk checklist' to make sure people take bags with them. Signs in key hotspots: erect new signs at key hotspots around the parish. Free poo bags: communications announcing that free poo bags will be available to collect from various locations around the parish for those who need them.
Mid-July onwards	Throughout the rest of the year, we will repeat our key messages on social media and in the local press. We will remind people about dog bin locations, the availability of free poo bags and share the link to SBC's 'report it' page.

Content for the parish council's website

This is the updated information that will be published on the council's website.

Our website will host:

- The A5 flyer
- An updated map of all the dog poo bins in the parish
- A link to the SBC 'report it' page
- Information about the law in relation to dog fouling

Risks

There are some risks to the parish council attached to this campaign. They are:

- That dog fouling is so entrenched a behaviour among some dog owners that they refuse to change, resulting in the campaign having no discernible effect.
- That dog owners may feel unfairly targeted, which could result in a backlash against the parish council.
- That highlighting the problem to the extent proposed makes it look as if Wroughton and Wichelstowe is the dog poo capital of Swindon, negatively impacting its wider reputation.

Suitable mitigations can be implemented by:

- Ensuring that messages are positive and empowering rather than accusatory.
- Involving the local community in the messaging rather than it being dictated by the parish council.
- Maintaining a sense of proportion.

The parish council does not have the staffing or financial resources to enforce the law in relation to dog fouling. There is therefore a significant risk that without the ability to enforce action, offending behaviours will not change.

This is why it's important for committee members to be aware that while communications alone cannot solve this problem, they are still nevertheless the best chance we have of changing behaviour. This will, however, require persistent messaging over a long period of time.

Recommendations

1. To **NOTE** the proposals and **APPROVE** the implementation plan for Poo Free Parish
2. To **APPROVE** the virement of the remaining balance of £5,406 from EMR Budget 355 (Workshop Building Fund) to a newly established earmarked reserve for the Poo Free Parish campaign.
3. To **APPROVE** the use of these funds for project-related expenditure, including signage, printing and publicity materials, additional dog waste bins where/ if required, and initiatives such as public dog waste bag dispensing stations

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