

PRESS RELEASE

Council Spending on Street Cleaning Increases Amidst Significant Drop in Litter Fines

***** For immediate release*****

[Belfast, 30th of January, 2018]: Council spending on cleaning streets, roads and open spaces has seen a significant increase of 5% during the last financial year, amounting to a total of £45,562,532 across Northern Ireland. This comes as a result of deploying extra resources to keep our streets clean. However, the practice of issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for dropping litter and dog fouling has dropped by 13% on last year. As such, there is a greater focus on cleaning up after litterers across the province rather than fining offenders in the first place.

The figures, which were gathered by environmental charity Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful from Council financial statements and records of enforcement, show the true cost that litter passes on to all of us, despite being dropped by only a few. To put the spend figure into context, it's almost half the amount spent on constructing the iconic Titanic Belfast museum, or the purchase cost of over 100,000 new street bins.

The money used to pay for the clean-up costs comes from our rates, with the average charge to every domestic rate payer in Northern Ireland sitting at just over £57 for last year.

This is particularly interesting given the amount of money being recovered in fines compared to the amount being spent on cleaning. The stand out performer here was Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, who managed to recoup 0.77% of the amount through the payment of Fixed Penalty Notices. This may seem a small number, but it was 37 times more than the Council who recovered the least through fines, thus showing potential to offset some of these costs to the ratepayer. The total raised by Fixed Penalty Notices to be set against the cost of cleansing was just £169,588, less than 0.5% of the total cost.

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Dr Ian Humphreys, Chief Executive of Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, said “Fining litterers is a part of the solution to the global problem of litter and with the real dangers of particularly plastic pollution now widely understood, there is no excuse for littering behaviour. Relying on the hard working Council street cleaning teams, and the army of volunteers who are dedicated to quietly cleaning up their local patch, is no longer acceptable. Thankfully, most people put their rubbish in the bin and many are joining Live Here Love Here and helping create cleaner, more responsible and prouder communities.”

Those penalised for dropping litter has decreased from 3,724 to 3,158 – a worrying trend considering the fact that we are spending more on the clean up operation. Surveys carried out by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful have shown that the percentage of our streets that failed to meet an acceptable standard has remained at 15% from last year. On a more positive note, however, the same surveys indicate that there has been a remarkable 7% rise in streets categorised as completely free of litter. Equally encouraging, more enforcement action has been taken to curb dog fouling on our streets.

Councils are also investing in anti-litter initiatives such as Live Here Love Here, a public engagement campaign supported by nine of the eleven Councils, the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, NI Housing Executive, Choice Housing, Coca-Cola, McDonald’s and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful.

The full 2017/18 Cleaner Neighbourhoods Report by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful will be published at the end of March.

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To speak to a programme spokesperson, please contact Freddie Harris, Cleaner Neighbourhoods Manager, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful at freddie.harris@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org or on 028 9073 6920 / 077 9664 7012.

Figures used in this release:

- Based on FY 16/17 spending figures, collected from individual Councils' financial statements, publicly available through Council websites
- FY 16/17 FPN figures were provided by Councils in response to requests for the information
- Cost of Titanic Belfast found here: <http://www.futurebelfast.com/property/1-olympic-way-titanic-belfast/>
- Based on cost of street bins found here: <https://www.heyn.co.uk/Environmental-Solutions/Bins/Litter-Bins/Outdoor-Litter-Bins/Manchester-120L-Litter-Bin-with-Apex-Ashtray-Top>
- Cost to ratepayers based on projected figure of 793,208 domestic rate paying occupancies in Northern Ireland for financial year 2016/17, correspondence by email from Department of Finance, Land Property Services Statistics Branch

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is a charity working towards the vision of a cleaner, greener Northern Ireland by running environmental education programmes and awareness raising campaigns, increasing volunteering opportunities and reporting on local environmental quality. Programmes include the BIG Spring Clean, Adopt A Spot, Clean Coast, the Live Here Love Here Community Awards as well as local environmental quality programmes such as international Eco-Schools, EcoCampus and Blue Flag, the Seaside Award, Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Marine Litter surveys, Green Key and the Live Here Love Here Green Business Awards. For more information, visit www.keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org or view our [Media Kit](#) here.