

Chi Onwurah’s 15 Point Action Plan for Rubbish

Including Fly Tipping, Littering and lack of recycling

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Introduction

Since I was first elected in 2010 to represent the people of Newcastle Central, constituents have regularly raised concerns about fly tipping, rubbish, waste materials and litter. Over the years these concerns have grown as the Conservative Government's cuts have affected services – the £320m cuts to Newcastle City Council have meant that rubbish collections, environmental services and household goods disposal have all been reduced or required a payment fee.

When out around Newcastle Central knocking on doors or visiting businesses, charities and schools, litter and rubbish regularly come up. It is an issue I have raised often with Newcastle City Council and Northumbria Police, and was a topic raised and discussed at the Ward Summits I arranged.

In Parliament I also raised with Ministers the need for more powers and funding for local authorities. I emphasized that rubbish and fly-tipping was having an unacceptably negative impact on constituents' lives.

By 2017, the number of complaints across all parts of the constituency about litter issues had risen significantly.

I began to record and identify what were the problems related to rubbish, what actions were being taken and what further action could be taken to tackle the escalating issues caused by litter and fly tipping.

So, in July 2017, I compiled my first Plan for Rubbish.

This has been regularly revised and I am now publishing my latest 15 Point Action Plan.



1. Empowering Communities

Problem: Littering, fly tipping, and waste

Community Action

For the past two years during the covid pandemic occasional neighbourhood and ward meetings with residents have been suspended but the city council has now stated when there is demand such events can now be arranged.

Action Taken

- **Councillors, Police, and partners have organised events in conjunction with local residents.**
- **Police Community Support Officers (CSOs)**
 - Prior to covid conducted door to door visits to educate/remind residents of the impact of fly tipping, littering and appropriate waste disposal methods in the worst affected areas, including the Benwell Terraces.
- **Joint litter picks**
 - Police, YHN, Council and Residents have undertaken joint litter picks in the Benwell and other areas to improve appearance of the area and encourage less littering.
- **Involvement**
 - Most recently litter picks have been regularly organised in Blakelaw, Wingrove and Kenton the city council encourages people to get involved via its website: <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/environment-and-waste/street-care-and-cleansing/local-clean-ups-and-how-get-involved>

Action Outstanding

- Confirm and publicise litter picks across the constituency

2. Funding

Problem: Large reductions in funding over several years due to reductions in central government grants

Action Taken

- **The budget is being increased by £1.2 million annually from 1st April 2022.**

- **The city council will:**
 - Recruit 19 additional operatives, plus 1 supervisor
 - Lease or purchase supporting vehicles and equipment

- **and undertake:**
 - Programmed strimming fence lines and shrub lines
 - Programmed cleansing traffic island and crossings
 - Programmed cleansing main routes and central reservations
 - Focused cleansing neighbourhood focal points
 - Focused shrub maintenance and grass cutting programme
 - Focused weedkilling programme
 - To develop new bulb planting sites
 - To develop wildflower meadow sites

- **Targeted Work**
 - Targeted work will be informed by neighbourhood walkabouts,
 - Ward member reports and complaints
 - Resident, Ward Member, MP requests
 - Letters, emails & social media
 - Incidents recorded and actioned by Ward
 - Prioritised by operational knowledge including Local impact and visibility

Action Outstanding

- To lobby for further funding

3. Education

Problem: educating and raising awareness of littering and fly tipping issues

Action Taken

- **Leaflet Distribution**
 - Prior to Covid-19: CSOs distributed letters to households in local hot spot areas warning of enforcement action should any resident be found littering / fly tipping.
 - Targeted work as part of the new funding from April 2022 will enable leafletting and walkabouts and other anti littering activities to commence.
- **Educating School-age Children**
 - To educate the next generation, CSOs have attended local schools to teach children about the consequences of littering and the need to respect your community. A number of school classes have written directly to Chi to ask for more action on plastics pollution and Chi is taking this up with the Government
- **Junior Warden Scheme Created**
 - A Junior Warden Scheme was operate from Canning Street Primary School. Part of the Junior Wardens' role was to speak with residents whilst on local patrols and educating them about waste disposal and litter.
 - The Junior Warden Scheme also undertook a competition where they designed leaflets encouraging residents to keep the environment clean. These were to be printed and distributed within the Benwell Terraces. This was curtailed by covid restrictions, but it is hoped will re-commence soon.
- **Local Businesses Accountability**
 - Local Councillors undertook visits to businesses on West Road to remind them of their community responsibilities regarding responsible rubbish storage, removal, and disposal. These were suspended by covid but will be re-introduced when possible.

Action Outstanding

- This initiative is extremely limited by the significant reduction in CSO numbers and demands on their time for more urgent work, as well as the covid restrictions. Chi is working with the PCC to assess future need/resources.

4. Enforcement

Problem: Littering and fly tipping

Actions Taken

- **Fixed Penalty Notices**

- Wardens go through rubbish in to identify culprits and issue penalty enforcement notices. Enforcement action continues but is time consuming and many culprits are not identifiable, but action is taken whenever possible. Results below:

2020/21	Total Fixed Penalty Notice Actions	Vehicles seized	Prosecutions	Community Service Outcomes	Custodial Sentence Outcomes	Paid Fixed Penalty Notice %
	182	5	61	2	0	85.7%

2021/22	Total Fixed Penalty Notice Actions	Vehicles seized	Prosecutions	Community Service Outcomes	Custodial Sentence Outcomes	Paid Fixed Penalty Notice %
	192	3	63	3	1	85%

- **Landlord Property Responsibility**

- The Public Protection and Neighbourhood Team from Newcastle City Council continue to take enforcement action.
- But powers are limited and rely on public informing staff of issues.
- Only 13 landlords were served notices in 2016 instructing them to clean the exterior of their properties, and often requires extensive follow up and expensive court action

- **Additional Enforcement Officers**

- New enforcement officers were recruited by Newcastle City Council. They predominantly work within the City Centre of Newcastle and regularly go to the inner west of the City, educating residents and issuing penalty notices to act as a deterrent.

- **CCTV**

- 10 overt CCTV cameras were installed in pilot scheme to cover key lane and junctions.

- Resulting in 37 investigations, 9 fixed penalty notices issued, 9 fixed penalty notices paid. 1 summons case, 20 simple cautions, 1 referral to police (counterfeit driving licences), 1 hooded nighttime bin raider, 1 warning letter.
- **Fly Tipping Prosecution**
 - The city council has been prosecuting fly tippers, when it can identify the culprits.
 - It widely publicised the exceptionally high fine of £2,500 made for two large piles of junk dumped in a park, when the cost of disposing the items legally would have been £30.
 - Most recently in Arthurs Hill and Wingrove selected streets and lanes used 10 overt CCTV cameras were installed to cover key lane and junctions. Resulting in 37 investigations, 9 fixed penalty notices issued, 9 fixed penalty notices paid. 1 summons case, 20 simple cautions, 1 referral to police (counterfeit driving licences), 1 hooded night time bin raider, 1 warning letter.

Action Outstanding

- Budget reductions have reduced these activities but may be increased again with the new funding. Will confirm with Newcastle City Council
- Consider more CCTV



5. Licensing

Problem: A proportion of the accumulating litter is alcohol related.

Action Taken

- Eight new licensing applications have been objected to and denied by the police / Council. Funding from the late night levy has been used to help increase cleansing after weekends.

There has been an increase in glass waste being left on the streets at night, partly as a result of covid legislation which has allowed off sales of alcohol from all licensed premises.

Action Outstanding

- This is ongoing periodically as new applications are made. Regular communication with businesses and licensees about good management.

6. High Visibility Patrols

Problem: Organised fly tipping

Fly Tipping

Recently Newcastle has seen a serious and growing problem of serial and organised fly-tipping (with a large “ghost economy” of opportunist waste carriers; many of whom have diversified from acquisitive crime such as burglary and theft into presenting themselves as legitimate waste managers and getting customers confidence and business) and also with bin raiding in parts of the city. The latter problem is driven by a number of varied factors, including poverty, identity theft, realisation of recyclable waste (electricals, items still fit for use, scrap metals and rags) and “freeganism” (recovering/using wasted goods).

The city council is taking a very proactive approach to all waste crimes in order to maintain clean and green neighbourhoods for residents, this includes enforcement action to deal with offenders from low-level crimes such as littering to the more serious crimes such as fly-tipping.

Fines payable at £5 per week are seen as an affordable operating overhead by serial fly-tippers and community orders are rarely imposed in the lower court.

A significant number of vehicles used by professional fly-tippers are falsely registered with the DVLA or not registered. When seized, these can't be claimed, but it makes enforcement more difficult and is rarely addressed by the courts as either a separate offence or as an aggravating feature.

The process of registering vehicles for waste carriage does not work. This would work better as a licensing system, where checks were made about duty of care arrangements. It would also help fund compliance. Fees should be set at a national level and the requirement to register in the area where the vehicle is kept.

Action taken to tackle littering and fly-tipping in March 2019



Action Taken

- Officers deployed on foot and in vehicles to target vehicles likely to be used for high volume fly tipping.

- **In 2022, HMG consulted on replacing the waste carrier registration system with licensing/permitting one.** Ministers want to enhance background checks needed to operate as a waste carrier, broker or dealer and introduce a technical competence requirement. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/waste-carrier-broker-and-dealer-system-reform>. Newcastle City Council responded positively and constructively to the proposal.

- **Working with the Police**
 - Fly-tipper who received prison sentence in 2019 for dumping and burning fridges started fly-tipping again in Outer West of the City. His van was seized in February 2022 on behalf of the Council by police firearms officers, and he was arrested for affray. He is currently in HMP Durham.
 - Fly-tipping father and son set up rogue recycling business. Father arrested in November 2021, and son handed himself in. Both men indicted on total of ten charges under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Accessories and Abettors Act 1861, and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. Son promptly pleaded guilty to five charges relating to large deposits from a 7.5 tonne tipper lorry. The lorry was seized and sold. Father has elected jury trial.

- **New Technology**
 - Newcastle City Council have some higher specification CCTV cameras with improved capability of recording vehicle registration plates. These are deployed in known fly-tipping spots, which are attended to by officers each day.
 - Working with Northumbria Water using a covert CCTV unit at a regular fly-tipping site, which has had a number of successes, such as in June 2022 when neighbourhood police team seized a van which was recorded tipping by this camera, and the owner attended interview and made a prompt admission.

Action Outstanding

- Ongoing periodically but now very limited due to large reductions in Police numbers. Newcastle City Council recommend that current scheme of registration of waste carriers should be turned into a licensing system whereby waste carriers have to be licensed to carry waste and have documented procedures for waste disposal that are audited through regular inspection. The system could be self financing.

7. Fire Brigade Partnership Working

Problem: Issues with bins being left out: they can be arson risks; things fall out of them; and they are pushed over, and residents report they are being searched resulting in dumping around the bins

Action Taken

- In several areas individual household bins were replaced by communal bins with some reduction in littering but with many objections from residents.
- The new bin pilots have shown improvements in tackling bins being left out, and further action based on pilot outcomes is intended. Some adjustments have been made in response to residents' comments and experience following the introduction of the communal bins.
- Lobby government for legal requirement for bins to be stored off the highway.

8. Neighbourhood Policing Priority Status

Problem: Community concern about littering and fly tipping

Action Taken

- Due to community concerns, the issues of littering and fly tipping were made local neighbourhood policing priorities. As a result, the activity, engagement, and partnership, working as outlined above, were undertaken.
- This action was to demonstrate to local residents that their concerns have been heard and activity undertaken to address them. This was limited by covid restrictions and reduced Police numbers.
- Littering and fly tipping remain a neighbourhood policing priority, due to the strength of feeling regarding this issue in the local community. Northumbria Police encourage anyone witnessing a vehicle tipping waste illegally to contact them on 999 or 101 at the time.

9. Bins

Problem: Residents raised concerns that the two weekly bin collections resulted in litter and rubbish accumulating in greater quantities and being left in sitting for longer.

Action Taken

- **The city council implemented a communal bin system**
 - This means that individual residential dwellings no longer have their own bins, but larger industrial style bins are dispensed throughout the terraces for residents waste. This reduces the number of wheelie bins within the back lanes and is aimed at improving the aesthetic appearance of the area whilst reducing collection costs. This received a mixed response amongst residents.

Communal Bin Trial Reception

- March 2022 Pilots of bin options in Arthurs Hill & Wingrove. Three months into the Arthurs Hill & Wingrove pilots, which run for another 3 months. 558 residents involved.

Bins

- **Bin trial assessing impacts based on four scenarios:**
 - Road closed with Individual bins
 - Uncontrolled access with Individual bins
 - Road closed with shared bins
 - Uncontrolled access with shared bins
- **Key points when provided with individual bins**
 - 25% of residents not taking ownership of individual bins with bins left out
 - still some residents who Newcastle City Council were unable to engage with.
 - increase side waste – could be reduced capacity as only 16% recycling.
 - No accurate data on some households, HMO's & converted properties.
- **Positives**
 - Majority are keeping bins off the street.
 - Double the number of residents have opted in for recycling.
 - 90% of opt in recycling are keeping bins off the streets.
 - 80% of recycling left on street still at acceptable standard

- **Key points with individual bins and restricted access**
 - Streets have generally been cleaner and manageable with current resources.
 - Reduced instances of larger fly tips
 - No difference in the amount of side waste
 - Restricted access has helped reduce fly tips in these lanes.
- **Key points with communal bins and restricted access**
 - Streets have generally been cleaner and manageable with current resources.
 - Reduced instances of larger flytips
 - Fly tipping is generally individual household items
 - Restricted access has helped reduce flytips in these lanes.

Action Outstanding

- Target individual households to try and understand issues – capacity, additional education, behavioural change.
- Identify or remove opt in recycling bins left on street.
- Collate residents feedback.
- Schemes not to be extended to other areas during pilot phase.
- Further review to take place at the 6 month point.



10. Precautions for Bonfire Night

Problem: Concern that bins, litter, and discarded wood etc. could be used by locals to create unauthorised fires

Action Taken

- Both in the lead up to bonfire night and on the night itself, police and local authorities worked together to remove items being stockpiled or items likely to be set on fire.
- Skips were hired and local waste disposal operatives / facilities were used to remove items - with the aim of reducing arson offences. Regularly undertaken every October/November but limited by budgets and staffing number reductions.
- Prosecuted waste carrier using Bonfire Night as an excuse to get rid of rubbish for free, and in a harmful and polluting way. Sentence: fine of £291, £235 contribution to officer costs, and £34 surcharge.

11. Public Litter Bins

Problem: Small public litter bins overfilling and not in areas that they were needed most.

Action Taken

- The Council have removed small public litter bins and have instead place new larger volume litter bins in locations with the biggest litter problems.
- Fill levels are monitored through the use of technology.

12. Encouraging Recycling

Goal: To encourage more recycling and less materials being put in communal bins.

Action Taken

- Two new information signs to promote the importance recycling were created to put on the sides of 35 refuse collection vehicles. More leaflets, posters, and visits will commence to promote recycling.
- In some areas residents are now being offered back individual recycling bins, where they can be kept off the streets or lanes, except on collection days.
- Additional leafletting, target mail and visits have been introduced.

13. Newcastle Waste Commission

The city council commissioned a Report that set out how Newcastle could significantly reduce waste. The Report was published in February 2018

The city collects 142,000 tonnes of household waste every year.

Action Taken

- The Newcastle Waste Commission Recommends:
 - a voluntary ban on single use plastics in the city
 - a voluntary ban on drinking straws in pubs, clubs and restaurants
 - setting an ambitious target to be a zero-food waste city
 - a re-use mall where unwanted items can be bought, sold and swapped
 - exploring alternatives to the council sending waste to Sweden
 - setting up a city-wide partnership for groups to share ideas and good practice
 - Build zero-waste principles into homes, buildings and spaces
 - It is estimated waste could be reduced by 10 per cent by 2025, and recycling rates improved from 42 per cent to 65 per cent by 2030.

The research and findings of the Waste Commission were used to inform the City Council's own Waste Strategy agreed March 2019. Specific recommendations that the Council has responded to include:

- Stopped the use of single-use plastic where practicable, including cutlery and straws, promoted reusable water bottles through the 'Refill Newcastle' app, and improved recycling within council buildings and operations
- Provided more information on waste and recycling to residents including through social media, videos, face-to-face contacts and on our bin lorries
- Started planning for a Reuse facility within the city

- Joined a partnership of seven local authorities that will dispose of waste in the Tees Valley using an Energy Recovery Facility
- Worked with leading national charity WRAP (Waste Resource Action Programme) to explore the scope for separate food waste collections and more recycling
- Set up the Resource Newcastle Partnership' to share experience, expertise and opportunities
- Worked with the Future Homes Project to build waste reduction, reuse and recycling into these new homes of the future
- Worked with NE1 on pilots to improve trade waste collections in the city centre

14. City Clean Up

Goal: Allocate more money to keep Newcastle clean.

Action Taken

- In 2018 the city council allocated an extra £1million to make a one off special clean up covering street cleaning, litter collection, remove dog mess, erase graffiti, cutback overgrown shrubbery, new posters on litter bins, and litter information notices on council vehicles. This was made permanent in April 2021.
- The annual budget for cleaning from April 2022 is being permanently increased by an additional £1.2 million.

15. Valuing the West End

Goal: Raise the profile of West End attractions and communities leading to great investment in keeping the area clean from both residents and Government

Action Taken

- I kicked off a campaign to promote the real route of Hadrian's Wall down the West Road, which currently the official Hadrian's Wall Trail ignores. I emphasised that in the third century, Hadrian's Wall would have been the most diverse place in the UK, and that it is their rubbish which helps us understand them through archaeological digs.