

**To:               INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY BOARD**

**On:               7 NOVEMBER 2018**

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**Report by:     DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE**

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**Heading:       CHEWING GUM**

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## **1.       SUMMARY**

- 1.1     At the Council meeting on 28 June 2018, the Council discussed a Notice of Motion on the introduction of a chewing gum levy on manufacturers.
  - 1.2     Council agreed that the Director of Environment & Infrastructure should review the removal of chewing gum and provide a board report on various costs and options for removal of chewing gum from Renfrewshire's pavements.
  - 1.3     This report sets out 4 broad options to remove chewing gum from pavements, including the current approach taken by the StreetScene service. Any option or combination of options beyond the existing service provision would be an additional revenue cost on the Council that is not currently budgeted for.
  - 1.4     Following a UK government consultation on single use plastics, which included chewing gum, the treasury summary report details that a tax/charge will be considered for introduction on items, including chewing gum.
  - 1.5     At the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board in August 2018 it was detailed that the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse was revised in 2018 and comes into force in June 2019. The revision to the Code of Practice now includes chewing gum as litter, with the Council having a legal obligation to address chewing gum. The service is currently reviewing the implications for meeting the Code of Practice and this may alter the focus on chewing gum to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice.
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## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board considers the options set out in section 5 of this report and costs associated with the removal of chewing gum.
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## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As part of the Spring Statement in March 2018, the Chancellor proposed a potential litter levy that could include chewing gum. At the same time the UK Government undertook a consultation on the possible introduction of a tax on single use plastics, which some argued could include chewing gum as many are made of rubber.
- 3.2 The Treasury summary report on the consultation was produced in August 2018 and proposed consideration of taxes and charges for “on the go” items including litter, plastics, cigarette butts and chewing gum.
- 3.3 As a country, Scotland spends £28.6m on purchasing chewing gum annually. Zero Waste Scotland research concluded that the average cost of a piece of chewing gum is 3p, with a clean-up cost estimated to be £1.50 per piece.
- 3.4 The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (COPLAR) was revised in 2018 and comes into force in June 2019. This revision to the code of practice imposes a statutory duty on the council to, as far as is practicable, keep their land clear of litter and refuse. This will include chewing gum from June 2019, and litter monitoring and benchmarking will include the presence of any chewing gum in the analysis.
- 3.5 Should anyone be observed discarding chewing gum inappropriately on the ground, a fixed penalty notice for littering (£80 fine) can be issued under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 3.6 The Council has also signed up to the Chewing Gum Action Group annual campaign in 2018 to reduce chewing gum littering. This provides a toolkit for local authorities as well as press packs and advertising materials.

## **4 Street Cleaning Operations**

- 4.1 Environment & Infrastructure undertakes street cleaning across Renfrewshire, ensuring compliance with its statutory undertaking set out in the Code of Practice under the Environmental Protection Act.
- 4.2 Street cleaning is undertaken through manual litter picking and mechanical street sweeping of our communities. These operations do not result in the removal of all hardened chewing gum from our streets and pavements.

- 4.3 To remove hardened chewing gum from pavements and hard standing areas specialist machines that use heat and detergent to unstick the chewing gum are utilised. This process combines a detergent and heat treatment, which breaks down the sticking properties and allows the residual waste to be brushed away. This process can be time consuming to remove pieces of chewing gum and can only target small areas of concern at a time.

## **5. Options to Remove Chewing Gum**

- 5.1 The Council has researched this issue through public and private sector bench marking, focussing on solutions in use across the United Kingdom, including trialling different equipment. There are 4 broad options set out below. Each option, other than the status quo, would require additional revenue funding and equipment to remove chewing gum.

### **Option 1 – Current Street Cleaning, Approach to Tackle Chewing Gum**

- 5.2 Paragraph, 4.2 and 4.3 of this report set out the street cleaning activities currently deployed to tackle chewing gum. These activities are built into core Streetscene budget arrangements.
- 5.3 Environment & Infrastructure currently have handheld chewing gum removal machines, mechanical sweepers and power washers to undertake street cleaning across Renfrewshire. The Chewing gum removal machines combine detergent and heat treatment to break down the sticking properties and staff brush away residual waste. These machines are used to address hotspots on a required basis.
- 5.4 The chewing gum removal machines are slow and can only target small areas of concern. Chewing gum build up often occurs in areas such as bus stops, outside public houses and other high footfall areas. This is often a recurring issue requiring repeat visits.
- 5.5 It should be noted that the current review of implications for the Council through the new code of practice for litter and refuse which comes into effect in 2019 may alter and enhance the focus on chewing gum to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice.

### **Option 2 – Enhanced Chewing Gum Removal**

- 5.6 This option builds on core street cleaning activities set out in option 1 above with 4 additional personnel dedicated to utilising chewing gum removal machines to focus on a dedicated programme of chewing gum removal throughout Renfrewshire, targeting hotspots and areas of community concern.
- 5.7 This enhanced chewing gum removal service would cost an additional £150,000 per annum to deliver.

### **Option 3 – Dedicated Chewing Gum Removal Vehicle**

- 5.8 This option builds on the core street cleaning and chewing gum activities set out under option 1. Under this option a dedicated chewing gum removal van, utilising a pressurised hot water system would be used to remove chewing gum.

This approach allows larger areas of chewing gum to be removed quickly. The high-pressure system would not be suitable in all circumstances. In these circumstances, the core chewing gum removal equipment would complement and support to provide a greater flexibility in service provision.

- 5.9 This operation would require a capital investment of £120,000 and a revenue cost of approximately £150,000 per annum. This is a scalable option with the above costs based on a full 7 day working pattern so could be reduced to a more focussed approach to tackle hotspot areas.

### **Option 4 – Dedicated Mechanical Sweepers**

- 5.10 This option also builds on the core street cleaning and chewing gum activities set out under option 1; enhancing the removal of chewing gum removal operations through a dedicated mechanical sweeper with twin tanks and pressurised systems for mechanical cleaning and removal of chewing gum.

- 5.11 This option was trialled around 18 months ago in the Paisley town centre area over a variety of different road and pavement surfaces. Whilst effective at removing chewing gum the productivity was low due to the water tanks and vehicle fuel being depleted quickly and requiring refilling and refuelling. The inefficiencies within the operations would be increased further when rolled out across Renfrewshire. The slow operation of this vehicle and high costs associated led to the option not being pursued.

- 5.12 As the machine utilises high pressure, it was also found to remove mortar and other loose items and is not therefore suitable on all pathways.

- 5.13 This operation would require a capital investment of around £160,000 and a revenue cost estimated at £120,000 per annum (staff, consumables, vehicle and servicing).

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 In summary, chewing gum is currently tackled through the core StreetScene service. Options 2, 3 and 4 in Section 5 set out proposals that would enhance the resource and equipment available to tackle chewing gum.

- 6.2 The service is currently considering the implications of the new code of practice on litter and refuse as reported to the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board in August 2018 and this may require our current approach to the management of chewing gum to change to comply with the requirements of the code of practice.
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## **Implications of the Report**

1. **Financial** – Options, 2, 3 and 4 as set out in section 5 of this report would incur additional revenue costs to deliver the service. Options, 3 and 4 also require a one-off capital investment in equipment.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community Planning** – None
4. **Legal** - None
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – Testing and a full procurement exercise would be required to deliver the required machinery to achieve this change
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None

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## **List of Background Papers - none**

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