

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET**

**Date 26th September 2017**

1. **REPORT TITLE**                      **Subways Evaluation 2017**
- Submitted by:**                      **Scrutiny Officer, Jayne Briscoe**
- Portfolio:**                              **Communities & Social Cohesion**
- Ward(s) affected:**                      **All**

**Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to receive the report into subways within the Borough from the Cleaner Greener and Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee.

**Recommendation**

That the report is received and that Cabinet consider an appropriate response.

**Reasons**

The Cleaner, Greener, Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee have recently scrutinised the subways within the Borough and have made a number of proposals on how these could be improved.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Cleaner, Greener and Safer Scrutiny Committee have completed an examination of the issues surrounding the perception that subways in our Newcastle public domain have been progressively neglected. They have become a 'problem' as the funding for their maintenance has been steadily eroded.
- 1.2 There have been positive joint approaches to some aspects of subways in Newcastle. For example, LED lighting has been installed resulting in much improved brighter lighting, the Grosvenor roundabout arms were all cleaned in May 2017 as part of the upgrading scheme for the whole roundabout. The Borough Council has a successful track record of working in partnership with the County Council and local artists to improve the subways in the town centre. This has created subways that are attractive and welcoming to use. Generally the subways where we have commissioned artworks are well received and tend to remain graffiti free. However, where we have refurbished the subway barrels and in some cases repainted these, they continue to be a target for illegal graffiti.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The main issue is cleaning the walls of the subway barrels to keep them free from illegal graffiti. The Borough Council has responsibility for cleaning the subway floors and the County Council is responsible for cleaning the walls. After meeting the County Council it is clear that there is no funding for cleaning the walls so that the graffiti in the subway barrels continues to increase. The recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee address these difficulties and have set out a potential way forward.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet consider the report from the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Scrutiny Committee and their proposals on how these could be improved.

4. **Recommendations**

That the report is received and that Cabinet consider an appropriate response.

The Scrutiny Committee wishes to propose the following actions:-

1. Engage 'community payback' teams to start on a publicly visible and ongoing approach to cleaning off graffiti Ask partner organisations (see Section 1) for their experience with these initiatives indicating successes and limitations. Police Commissioner's Proceeds of Crime and People Power Funds may offer routes forward.
2. Safer Routes to School initiative of the County Council could be a driver to improving the environment of identified relevant arms of subways. No parent wants to be explaining offensive drawings and words on subways to children on their way to school. County Council to be engaged with this with a view to funding clean up schemes in arms near Primary Schools.
3. Drains need more frequent suction. Responsibility and process mechanisms to be identified clearly and on a proper maintenance programme to be agreed between NBC and SCC together with an agreed cleaning maintenance and renovation programme.
4. Develop the idea of paid for advertising panels; this had been mooted by the County's portfolio holder as something to be trialled in Stafford. An example was cited; Newcastle College might wish to publicise courses in the subway arm nearest to it and where student footfall was at its highest. It could be that the College itself could fund or get sponsors for such an installation.
5. Build on the popular 'Art in Subways' NBC/BID could work jointly to gain funding.
6. Some subways could be gated off entirely. Start the process of identification. Whilst this is a costly process in the long term, it is a logical step and plans should be drawn up and agreed between NBC and SCC identifying where closure could take place, and what alternatives can be made available for pedestrians such as Pelican Crossings.
7. The offer from the portfolio holder Councillor Mark Deaville at SCC to be taken up and agreed for the first of regular quarterly meetings. An agenda item for the first meeting to be: discussion of County handing over responsibility and funding for complete maintenance of subways to the Borough Council.
8. Senior officer Roger Tait made a useful suggestion in June about the possible recruitment of the Probation Service. The Council could enlist their services to engage a team of offenders to systematically clean all the subways walls lights and barrels. The Probation Service would provide their own PPI equipment and supervision. The Council would be required to provide cleaning materials and a fee of £3,900 for six months work Officer Chris Plant (at County Highways and in the context of discussion of responsibilities regarding subways) agreed that this appears to be good value for money. Our Committee recommends that officers should find a way of resolving the fee issue and engage the Probation Service as soon as possible.

9. A suggestion has been received from Highways Officer Chris Plant subsequent to Roger Tait's comment about using the Probation Service and was discussed and considered as a 'recommendation'.

It is that the Borough Council could seek sponsorship from institutions and town businesses to have their information portrayed on the subway arms. The committee members were lukewarm about making this a strong recommendation agreeing that this could work but only after a continuous cleaning programme was underway and that this would have to be initiated and in place before seeking sponsorship deals.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 The Cleaner, Greener, Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee have recently scrutinised the subways within the Borough and have made a number of proposals on how these could be improved.

The Scrutiny Committee considers that the current state of the subways is not serving the public well and that this is creating reputational damage for both councils. Implementation of the suggested recommendations are considered to be capable of arresting this problem.

6. **Links to our Corporate Priority of a Cleaner, Safe and Sustainable Borough Priorities**

- 6.1 We will improve the environment so that everyone can enjoy a clean safe and sustainable Borough.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Council has powers, under the Local Government Act 2000, to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough's residents.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 Ensuring that our built environment demonstrates the Council's due regard to the Equalities Act 2010 as the Council can demonstrate that it:
- Ensures services are accessible and designed to meet the diverse needs of local communities.
  - Assesses the impact of services, policies and activities on specific communities.
  - Understands the make-up and needs of local communities.
  - Ensures staff and Councillors respect, value and support the development of strong and cohesive communities.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 The project is being developed at a time of limited financial resources and forms part of our response to encourage excellence, whilst being driven by the need for austerity. The recommendations have been developed within existing resources.

10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 The approach seeks to manage the risks for all stakeholders and funders, in relation to their ability to respond to the challenge.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This proposal affects all wards.

12. **Earlier Cabinet Resolutions**

12.1 None

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 None.

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 None.

15. **Management Sign-Off**

*Each of the designated boxes need to be signed off and dated before going to Executive Director/Corporate Service Manager for sign off.*

	Signed	Dated
<b>Financial Implications Discussed and Agreed</b>		
<b>Risk Implications Discussed and Agreed</b>		
<b>Legal Implications Discussed and Agreed</b>		
<b>Equalities Implications Discussed and Agreed</b>		
<b>H.R. Implications Discussed and Agreed</b>		
<b>ICT Implications Discussed and Agreed</b>		
<b>Report Agreed by: Executive Director/ Head of Service</b>		