

**7<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

**Deteriorating Council Services in Westcourt Ward - Waste Removal\Fly Tipping**

**Background**

Over the last year the volume of rubbish and number of rubbish dumps on council and other property in the area bounded by Freeman Rd, Bourne Rd, Cruden Rd and Medhurst Cres in the Westcourt Ward has grown.

Referring to the map below, the location of the most common dumps are marked at points B, C, D, E, F, G, I and J. Basically every 20 meters or so in the access way (marked in green) there is a rubbish dump. Mostly those marked are becoming permanent features of the local environment.

On the ground the access way is marked by the fences of individual properties according their deeds. It runs from points A, G and H with junctions at B and E. A secondary access point is at point K in Bourne Rd.

**Map**



As far as residents know, the entire access way is a public right of way and the council's responsibility to *maintain*.

In attempting to keep it clear a number of reports have been made to Gravesham Council and a list of known reports is at table 1.

Residents are fed up after the latest two incidents which have been substantial loads of trade waste completely blocking access for long periods of time.

In summary a number of issues have been raised in meetings with the council, listed at table 2.

The feeling is that residents are not being listened to, as it seems to take a long time to obtain a response.

The issues are mainly a council responsibility to resolve but a blame culture has been detected.

**Local Consultation.** Residents at 33, 35, 37 and 25 Medhurst Crescent have been consulted over the matter and have individually approached the council through Mr Dietrich-Coke in Housing. Every household in the area is affected.

### **Conclusion**

On the occasions when Gravesham councils waste management services have been engaged in respect of this problem - services have fallen short of satisfactory. The thought is that while our council tax has gone up, services have been reduced. Simply getting a response has become more difficult. As each incident incurs a cost, it is easy to assume money is being taken but costs avoided by reducing services.

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## Appendix 1 - List of Sites and Incidents

Dump Site	Most Recent Incident	Impact	Approx Date Dumped	Current State	Date Removed	Remarks
<b>B</b>	Central Location regular dumping occurs	Environmental - Visual	Regular Dumps	Growing		
<b>C</b>	.25 Tonne Top soil and Flints	Damage to vehicle due to flint nodules. Dragged mud into properties. Vehicles and shoes dirtied, Distress to elderly neighbours, restricted access to properties.	Mid Feb 2016	In situ as at 7th March	n\a	Luke Dietrich-Coke attended meeting on 23rd February
<b>D</b>	Approx 1 Tonne of Builders Waste Tipped from a vehicle	Obstruction to pedestrians and vehicles.	Nov 2015	Cleared	Nov 2015	10 to 14 day response noted
<b>E</b>	Fridge, Tyres and Various Other rubbish	Environmental - Visual	January 2015	Still in situ and growing	n\a	
<b>F</b>	Long standing Dump  .25 Tonne miscellaneous Household Waste	Environmental - Visual	All Year Round			
<b>G</b>	Regular Household Rubbish Dump in Cruden Road	Environmental – Visual\Vermin				
<b>J</b>	Asbestos Sheets	Environmental\Health Hazard	November 2015	Still in Situ		

## Appendix 2 - Issues

Issue No	Issue	Impact\Cause	Effect	Suggested Solution	Remarks
1	When Council staff attend incidents, they clear up the site but ignore other sites nearby.	Poor supervision	Contributes to problem	Supervision and Incident closure	This happened in relation to November 2015 incident at dump D. Rubbish was left at all other sites after clearance at D by council workers.
2	The council spent several thousand pounds on gates at A and G several years ago but these have remained open allowing outside people to tip from vehicles.	Frustration at wasted money	Contributes to Problem	Closing these gates will change the situation because only people with access will be able to dump rubbish.	There is no gate at H. Please note costs. Concerns about access for delivery vehicles and resident's caravans must be addressed
3	Reports submitted via Gravesham 24 App ignored or service delays.	Lack of communication	Response is not as good as the app suggests -		Please note service fails and costs.
4	Enforcement is a council responsibility and a service we pay for.			Covert surveillance has been used elsewhere. If the gates are closed and covered with cameras this is thought to be a workable solution combined with fines.	What does the council do exactly? Why do we never see environmental enforcement officers in the area but these are deployed regularly in town?

<b>Issue No</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Impact\Cause</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>5</b>	The council owns and controls plant such as road sweepers which we have paid for but which are not deployed in response to the incidents.				To clear the area today would require such equipment and a team for one day.
<b>6</b>	Residents already make many trips to the dump as waste management services are no longer fully effective.				
<b>8</b>	Blame culture. "The issue is caused by residents". (GBC)  "The rubbish is on private property." (GBC)				See issue 4
<b>9</b>	No money at the end of the Financial Year "you will have to wait until the new FY" (GBC)				Residents pay council tax for a years services, year on year.
<b>10</b>	The waste is put there by residents (GBC). (See also issue 2).			Closing the gates to outside access will prove this.	
<b>11</b>	Some of the waste is on private property			The council contact property owners with enforcement notices	See issue 4

Issue No	Issue	Impact\Cause	Effect	Suggested Solution	Remarks
12	Amateur attempts to clear the rubbish to one side doesn't remove the problem. Residents interfering with it exacerbates the problem.				
13	"Access is not blocked" (GBC) "so we won't remove anything"				This doesn't prevent it from becoming an eyesore or encouraging vermin (Residents).
14	"It only takes one resident to object and we can't lock the gates."				We live in a democracy and not a dictatorship. All residents affected should be consulted and the majority solution adopted. Residents are easy enough to identify by the properties surrounding the area.