

**To:** Communities and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 17 October 2011  
**Report of:** Head of Law and Governance  
**Title of Report:** Cleaner Greener Oxford Scrutiny Panel - Update

## Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report:** To update the Committee on the work of the Cleaner Greener Oxford Scrutiny Panel

**Report Approved by:** Scrutiny Committee Chair, Councillor Campbell

**Recommendation(s):**

### **Recommendation 1**

As only 1 of the committee's members is currently involved in this Panel to decide if it wishes to pursue the issues further and if so nominate members

Assuming a positive response:

### **Recommendation 2**

To ask City Works, Environmental Development and Communities and Neighbourhoods to work with voluntary sector partners (in particular Oxclean) to encourage communities to take part in the Annual Clean up as a way of encouraging and sustaining the community ownership

### **Recommendation 3**

To consider asking Area Forums to take an active part in gauging community opinions on the state of cleanliness of their neighbourhoods This will complement the existing survey work being carried out by the Council in performance measure DS010 which surveys residents' opinions via the talkback panel.

### **Recommendation 4**

For the Panel to pursue the environmental and service issues around flats within the developing HRA Business Plan and report back to either this committee or the Housing Panel

### **Recommendation 5**

To evaluate the measures taken in Druce Way and report back to the committee in the New Year.

## **Introduction and Background**

1. As part of the work programme for the current year the Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee decided to continue the Panel established to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of the Cleaner Greener Campaign in Blackbird Leys.
2. The Panel was given the following brief from the Committee “To take opinions from a broad section of the community in Blackbird Leys on the success and sustainability of the Cleaner Greener Campaign in their area.”
3. The following report is written to give a summary of the work carried out since the last update in an attempt to refocus and reinvigorate the Panel’s work. Insufficient evidence has so far been gathered that would enable the Panel to come to a firm conclusion in response to the original scope.

## **Update and Findings**

4. At the Committee’s March meeting an update on work done to date was provided. Since then the following activities have taken place:
  - A survey of residents opinions in The Leys News
  - A meeting with OxClean
  - Local member doorstep surgeries
  - A walkabout on the Blackbird Leys Estate by Panel members
5. Leys News survey

A survey was published in the March edition of the Leys News. Despite the incentive of a chance to win a £30 shopping voucher the survey received only 5 responses. The low response rate makes meaningful statistical analysis of the data impossible although the following two headlines are relevant:

- 3 of the 5 respondents noticed an improvement in the level of abandoned vehicles in the area
- 4 of the 5 respondents noticed an improvement in fly posting in the area.

In the “extra comments” column, 2 respondents talked about the problem of dog fouling, 1 talked about the poor cleanliness of Spindleberry nature reserve, 1 commented on general litter around bus stops and 1 made comments about the importance of prosecuting fly-tippers.

## 6. OxClean

Officers organised a useful meeting with Vernon Porter, a member of the OxClean Group. He provided some useful insights into the valuable work that OxClean carry out in the city and made the following points:

- A more joined up approach between various statutory and voluntary agencies would achieve better results.
- The community response from Blackbird Leys to the Oxclean annual spring clean was poor
- Windale School in Blackbird Leys was mentioned as an area where rubbish accumulates, particularly when parents are waiting to collect children from school
- Windale Avenue, Gillians Park and the surrounding areas were considered “grot spots”
- OxClean commended City Works for doing a good job in keeping streets generally clean in Blackbird Leys. They said that they would like to see more time spent in removing rubbish from around shrubs and at bus stops

## 7. Door step surgeries

As part of “door step surgeries” during the spring, Blackbird Leys Ward Councillors asked constituents to give their opinion on how clean their neighbourhoods were. The feedback received was mixed and a selection of comments is produced below:

Ashmole Place	Complaints about rubbish from the pub  Brick bin housing area is a location for dumping rubbish and other anti-social behaviour  Problems with rubbish disposal in flats but happy with improved cleanliness of the area in general.  Pleased that alleyways are being cleaned up.
Warburg Crescent	Residents were pleased with the general cleanliness of area.  Problem with top floor maisonettes – rubbish chutes become clogged.
Moorbank	Black bags strewn around the area. Large bins positioned next to front doors. General poor awareness of recycling

## 8. Walkabout on Blackbird Leys

On 14 June Councillors Campbell and Smith went on a walkabout around Blackbird Leys. The visit was done without notifying officers in City Works so that a typical scene on the estate could be witnessed. In particular visits were made to three main areas which had been reported by local members as to have problems: Stalwart Place, Ashmole Place and Druce Way.

In general public areas, roads and pathways appeared to be largely free from litter.

**Stalwart Place** flats had clear problems with rubbish disposal and bin storage. During the visit members witnessed 1 resident throw a bin bag from the top floor into an already overflowing bin (see picture below). There was only 1 large bin for 24 flats to share and the chutes from the top floor were blocked. Residents told us that the bin was emptied once per week and that during the time of the Cleaner Greener Campaign, bins were emptied more frequently. Properties on the ground floor had been allocated a recycling bin of their own. This received positive feedback from residents.



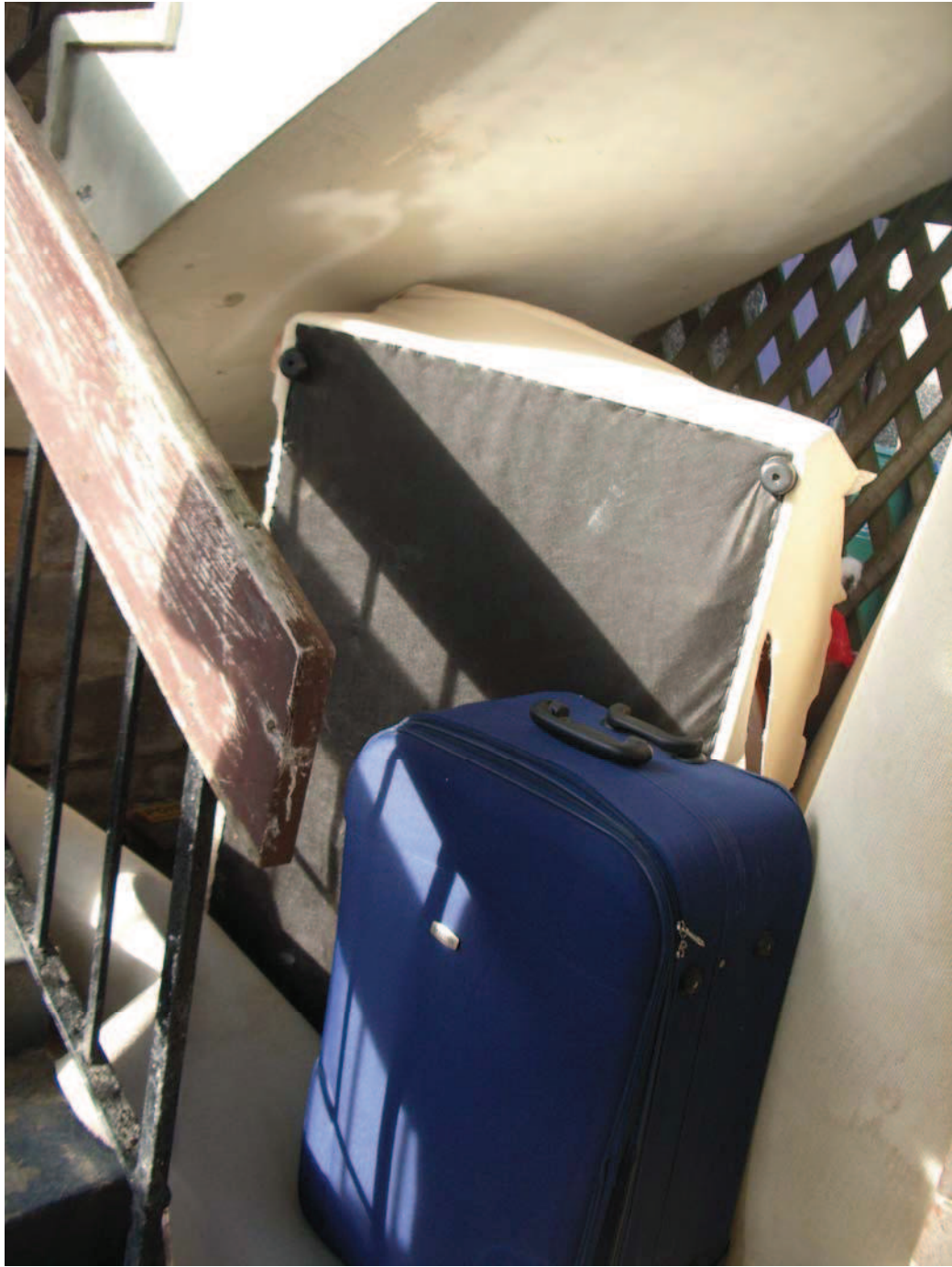
In the “square blocks” of flats at the other end of the road a better arrangement for bin storage appeared to be in place. A fenced off area had been constructed for bin storage.

**In Ashmole Place** a fenced area for bins also seemed to be working well although all bins were full to overflowing. Members witnessed a pile of builder’s rubble dumped at the entrance to a footpath (see below).





**Druce Way** was the area of most concern. The blocks of flats all had bins full to overflowing with chutes from the higher floors all blocked. Storage areas through the flats complex were used as dumping grounds for large items such as boxes, suitcases and beds (pictured below)







During the campaign brightly coloured plastic recycling containers were installed. These appeared to be in a poor state with rubbish dumped around the area.

Alleyways in the **Druce Way** area were littered with fly tipped assorted rubbish (below)





From the observations made and brief conversations with residents during the walkabout it was clear that the main area of concern continues to be the arrangements for collection, storage and disposal of household waste and recycling from flats and maisonettes in the area. This view was supported by the views of local members.

## **Conclusions**

9. As the public survey was not able to reveal any meaningful picture of the perception of cleanliness in Blackbird Leys it would make sense to focus the conclusions on the Panel and local member's work in the

area. This reveals clear issues for resolution on the storage, disposal and recycling of waste in flats.

10. When returning to the original brief from the Committee which was to “take opinions from a broad section of the community in Blackbird Leys on the success and sustainability of the Cleaner Greener Campaign in their area”, to date there has been insufficient evidence gathered to come to a firm conclusion on whether or not the campaign has been a success overall. Further work would be needed to establish conclusions.

### **City Works**

10. Druce Way has been a focus for attention by the service and the following measures were implemented in the summer:
  - The replacement of 2 wooden doors at both ends of the main block of flats with metal gates to make way for four large recycling containers. Access is secured for the exclusive use of residents.
  - Current bin store areas re-secured and emptied more regularly
  - Bins outside of the unsecured storage areas have been removed to prevent non-residents dumping rubbish
  - It was planned to install CCTV to monitor the site
  - There were plans in place to carryout proactive field officer visits for a period of 4 weeks following implementation of the measure as well as letter drops to all residents. Officers from Environmental Development were also to be contacted to request assistance with monitoring the cleanliness of the site.
11. During preliminary discussions with officers it was suggested that further capital money to improve environments and revenue money to improve services for flats was linked to business planning within the reform of council housing finance. Further information on the priority given to this type of work within the HRA business plan is needed in order for the Panel to progress their work and make more useful recommendations. This is not likely to be available until early 2012
12. Committee is asked to consider the following recommendations suggested by the Panel:

### **Recommendation 1**

As only 1 of the committee’s members is currently involved in this Panel to decide if it wishes to pursue the issues further and if so nominate members

Assuming a positive response:

## **Recommendation 2**

To ask City Works, Environmental Development and Communities and Neighbourhoods to work with voluntary sector partners (in particular Oxclean) to encourage communities to take part in the Annual Clean up as a way of encouraging and sustaining community ownership.

## **Recommendation 3**

To consider asking Area Forums to take an active part in gauging community opinions on the state of cleanliness of their neighbourhoods This will complement the existing survey work being carried out by the Council in performance measure DS010 which surveys residents' opinions via the talkback panel.

## **Recommendation 4**

For the Panel to pursue the environmental and service issues around flats within the developing HRA Business Plan and report back to either this committee or the Housing Panel

## **Recommendation 5**

To evaluate the measures taken in Druce Way and report back to the committee in the New Year.

**Name and contact details of author: Alec Dubberley, Law and Governance Ext 2402**

**Background papers: None identified**

**Version number: 1.2**

This page is intentionally left blank