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Team Up to Clean Up

Practice Exemplar 16/07/2021

Introduction

Nicola Drummond and her colleague Emma work in the “Communities, Housing and Planning” departments and oversee the Team Up to Clean Up campaign. They have an active Facebook page where residents in Renfrewshire can see how the campaign is being maintained.

Situation

Years of reduced budgets for local authorities saw a lack of investment in non-essential services. In 2017 Renfrewshire fell to second bottom of LEAMS benchmark report (Zero Waste Scotland) comparing the performance of the 32 Scottish local authorities. This was a concern however it was recognised people were already improving their place by cleaning up regularly. Renfrewshire made a decision to harness this approach and promote it across the authority, celebrating volunteer's efforts on social media. Simultaneously, a larger global movement was taking place with the media shining a light on environmental issues and a focus on what we, individually, can do to help. The Council ringfenced £2.5M for a 5 year spend and increased capacity in gully cleaning, street sweeping and litterpicking – the Team Up to Clean Up Campaign was created with the strapline “*We are doing our bit to keep your community clean, but we need your help too*”.

Action

The Council monitor the Facebook group, which is where volunteer's post their efforts and other volunteers, and Council Officers, celebrate and praise them. Council staff arrange, behind the scenes, for collected bags of litter and presented flytipping to be uplifted by the StreetScene Team. New members ask for equipment from the Council on the page to support them taking up activity to improve their neighbourhood.

Other questions are inevitably raised on the group regarding other Council Services. These are signposted to the relevant Service.

Some volunteers work independently, some prefer to work as a team. Groups receive loan litterpickers which are then collected after their event. Schools and businesses are also encouraged to take part and loan litterpickers are also issued to them with photographs requested allowing us to showcase their work which is always well received by the group.

Further improvements can be made to neglected green/open spaces. Team Up to Clean Up will provide smaller scale hand tools however the Council has a Green Spaces, Play Parks and Villages Investment Fund which is accessed by groups hoping to deliver larger scale improvements.

Outcome

What began as a partnership to remove litter has evolved into community capacity building. Activity has further been attributed to combatting social isolation and supporting good mental health, particularly through periods of lockdown. Over the past 18 Months (from March 2020) the level of volunteers has grown significantly. 2019 closed with the Facebook group having circa 1200 members, it now boasts over 2.8K members with almost 1,000 individual litterpicking kits gifted to volunteers.

Keep Scotland Beautiful LEAMS benchmarking has evidenced an improvement in Renfrewshire's Street Cleanliness. 91.9% in 2019, from 88.2% in 2017. Figures from 2021 are not available due to the pandemic however improvements are again expected in 2021's reporting. Further to this, the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) also saw a significant improvement in Street Cleanliness from 21st place in 2019/20, to 12th position this year.

The Campaign continues to grow organically. Volunteers are vocal in their views and often direct the areas of priority

Reflection

Volunteers often request efforts are concentrated to specific groups. Secondary school children's lunch time routes appear to be an area of concern, and slip roads, country roads and rest laybys are also problematic.

Efforts will be concentrated in these areas in the coming year with bespoke presentations to each of our 12 high schools and nudge techniques implemented.

Team Up to Clean Up's priority outcome is to change behaviours and school children are a captive audience to highlight the impact of litter, not only on communities, but on wildlife and the larger links to plastics in the ocean and worldwide litter issues.

The use of cameras to combat roadside litter is also being investigated.

Contact Details

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