

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils



Community Action Plan

Dog fouling: Reducing the problem

Introduction

It is estimated that 24% of UK households own a dog and although the majority of these dog owners are responsible there are still those that don't and won't bag it and bin it!

Dog mess is a nuisance and is associated with various diseases including toxocara canis which is a roundworm whose eggs can be found in dog mess. This causes stomach upsets, sore throats, asthma and in rare cases blindness.

When irresponsible dog owners do not clear up not only are they committing an offence but they are leaving behind something which can be easily picked up by young children or stood in by others.

Unfortunately it is difficult to catch dog owners not clearing up, however across West Suffolk several initiatives have been implemented which aim to change this behaviour.

There are various options listed within this action plan which can be implemented at minimal or low cost to any organization affected by this issue.

All the options have been trialed at locations across West Suffolk and all have helped reduce dog fouling.

1.0 Basic provision

Most locations suffering from dog fouling will already have the basic provision of either a dedicated dog waste bin or general litter bin somewhere on or nearby the site.

As a minimum one waste disposal bin (either a dog or combined litter and dog waste bin) should be sited at or near the location where you are having an issue with dog fouling.

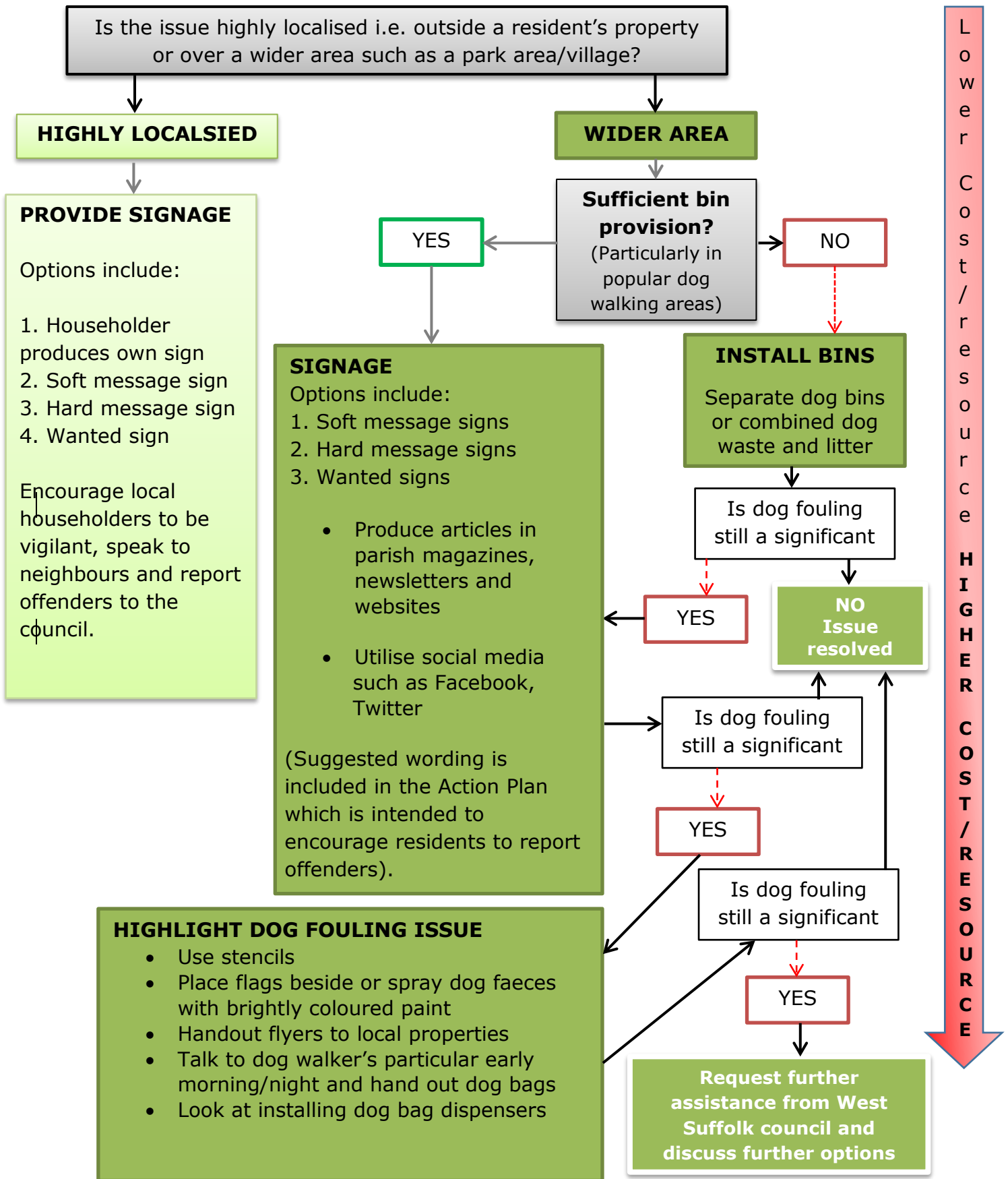
If people are visiting the location to walk their dogs then having at least one bin encourages and reinforces responsible dog ownership.

This should be located where it is both easy to empty and where most people will see it and therefore use it.

A bin is a basic requirement for any location where dogs are allowed before considering any of the other stages listed to reduce a dog fouling issue.

A flow diagram explaining the various stages which can be implemented can be found below, followed by a more detailed explanation of what each of these stages involves.

Flow diagram to assist in the management and reduction of dog fouling:



2.0 Dog fouling: How to reduce the problem

There are several progressive stages in the process of trying to reduce dog fouling which can be followed one by one or a specific stage can be selected, depending on your local situation.

The implementation of one specific stage may be enough to resolve the issue at one location whereas another location may need to try several stages in a gradual approach to reduce the issue.

Details of different trials and the various individual and multiply stages that were implemented during these trials can be found in the appendix.

Before you consider implementing any stages you should ask:

- Where are your 'hot spot' locations?
- When do you have an issue?
(Summer months tend to result in fewer complaints than the winter months.)
- What stages you want to implement?
- Who is going to implement these stages?

Behaviours

A recent investigation into barriers to behavioural change in dog walkers categorises five distinct 'dog walking typologies':

- **'Proud to pick up'** – happy to be seen carrying dog waste, will pick up in all locations and take it home if no bins are available.
- **'It is the right thing to do'** – will pick up in public places but will seek to dispose of the waste as soon as it is practical.
- **'I have done my job'** – if there is no bin available will leave the bagged waste to be dealt with by others.
- **'Only if I have to'** – will only pick up in the presence of other people – likely to discard when no one is looking.
- **'Disengaged'** – will not pick up in any situation even if they are aware of the environmental consequences of their actions.

Research has also demonstrated that dog fouling offenders:

- are from all social classes but more likely to be male than female
- include all age groups with just a slightly higher proportion between the ages of 18 and 24
- only admit that they allow their dog to foul in a public place when pressed

- all know that they could be fined, but the majority did not believe they would ever be caught.

The targets for influencing behaviour change will undoubtedly include the last three 'typologies' listed above.

The 'I have done my job' can be influenced by letting them know that any public litter bin will do, you don't have to use a dedicated dog bin and by making these aware that their general household waste bins can also be used for bagged dog waste disposal.

The 'only if I have to' and 'disengaged' are difficult behaviours to influence and change but with campaigns and more community involvement to report offences, the threat of being caught will increase. These people may be more inclined to pick up if they think more people are watching and willing to report them.

Success should be measured by a reduction in local dog fouling issues rather than the amount of fines issued or prosecutions taken. Fines and prosecutions are the last in the list of stages and there are lots of things to try before this.

2.1 No or minimal cost stages

Publicity/social media campaign

It is useful to be able to increase the awareness of any local dog fouling issues so that residents or users of a particular location are discussing the issue and potentially finding out information on potential offenders.

Local publications such as newsletters, village magazines, websites and social media pages/groups can promote the issue and highlight local concerns.

A template article is included in the appendix which can be adapted or amended and used in newsletters or placed on websites.

By either using your own or by joining other local social media groups the issue can be raised and an online discussion can take place.

The greater number of people that are made aware of an issue, the greater number of people that can keep a look out for offenders, and the greater the awareness, the more likely you are to change the behaviour of those who may previously not bagged and binned dog mess.

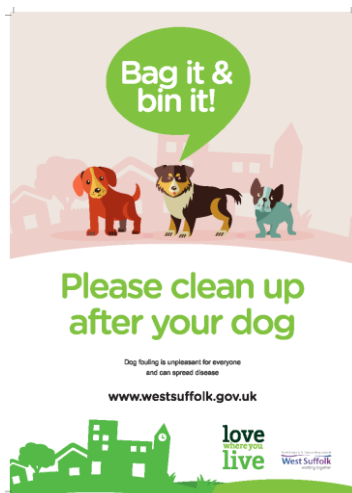
Links can be posted/tweeted to keep people aware of a local campaign / or use our online form to report anyone who is seen not clearing up dog mess:
www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/bins/street_cleaning/dogfouling.cfm

New signs

Three new signs have been designed: one with a softer, reminder message of "Bag it, bin it!", another with a harder hitting message of "Shameful" and a "Wanted" sign that warns irresponsible dog owners that others could be watching out for them.

All three signs are freely available for anyone to download and use from our website at: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/bins/street_cleaning/dogfouling.cfm

"Bag it, bin it"



"Shameful"



"Wanted"



- Download one or all of them
- Print them at home
- Laminate them (if possible)
- Display them

Once you have downloaded and printed any of the signs, they can be displayed within weatherproof noticeboards or in windows.

If you can laminate the signs then this will enable you to be more flexible where you can display them without having to worry about the weather damaging them.

The best locations for signs are where the greatest number of people will see them, both at the 'hot spot' location and in the surrounding area:

- main entrances/exits
- popular routes/footpaths
- car parks
- noticeboards (villages, schools)
- local businesses (shops)

The more prominent a location you can display a sign at, the more the message will be seen by those people whose behaviour you are trying to change.

You must **only** display signs where you have permission to do so.

If you prefer you could also try to design your own signs and display them; sometimes a more personal sign may have a greater impact at reducing the problem than one that has been produced by the local authority.

Printed and laminated signs can be attached to a small wooden stake. This will enable you to be flexible in locating signs on areas such as grass fields where a sign can simply be attached to a wooden stake and secured into the ground.

We can also provide these signs in A3 size, made from 5mm thick Foamex board - the cost of these signs is dependent on the quantity required (please contact the council for further information).

Stencils

We have a metal template which can be used for spraying a temporary message as a reminder to 'clean it up'; these messages have been sprayed on grass and footpaths at 'hot spot' locations using semi-permanent marker and chalk sprays.

They are temporary but may last for several weeks. When sprayed on grass, the grass needs to be cut so it is fairly flat. Footpaths will also need to be flat and free from loose debris.



White line marker spray on grass



Road marker spray on tarmac path

Flyer

The 'wanted' poster has been incorporated into a flyer which can be printed and hand delivered to properties in or near 'hot spot' locations or given out to supporters at sports games or other community events.

The front shows the 'wanted' poster and the rear has a form for anyone who has seen a dog owner/walker not clearing up to what they have witnessed.

A form titled 'Reporting Dog Fouling' with the 'West Suffolk' logo. It has sections for 'Your Details' (Contact name, Home phone, Email address, Home address) and 'Incident Details' (Date, time and location of fouling incident, Type of dog involved, Name of person responsible for the dog at the time of fouling (if known), Name and address of person responsible (if known), Car registration, make, model and colour (if a vehicle was involved)). At the bottom, it says 'Please report incidents to: customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk or 01284 763233'.

A copy of the flyer is available in the appendix to print and use to raise awareness of an issue or if the other stages have failed to reduce dog fouling.

Banners

We have two banners as depicted below which can be borrowed (subject to availability) by any organisation to display for a short period of time to highlight specific fouling issues on large open spaces or sports pitches.

The banners are 12'x3' and would need to be cable tied (not provided) to a secure structure such as posts at the chosen site.

They can also be displayed on the days before a sport pitch is going to be used, attached to goal posts, at the side of a pitch or at an entrance to an open space.

The banners should be used on a temporary basis so that they have an impact on those people seeing them.

(To borrow the banners please see the contacts below)



School talks

We have teamed up with the Blue Cross to provide free talks to primary schools and cub/scout groups that focus on responsible dog ownership. Further details and an online application form can be found at: www.bluecross.org.uk/education

Campaigns

National campaigns

The Dogs Trust has run several campaigns over the last few years to promote and encourage responsible dog ownership.

They have previously included the Big Scoop and Bag it and Bin it campaigns. Their latest campaign, 'love at first scoop' included a kit of A4 Posters, A5 Flyers, packs of poo bags and bin stickers.

The posters used in this campaign are displayed below and a range of advice and downloads are available from the Dogs Trust using the link below:



www.dogstrust.org.uk/news-events/issues-campaigns/the-big-scoop

The materials available from the Dogs Trust can be used to promote responsible ownership and run your own local awareness campaign; they tend to launch their campaign towards the end of summer.

There is an opportunity to again promote this issue locally by using the resources of the Dogs Trust to assist your organisation.

Local campaigns

Some local communities have used subtle techniques in an attempt to highlight the amount of dogs mess at a particular location and to shame those that are offending.

This is fairly inexpensive and can be as simple as a laminated sign on a stick, a flag or a harmless spray. The sign or flag is placed beside any dogs mess found to mark where it is located, a spray can be used even more effectively to literally highlight where the mess is and how much of it is not being cleared up.





The Pink Means Poo campaign has been effectively used in villages in the North East where a local mum was fed up seeing so much mess on the way to taking her children to school. She decided to use the pink chalk spray to prevent others from stepping in the piles of mess as well as shaming irresponsible dog owners and walkers. The amount of fouling decreased by at 50 per cent within three weeks.

2.2 Low cost stages

Bag dispensers

Bag dispensers can help by removing the 'excuse' used by irresponsible dog owners and walkers that they do not have a bag to clear up their mess. Although this is never a valid excuse, the supply of free bags onsite can help to alleviate the issue.

They are approximately £100 to buy and are fairly easy to install to either a brick wall or fence post.

Placed at the right site they tend to be used by people who have forgotten to bring a bag or who have used all their bags rather than people who just want a free bag.

They do require monitoring so that bags can be replenished as and when necessary and do not run out. Someone also needs to be responsible to order and store these bags and there is an ongoing cost to this as well unless sponsorship can be found from a local business to cover the cost.

Further information and current prices of dispensers and replacement bags can be viewed at: www.jrbenterprises.com

Waste disposal bins

Additional waste disposal bins will not necessarily stop the issue but can be considered as an option along with the other stages.

There is the initial cost to purchase a bin and the ongoing emptying costs to consider when considering this option. (Please use the contact details at the end if you require any further pricing information).

All locations in the trials did have existing waste disposal bins in place but still continued to have issues with dog fouling not being cleared up.



3.0 Conclusions

To reduce dog fouling it is necessary to change the behaviours of the minority of those irresponsible dog owners/walkers who are not clearing up.

The stages listed here aim to remove some of the excuses for not clearing up and to reinforce the message that this was not an acceptable behaviour.

Any stage listed here can be adapted to suit the particular needs or resources available to any community or organisation facing the issue of dog fouling.

The examples listed in the appendix have either used one stage or a combination of stages which have helped to reduce dog fouling at their particular locations.

4.0 Future developments

We are looking at a variety of options to reduce dog fouling in West Suffolk through a mixture of education and enforcement:

- Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) – is being introduced September 2017 to increase the amount of the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for those caught not picking up after their dog to £80.
- Possibility of rewarding residents who report offenders where a FPN is paid or a case successfully taken to court.
- Increased use of social media to raise the profile of dog fouling .
- Continue to participate in awareness campaigns (trial the use of banners).
- Free dog bag dispensers in main town locations.

5.0 Contacts

For any further information or advice on the prevention of dog fouling or on any other environmental crime issues please contact:

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Andrew Harvey

Enforcement Officer

Phone: 01284 757687

Email: andrew.harvey@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Forest Heath District Council

Dominic Owner

Enforcement Officer

Phone: 01638 719374

Email: dominic.owner@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Appendix

Parish dog fouling article

The Pet Food Manufacturers Association estimated that the dog population was 9 million in 2014 or 24% of UK households with the amount of excrement being produced probably exceeding 1,000 tonnes per day.

Fortunately the majority of dog owners and dog walkers are responsible with 9 out of 10 clearing up their dog mess, the problem is the one who still does not bag it and bin it!

Dog mess is a nuisance and is associated with various diseases including toxocara canis which is a roundworm whose eggs can be found in dog mess. This causes stomach upsets, sore throats, asthma and in rare cases blindness. When irresponsible dog owners do not clear up not only are they committing an offence but they are leaving behind something which can be easily picked up by young children or stood in by others.

Dog owners please remember to:

- ✓ take enough bags when you take your dog(s) out
- ✓ use a red dog bin or **any public litter bin**
- ✓ use your black household bin at home if no other bin is available
- ✓ watch out for others not clearing up and report them to us

Reporting dog fouling incidents

If you witness a dog fouling incident please record as many details as possible.

We will investigate all complaints, however the level of response that we can provide will vary depending upon the quality of information provided.

For example we are in a better position to take action if you can provide a full description of what happened including the name and address (if known) or a vehicle registration number of the person in charge of the dog at the time the incident took place.



Reporting dog fouling

Your details

Contact name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Home address: _____

Incident details

Date, time and location of fouling incident

Type of dog involved

Name of person responsible for the dog at the time of fouling (if known)

Name and address of person responsible (if known)

Car registration, make, model and colour (if a vehicle was involved)

Please report incidents to: customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk or 01284 763233

Trials

Wickhambrook (publicity, dispensers, signs)

Like many other villages Wickhambrook has playing fields adjacent to their community hall within the village.

There are dog mess bins at all four corners where residents can access the playing fields but even so dog fouling has been an ongoing issue on and around the playing fields where children play and football matches take place.

The usual warning signs were not having the desired effect and both the parish and borough councils agreed to trial a new approach:

- Publicity (parish newsletters and website)
- Bag dispensers (two installed and stocked locally)
- New signage (soft message signs followed by hard message signs)

The amount of dog fouling incidents monitored at the Wickhambrook playing field significantly reduced over and beyond the trial period and the awareness of the issue was raised within the community.

Red Lodge (warning signs)

Red Lodge Parish Council had ongoing issues with dog fouling on public pavements around Hundred Acre Way and although they had already installed numerous dog mess bins in the area, the problem had not been resolved.

The dog fouling was sporadic and appeared to be the result of a very small number of dog walkers who were persistently not picking up after their dog.

Two types of signs were provided for the parish to trial. First they used the 'Shameful, Selfish' signs which were placed on lampposts around the 'hot spot' areas. After two weeks the parish reported around a 50% reduction in the number incidents.

These signs were then removed and replaced with the 'Wanted' poster for two weeks. By the end of the trial, dog fouling in the area had reduced by 90.

It was felt by the parish that the 'Wanted' poster had been the most effective way of reducing dog fouling in this area. This was not only more successful than the dog bins, but was also more cost effective.

Great Whelnetham (New dog bin, signs, flyers)

In Great Whelnetham, a local resident was fed up with the amount of dogs mess not cleared up from the footpaths around the housing estate and on the route to the local primary school.

The parish council paid for a new dog mess bin to be installed near to the local primary school, new designed soft message signs were placed at key locations in the village. The resident who had raised concerns, along with other local

volunteers, delivered 'wanted' flyers to households within the village and highlighted the issue on local social media groups.

There was a considerable improvement and the flyers helped remind potential offenders that they could be being watched if they left their dog's mess on the footpaths.

Great Bradley (bag dispenser)

Although a smaller village, Great Bradley still had issues with dog's mess being left on footpaths around its playing field. They had a dog mess bin at the main entrance/exit to the field and had used old style warning signs but still had an issue that would not go away.

Following the success at Wickhambrook, they decided to purchase a bag dispenser for their playing field and have since noted a marked improvement on the field and little fouling on the surrounding footpaths where there was previously an issue.

Parks Department (bag dispensers)

The councils' own parks department has installed dog bag dispensers at two of its park locations, Nowton Park, Bury St Edmunds and East Town Park, in Haverhill. These dispensers have both been sponsored by a local vet practise and are both been well used. Neither of them has been vandalised and there has been reduced dog fouling in both parks.

Flyer



Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

West Suffolk
working together

WANTED

INFORMATION

TO IDENTIFY

THE

DOG OWNER

**WHO IS ALLOWING A DOG TO FOUL THIS
AREA AND DOES NOT CLEAN UP!**

Contact us (in confidence)

01284 763233

Reporting Dog Fouling

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

West Suffolk
working together

Your Details

Contact name: _____

Home phone: _____

Email address: _____

Home address: _____

Incident Details

Date, time and location of fouling incident

Type of dog involved

Name of person responsible for the dog at the time of fouling (if known)

Name and address of person responsible (if known)

Car registration, make, model and colour (if a vehicle was involved)

Please report incidents to:

customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk

or 01284 763233