

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - 12 NOVEMBER 2025

QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor Keane to ask the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee:

Fly-Tipping on Non-Council Land

Many thanks to the council for all the efforts being made to reduce fly-tipping in the town. However, I have been contacted by residents who are reporting fly-tipping on the Love Clean Streets app but being told that this won't be dealt with by the council as it is on housing association land. Unfortunately housing associations don't appear to take responsibility for the condition of the areas for which they should. This isn't just fly-tipping but not managing the upkeep of the area, abandoned vehicles, looking after trees, managing damage caused by wildlife etc.

What, if anything, can the council do to ensure that external agencies like housing associations and property management companies are taking responsibility for what goes on on their land?

REPLY by Councillor Dennis:

I invite Councillor Rowland, the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety:

Thank you, Councillor Keane, for your question, which provides me with an opportunity to raise broader awareness on the Council's fly tipping interventions and the responsibilities of private landowners or housing associations.

Fly tipping and littering is a scourge on so many towns and cities. Like most anti-social behaviour we encounter, the irresponsible and selfish actions of a few impact on the many residents who do the right thing. The Council understands that most people take pride in the place where they live and love their local environment.

The Council employ a team of Officers who investigate waste deposit offences and can take enforcement action for unauthorised waste disposal, littering, untidy front gardens or failure to comply with commercial waste duty of care requirements. Whilst this team prioritise investigations to public land and open spaces, Officers may investigate fly tips on private land and where appropriate can still take enforcement action against those responsible.

Where land is privately owned the responsibility to maintain, keep tidy and to secure the area would be with the registered landowner or a management company instructed by the landowner. The Council understands that landowners, as well as residents, are often

a victim of fly-tipping and as such would first engage with them informally to encourage proactive action to maintain their property.

It is important to know that managing agents or housing associations often have their own contractors who attend to clear excess waste, fly-tipping and/or clear contaminated recycling and often act promptly to address an issue once they have been notified. This service may likely already be included in a property service charge paid to the managing company by residents. We would therefore recommend that as a first port of call, residents report these incidents directly to the managing agent or housing association. Residents may also already have direct contact details for a housing officer or site manager, that the Council may not have record of. The Council identifies landowners through HM Land Registry Service, which is a chargeable service.

If a landowner fails to take action to clear fly tipped waste from their private land after substantial warning, the Council may escalate the matter to formal enforcement against the landowner. We would not commence formal action lightly as the sanctions for non-compliance can include criminal proceedings, noting again that the landowner may also be a victim.

In relation to abandoned vehicles, the council has a duty to investigate and remove abandoned vehicles from anywhere in the borough, private and public, except in some exceptional circumstances relating to access and costs.

In terms of general maintenance and upkeep, this is a private matter between tenants and their landlords. There are exceptions around waste management where we have powers available to address issues and would ask for engagement from impacted residents in this situation to support as we are able.

Oftentimes, those boundary lines with housing association land or larger publicly accessible areas that are private are not obvious, and I can empathise with the frustration that some residents feel in the response that they receive. However, I hope this better explains the limitations we have and the frustration we all face when housing associations or managing agents fail to keep their sites clear and tidy.