

Garden of England is drowning in sea of litter

By Lily Mori

MEDWAY'S streets are being flooded by what residents are calling a rising tide of illegally dumped rubbish. In 2017/18 the council attended 3,525 reports of fly-tipping incidents alone. Roadsides and footpaths are littered with sofas, fridges, old mattresses and black bags.

One local, behind social network Twitter page @futurechatham, is calling on the council to do more to tackle the problem, which he says is escalating.

He said: "It is really a major local issue, which is only getting worse and worse by the month."

"The streets used to be relatively tidy and well maintained. Litter has of course been an issue for a fair while, but places such as Chatham High Street and Gillingham High Street are in a state that the council and ourselves should be ashamed of."

Nationally, councils are paying £56 for every small van load of fly-tipped waste they remove, according to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). An individual investigation into an incident costs £33.

'Fly-tipping is not tolerated'

The council's portfolio holder for enforcement, Cllr Jane Chitty, said: "Fly-tipping is not tolerated in Medway. When fly-tipping incidents are reported to us we remove the waste as quickly as



Gillingham High Street suffering to fly-tipped waste

possible. "We also work closely with the police to gather intelligence on, disrupt and prosecute those involved in fly-tipping."

Fly-tippers can face fines of up to £50,000 and a maximum prison sentence of up to five years. In the last year, 12 people were prosecuted and 62 fixed penalty

notices were issued in Medway.

There are 1,454 public litter bins across Medway for members of the public to dispose of their rubbish.

Cllr Chitty is urging people to report incidents of fly-tipping, to keep the streets clean. She said: "I would encourage residents who may have witnessed fly-tipping

incidents to get in touch as they may be able to help us with future prosecutions and help identify offenders."

The 'FutureChatham' account founder says people's attitudes are partly to blame, with some relying on others to do the job for them.

He said: "This attitude is exact-

ly what has fuelled littering and fly-tipping. People have made it such a casual thing that it has somewhat become normalised."

He believes part of the problem is that families are unable to afford removal fees and do not have access to vehicles to get rid of their waste.

Free bulky waste removal is no longer available to Medway residents. Residents now have to pay £21 to have it removed on the same day as household waste collections, or £38 on any other day.

The social media campaigner is one of many locals criticising the council for not doing enough to reduce fly-tipping.

"Frontline staff are doing an incredible job, removing fly-tipped goods and responding to reports very, very promptly. But I feel that the council's strategy to minimise, or even prevent it from happening in the first place, isn't quite up to scratch."

He suggests the council look into scrapping removal fees to make disposal more affordable.

He said: "A Council elsewhere in England set up a scheme where they would install temporary skips on the street of a few housing estates and let residents throw away whatever they no longer need for free."

"Having these dedicated facilities can hugely improve access to correct disposal of unwanted goods, and reduce fly-tipping."

Kent Police advises the public never to try to clear up fly-tipped waste, in case it contains hazardous material.

Instead, fly-tipping incidents should be reported to Medway Council via their website: www.medway.gov.uk/flytipping.

All information was released to the Kent local by Medway council, or from DEFRA.



Fly-tipped waste in Chatham and over filling bin in Gillingham



Boris, Kent dog wins Fit Club competition

By Pat Hurst, PA



Before and after photos of Boris, credit Press Association



Two hefty hounds have shared a charity's Fit Club slimmer of the year crown by shedding a quarter of their body weight.

Borris, a once-obese Cavalier King Charles spaniel, tipped the scales at a whopping 4st 6lb, before losing 25% of his body weight to become a svelte 3st 4lb.

He shared top slot in the PDSA Pet Fit Club competition with once-lardy Labrador Sadie, who had ballooned to 6st 9lb but has now slimmed down to 4st 13lb.

Every year vet charity PDSA helps the UK's fattest pets battle the bulge in a six-month diet and exercise challenge, specially tailored and overseen by its vets and nurses, with pets who lose the most percentage body weight declared winners.

Borris's owner Annmarie Formoy, 46, from Deal, Kent, admitted the family fed him too many treats in the past, but said his lovable nature meant even complete strangers would give him titbits.

His love of food also led to sev-

eral mishaps - including once raiding a cupboard full of chocolate Easter eggs, and chewing up Annmarie's father's false teeth.

"I'm completely over the moon," said Mrs Formoy, whose pet's weight loss was supervised by Louisa Carey, head nurse at Margate PDSA Pet Clinic.

"Borris's weight loss has been amazing," she added.

"In the past his belly used to be touching the ground and he would refuse to walk. Now he loves his walks - even when it's raining, which he used to hate.

"The best part was the first time that I saw Boris taking his first few running steps, it made me want to cry, I was so happy. He hadn't run in years!"

"It has also helped show me just how bad his life must have been before with carrying around all that extra weight."

A side effect of the weight loss has been the change in dynamic with the Formoy's other pet, cat Charlie.

To register a pet for next year's competition visit www.pdsa.org.uk/petfitclub.