

Opinion – Sighthill Gorgie – waste capital?




by Cllr Ashley Graczyk who is the independent councillor for Sighthill-Gorgie writes about the very big problem of fly tipping in her ward.

I receive multiple reports from local residents in my ward of Sighthill-Gorgie every single week regarding flytipping, dumping, dog fouling and litter. It is clear to me that our area is being used as an illegal dumping area by multiple offenders, irresponsibly disposing of personal and commercial waste.

My enquiries into this subject on behalf of my constituents have revealed that we are in fact the 'waste capital of Edinburgh', with more complaints related to dumping and flytipping than any other ward. Edinburgh Council's own statistics show that Sighthill-Gorgie has the most serious problems with flytipping, dumping and dog fouling in the whole city.

My ward reported the most incidents of flytipping and dumping by far in 2020, with well over 1,000 reports in 2020. This is more than 50% more than the second worst affected area, Leith Walk, and represents around 12% of all reports logged across Edinburgh. We are also the worst impacted area for dog waste, with the most service requests for street cleaning in 2020, over 40% more than the second worst affected area, which is Liberton/Gilmerton.

Resources to tackle this problem in Edinburgh are unfairly distributed. I have spoken out previously about Edinburgh Council's 'city-centric' approach, whereby they choose to direct more resources to the city centre than to other areas. Unfortunately, this is another case in point. 15 Edinburgh council wards share just 11 Street Enforcement Officers (formerly Environmental Wardens) between them, while 2 wards – City Centre and Southside – share a full complement of 6 officers.

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Photos courtesy of Keep Gorgie Clean

Taking all waste-related reports for 2020 together underlines the inequity of the current system. Sighthill-Gorgie logged a total of 1,605 waste reports for flytipping, dumping, dog waste and litter in 2020. This is more than the City Centre and Southside combined, with 1,573 reports. Yet in Sighthill-Gorgie, we have an effective resource allocation of 0.7 of a street enforcement officer while the two central wards have 6. Why do these areas get 9 times as much resource as Sighthill-Gorgie? It is abundantly obvious this is not a satisfactory, fair or effective approach.

Edinburgh Council have to date been unable to justify this resource allocation to me, despite repeated enquiries. This distribution of resources is visibly unfair to Council Tax payers across the city. It is also particularly hard to accept when resources do not actually match the areas where the biggest problems lie.

It is even more urgent that this problem is addressed as we are again in lockdown and people have to keep close to home for daily exercise and to reach essential services. It is

frustrating and time-consuming for local people to have to repeatedly report offences. I do not believe that the primary responsibility for tackling the problem should rest with residents as they are unable to resolve it alone.

I will be raising this issue at Full Council this month on behalf of my constituents and will continue campaigning for the fair and necessary resources to be directed to the serious waste problem in my ward.

I also encourage concerned residents to get in touch with me with any issues and join the [Keep Gorgie Clean](#) campaign.