

Bellevue petition will be incorporated into a new street cleansing report

Shane Carter is a one man activist who is trying to get improvements in street cleaning in Bellevue and Broughton, if not the whole of Edinburgh.

He suggested to the council committee who were considering his petition on Monday that the city's waste department needs "root and branch reform".

He had already presented a petition with 74 signatures to the council and this was being discussed at today's meeting of the Transport and Environment Committee.

- **The petition demanded:** "We, the undersigned, wish to express our concern and total dissatisfaction with the street cleaning service in the Bellevue and Broughton areas of Edinburgh. The footpaths, roads and road gullies in this largely residential area of a world class city are dirty, strewn with litter, and spillages from communal dustbins, with leaves, debris and detritus lying in situ for far too long. Ankle high weeds growing

out of footpaths and road gullies adorn this district. We all contend with broken and uneven paving stones in the locality. The City Council has consistently failed over many years to devise a systematic plan to maintain a satisfactory level of street cleaning. The way the service is currently organised, executed and delivered is failing us all and requires immediate revision in the light of the lived experiences of those who foot the Council Tax bill year in, year out. We require the City Council to remedy this longstanding and disgraceful situation."

Mr Carter said ahead of today: "It is manifestly plain that the City Council does not have a systematic plan of maintaining a satisfactory level of street cleaning. The way the service is currently organised, executed and delivered is failing us all and requires immediate revision in the light of the lived experiences of those who foot the Council Tax bill.

"I was very impressed with how spotlessly clean the Royal Mile was by 7.30am each morning when the late Queen was lying at rest in St. Giles' Cathedral. If the Council can manage to keep The Royal Mile clean for royalty why are they incapable of doing the same for those of us who pay the Council Tax Bill, year in year out?

"I had such high hopes for improvements in street cleaning and the streetscape when Labour gained control of the City Council in the last local government elections only to be disappointed; nothing changes."

Today's meeting

Mr Carter admitted that street cleaning and weeding had improved slightly after word of his petition emerged, and advised the council that there had been a marked improvement in his area in the last week alone, but that there are still

areas of concern.

He said: "I can assure you there has been quite a bit of work in the last week, but there are still areas of northern Bellevue with ankle high weeds. I recently returned from Vienna and it is absolutely spotless. I don't see any reason why Edinburgh can't emulate that. I shudder to think what visitors think when they come here."

The committee agreed that the petition will be incorporated with the Cleansing Performance Report expected to be considered at December's Transport and Environment Committee. This is included in the Business bulletin (which is a kind of aide-memoire as to what the committee will deal with each month).

The report will be amended to cover a typo so that the report will cover the North East locality rather than just the City Centre ward (which was clearly incorrect). The proposals will have to be costed and agreed within the annual budget, and would also require full community consultation.

Council's options

This has to be considered a good result for the petitioner as the committee only has three options when considering a petition (since the Petitions Committee was disbanded some time ago). The options are to request a report on the issues raised by the petitioner and the committee, to agree that the issues raised do not merit further action and/or to agree to take any other appropriate action. So the fact that the committee has agreed to report back on the issues raised in the petition is a step in the right direction.

Mr Carter said at the meeting: "What I would like to see is a street cleaning Working Party to be set up with representatives from every community council in Edinburgh. Best practice is achieved by an exchange of ideas, not by

party politics or silly billies. That is how it should be done and we could probably achieve a street cleaning service to be proud of.”

Cllr Iain Whyte reminded the committee that more resources had been awarded to the waste department in the last two budgets. He asked what Mr Carter thought.

Mr Carter replied: “I appreciate this additional resource being committed to the work, but residents are not, in my view, getting value for money. I think individual accountability where workers are given a “patch” of streets and told it is your responsibility to clean these streets, clean up the weeds, the detritus.

“One East Claremont Street resident is furious about the number of times he has had to have his car tyres changed because he has gone over a nail. Residents in basements are fed up with the waste of all sorts that blow through their railings. I think the way the service is organised and the way it’s managed is wrong. It needs to be much more systematically managed. I don’t think we can just patch repair this with more resources going in. I think we could probably achieve just as good a service with the existing resources.”

Cllr Munro asked what it was like dealing with the council as a resident making a complaint about this service.

Mr Carter replied: “The attitude of officers in this council when you are complaining is risible. I am really annoyed about it, but I am not a nuisance. I am an intelligent man – a graduate of London School of Economics – and I can see that the internal validity of this street clean audit is deficient.”

Cllr Dyks Downie: “What did you think about the Scrub my Streets update?

Mr Carter replied that he had read about but said: “I haven’t

seen any noticeable improvements – not where I live anyway.”

On 22 February 2024, the Council approved its budget for financial year 2024/25, and included provision of £892,000 for a “Scrub my Streets” initiative.

In June 2024 the council reported their Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS) score – where there was an aggregate score of 90.6% – increased from 86.3% in the previous year when a survey was carried out.