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Our ref: RW
Your ref:
Date: 29 February 2016

Dear Mr Denton

Re: Litter

I am writing further to your letter dated 21st February 2016 addressed to Mr Aziz, which has been passed to me for reply concerning the clearance of litter and waste from verges along local roads which is particularly evident on the A2 and A20.

I totally share the concern you have expressed and indeed the situation in which the Council is being placed is causing us considerable frustration. We are quite clear that, the Council, as a Principle Litter Authority, has responsibilities as defined within Section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to ensure that any relevant highway or, relevant land for which it is responsible, is, so far as is practicable, kept clear of litter and refuse.

Defra's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse, recognises the difficulties involved in undertaking cleansing operations safely on motorways and high speed roads which in practice can only be achieved by arranging short term lane closures to enable crews to litter pick the adjacent verges. On ordinary roads, this can generally easily be arranged by the Council's contractors but as regards the A2 and A20, if the Council is to fulfil these responsibilities agreement is needed from Highways England and their managing agents, which is where difficulties arise.

The Council is required to pre-book road-space for the necessary lane closures, which are only allowed overnight, and of course has to pay for the traffic management measures required to put such closures into effect. Over the past year or so the aim has been to book such lane closures on a regular basis through the year so that cleansing operations are undertaken routinely, with dates planned ahead. However the traffic difficulties over recent months have meant this has been impossible to achieve and our contractors are routinely being denied access to undertake cleansing operations.

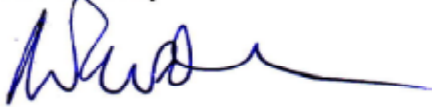
The most recent cleansing operations undertaken were in November when 4 nights were booked on the A20 at a cost of £7,346. In the event due to traffic conditions on the specific evenings, access was only achieved on two of the four nights allowing only sections of the Folkestone bound carriageway to be cleared. Given the understandable concerns regarding the amount of litter we have been actively seeking further lane closures but are currently being advised by HE's managing agents that we will be "unable to do any traffic management on the A20 until the Round Hill tunnel closures are put back on in March/April 2016". This is clearly not acceptable and I have taken this up with HE at a senior level.

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At a wider level there is some understandable frustration that the burden of cleansing the A2 and A20 falls on this authority given that any cleansing required on the M20 as far as the Round Hill tunnels is undertaken by Highways England contractors at their cost and is not the responsibility of the individual local authorities. There is, I would suggest, a strong argument that their responsibility should be extended to at least the Aycliffe Roundabout and we are lobbying to this effect.

In the meantime we shall continue to engage with Highways England to try to book the lane closures required to undertake cleansing operations as the Council shares and supports the concerns that you and other residents have expressed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RWalton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger Walton
Director of Environment & Corporate Assets