

## ‘Think outside the box on litter louts’

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Sean O’Riordan

Hidden cameras, a name-and-shame policy and education programmes are among the likely proposals being considered by Cork County Council chiefs to halt public littering.



A number of councillors demanded a get-tough policy on litter louts after hearing about increased dumping in rural areas and the underutilisation of some recycling centres.

“I genuinely believe we’re going to have to catch these people on camera and prosecute them,” said Fine Gael councillor Gerard Murphy.

Independent councillor Tim Collins said special squads of council workers were picking up tonnes of litter on roadsides and that was an indication of how bad things have got.

“People are getting away with it and they don’t care. Cameras are the solution,” he said.

Fianna Fáil councillor Ian Doyle said it was worrying that recycling sites in Kanturk and Mallow were among the most underutilised in the county.

Sharon Corcoran, head of the council’s environment directorate, said teams sent to areas of high littering were doing a good job.



She said officials were now compiling a map of hot spot littering areas and already it was noticeable some areas were being repeatedly targeted by litter louts.

Ms Corcoran said officials would be checking out the law on the use of covert CCTV in certain locations and admitted it was likely that council would deploy them. Fianna Fáil councillor Dan Joe Fitzgerald said he was in favour of such a move.

“We need to send a strong message out that if you dare to dump you will be caught and your name will be published,” said county mayor and Independent councillor John Paul O’Shea. “The Food Safety Authority of Ireland is publicising prosecutions and we should do that as well.”

Fine Gael councillor Kay Dawson asked when legislation was being enacted to allow council officials call to householders and ask them to provide evidence of their waste disposal to legitimate companies. Ms Corcoran said Environment Minister Alan Kelly would introduce the legislation next July.



Mr O'Shea said more needed to be done to encourage people to use recycling centres. He suggested to Ms Corcoran that free entry would be available on a couple of days of the year.

He also suggested that environmental officers conduct school visits to tell children about the importance of recycling.

"We need to think outside the box on this," said Mr O'Shea.

Ms Corcoran said she would take the mayor's comments on board.

An increase in dog fouling was also discussed, with Sinn Féin councillor Melissa Mullane saying it could carry dangers for children through toxocarasis (an infection caused by the larvae of parasitic worms) which can lead to blindness.

She and Labour councillor Noel McCarthy also suggested the council organise an education programme in schools about it.

Ms Corcoran said the council send out HSE literature on the subject to people when they apply for dog licences. She said dog fouling and wardens bins had been put in various areas. She admitted it was very difficult to prosecute a pet owner who does not clean up after them.