

Statement from John Chapman

Since I last spoke to you about litter enforcement, the fines for profit route has taken a few further knocks with Kingdom removed from Liverpool, Plymouth and Darlington. 3GS, removed from the green capital of the UK, Brighton, and I believe Leeds. They have terminated contracts in Bradford and Boston due to unprofitability, so beware, if they succeed, they will go! Utterly ludicrous offering a contract where the contractor gets paid less if they are successful!

3GS - I have researched their efforts in Leeds and Manchester amongst others, and it just seems to be the usual MO, over-zealous, tickets like confetti, issuing a proportionate fine for pork pie crumbs. Not noticed the words ethical or proportionate outside their own PR blurb. The staff may not get bonuses, but all employee reviews mention a strong target culture, with disciplinary action for not issuing sufficient fines. Those alarm bells are ringing very loudly.....

The contract may be nil cost to Council, but 3GS keep ALL of the revenue from fines, with a cap to how much they can earn. Their revenue protected, risk to Council! My guess is that this will be around £500K to £750K, maybe less, maybe more. Feel free to share the amount of cash that they will drain out of the local economy. That means around 5,000 – 7,000 fines per year. So at the coming elections, please remember, certain members of this Council wish to fine over 5,000 of you for minor offences, draining over £500K from the local economy, and in return for what? A few less cig butts on the floor. Negative publicity for Bath. And that's about it really. Basically, it's a lot of money draining from Bath, direct to a private company, in return for them paying people to collect this cash. At a time when retailers are struggling. Brilliant!

The big question is 'what is the actual goal of this?' FOI requests to other Councils regarding KPI's suggest that they don't really have a clue. And at the scrutiny meeting, I got the distinct impression that nobody here really had a clue, other than to issue lots of fines, overlooking the very obvious points that –
If littering reduces, the enforcers will leave, so back to Square One
Keep fining people for trivial/ non offences with no tangible benefits, and the public will not accept this. As evidenced elsewhere in the UK. Why not learn lessons rather than sheepishly follow, in the vain hope that, this time, it will be different.

You are not touching night-time litter, cannot fine seagulls. And summer park picnic litter? Large temporary bins might be a better solution than money-grabbers prowling in the bushes! So it won't solve your alleged Littergeddon.

Appeals, correspondence and complaints? I take it that you will be abdicating all responsibility, and letting them mark their own homework? No doubt the usual line of appealing to a magistrates court will be trotted out! So for the benefit of the Bath electorate, if you are fined for accidental littering, or have not littered, any appeal will be handled by the very Company that issued the fine. The standard official line is that you can appeal in the magistrates court. So your only recourse is the stress of a court appearance, with the risk of a much larger fine if you lose. And I can assure people that "Nothing to fear if you don't drop litter" does not apply. We all have butter-fingers. We all accidentally drop things from a bag or pocket. Just remember, the single most important thing for 3GS staff will be meeting targets for fines and revenue.

Last words come from Martin Jerrold, Managing Director of 3GS, to the Brighton Argus in November 2018

"We believe it is not possible to supply a compassionate and proportionate enforcement service and provide and income to the customer."