

# Cheltenham Civic Society



## Street Pride Audit Report

August 2018



Published by the  CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

Parmoor House, 13 Lypiatt Terrace, Lypiatt Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2SX

## **CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY**

### **Civic Day Street Pride Report**

**August, 2018**

The Street Audit was organised by members of the Civic Society: Tess Beck, Maxine Melling (CCS Chair), Peter Sayers (Trustee) and Simone Seward. This report is published under the auspices of the Cheltenham Civic Society and was written by the street audit team.

#### *Acknowledgements*

We would like to thank the Business Improvement District for providing funds to help with the administration of the day and for providing three staff to help on the day of the audit. The MP's office was very helpful in providing guidance and support and Cheltenham MP Alex Chalk attended on the day and took part in the audit itself. Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) Planning Department, and especially Chris Morris, provided advice and guidance. The CBC Council Leader, Steve Jordan, participated in the audit and helped with some questions from volunteers. In addition the CBC ICT Office provided maps of the High Street and refreshment vouchers were provided by Soho Coffee, Cambray Place. We would also like to thank Bernice Thompson and Sarah West at CWEP who let us use the Grove Street Community Resource Centre as our base for the day, free of charge.

Most of all, thanks go to all the volunteers who provided time, energy and enthusiasm in carrying out the audit – following the instructions given to an impressive extent!

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

On June 16<sup>th</sup> 2018 the Cheltenham Civic Society celebrated Civic Day (an annual event when communities celebrate and support their local community) by taking part in the Street Pride campaign. Street Pride is supported by English Heritage and is run under the auspices of Civic Voice, the national umbrella organisation that supports civic societies. The campaign aims to “make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive [by] reducing street clutter”.

Having consulted with its members and with key groups including the Business Improvement District (BID), Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) and the Cheltenham West End Partnership (CWEP) we decided to focus Cheltenham's Street Pride activity on the length of the High Street – from the Honeybourne line bridge to College Road. This falls within the town's Central Conservation Area. It's worth noting that the Cheltenham Development Framework identified a number of challenges to the protection of our conservation areas, including on-street parking, street paraphernalia, poor street furniture and equipment on buildings. The aim of the audit carried out on 16<sup>th</sup> June was to list and photograph all such street clutter in order to highlight issues of particular concern.

The audit was carried out in full consultation with the main authorities responsible for these issues (BID, CWEP, CBC and Gloucestershire County Council). All efforts were made to ensure that the Street Pride audit complemented and supported existing efforts to improve the environment,

possibly providing additional information to those seeking evidence to inform their own work and certainly aiming to bring pressure to bear where issues of note are not being addressed.

## **B. THE AUDIT**

Thirty volunteers carried out the audit, focussing on 10 stretches of the High Street:

- A. Honeybourne Bridge to Poole Way
- B. Poole Way to Milsom St
- C. Milsom St to St Paul's St South
- D. St Paul's St South to Woodys Fruit & Veg
- E. Woodys fruit & Veg to Bennington St
- F. Bennington St to Pittville Street
- G. Pittville St to Rodney Road
- H. Rodney Road to Grosvenor Terrace
- I. Grosvenor Terrace to Barratts Mill Lane
- J. Barratts Mill Lane to College Road

The volunteers worked in groups of three, filling in a template that described the issue identified, marking the issue on a map and photographing it to help with identification and description. In order to keep things as straightforward as possible groups were asked to identify the location & purpose of the item (e.g. outside Boots, a waste paper bin) and also what the problem was & what might be done (e.g. covered in graffiti, needs cleaning).

The volunteer groups comprised members of the Civic Society and other local people who had heard about the campaign. In addition, we were grateful to BID staff, the Leader of the Borough Council and Cheltenham's MP for taking part in the audit and being very supportive on the day.

The groups were given a list of issues in order to help with common terminology once results were collated (see appendix 1). However, they were encouraged not to limit themselves to these issues should they feel something was important enough to report. Inevitably people in the groups put emphasis on slightly different things – this was not a scientific exercise. However, there was reasonable consistency over the number of issues identified (averaging 25 per group) and there was also consistency in issues of particular concern – these are reported in section 3 below.

The comments and photos taken were all transcribed and collated – these will be shared with our partners in local authorities, the BID and CWEP. We include some examples in appendix 2 of this report as an illustration of the issues encountered.

The day was very successful and the volunteers are to be commended for their active engagement and clear passion about their local town. Many reported being approached by local people during the audit and it was clear that people were very supportive of "something being done" about the state of the public realm. As this was a first for the Civic Society there has been an inevitable learning curve. All volunteers were invited to comment on how the day was organised. These comments have been used to develop a "lessons learned" document which will inform any future repetition of the street audit. The report was taken to the Civic Society Executive Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> August and all recommendations were endorsed, including the creation of a CCS Street Pride group to take the report forward.

## C. FINDINGS

The pie chart at fig 1 shows the weighting of the main issues identified.

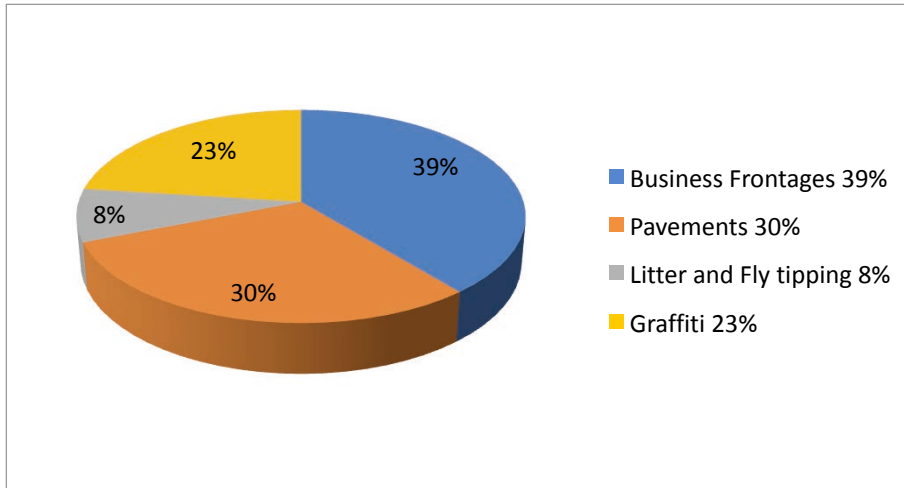


fig 1

In order to allow recommendations to be made and action taken the issues have been grouped under the main authority responsible for taking this forward.

### 1. Gloucestershire County Council – pavements, road surfaces and street furniture

One of the biggest issues (30%) of concern under the auspices of GCC is that of broken pavements, including asphalt infill to York paving and broken curbs. Comments from volunteers included loose and broken paving stones, broken gutter slabs, uneven surfaces and inconsistency in the use of pavers, slabs and tarmac. These observations covered the full length of the High Street, leading to an ugly overall impression and to trip hazards.

A number of the issues of concern identified by the volunteers relate to street furniture – be it disrepair and graffiti or general clutter. Volunteers reported poorly maintained street bollards and bollards that appear to serve no real purpose, also different types of street furniture almost fighting for space on the pavement.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** A Public Realm Strategy for Cheltenham is developed and agreed with Gloucestershire County Council as a matter of urgency. This Strategy could be encompassed as part of the Borough Council's development of a town centre vision.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** GCC highways contract be amended at the next opportunity to include responsibility for the maintenance of street furniture.

### 2. CWEP and the BID – local business premises

By far the most frequent issue identified in the audit (39%) was that of the poor maintenance and appearance of local business frontages. This ranged from hanging cables, general scruffiness and poor maintenance (need to be painted, broken window ledges, broken windows etc). In addition, weeds and overgrown greenery are sitting in guttering or by the front of shops.

The impact this has on the length of the High Street can't be underestimated. Some parts of the High Street were singled out as particularly poor (e.g. the section between Milsom Street and St Pauls Street South). However, business fronts were reported by every group of volunteers as an issue of concern.

CWEP and the BID already work with local businesses to seek to improve the environment and these organisations cover all but two sections of the street audit.

RECOMMENDATION 3: CWEP and BID present the street audit findings to local businesses and agree how improvements might be made.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Cheltenham Civic Society investigates how it might institute an annual prize for the most improved or best shop front.

### **3. Cheltenham Borough Council – litter and graffiti.**

Problems with litter accounts for 8% of the main issues identified, ranging from unsightly litter bins, fly tipping and general litter and chewing gum on the pavements. In addition, wheelie bins are being left out on the streets permanently, creating obstacles to pedestrians and creating an ugly environment. Graffiti was a particular problem on telecom boxes.

RECOMMENDATION 5: CBC develops a strategy for graffiti – including responsibility and policing.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Litter pick groups are formed from volunteers who live and work in the areas concerned.

### **4. Conclusion**

The organising group believes that this was a successful day and – as a first street audit for the Cheltenham Civic Society – provided some useful learning. We think there is benefit to be gained in carrying out the street audit annually, using Civic Day as the impetus. However, an annual event is not sufficient in itself and there is agreement amongst the group that a new Street Pride sub group of the Civic Society should be formed in order to maintain contact with the new group of volunteers, monitor progress with the recommendations in this report and act as a catalyst for change.

One of the strengths of the day was the active involvement of key groups and individuals in the town. The Street Pride group will be well placed to support co-operation between interested parties. It was a pity on the day that ward councillors and county councillors were not able to participate fully. The group can ensure that sufficient warning is given to these individuals and that they are kept well informed of the findings of this report and future investigations.

Any activity of this nature is only as successful as the visible outcomes arising from the recommendations made. It is therefore intended that this report will be used as the basis for discussions with key groups, including the MP for Cheltenham, CBC, GCC Highways, the CWEP and the BID. In addition the Civic Society will report direct to its members and will publish this report on its own web site as well as monitoring progress through its Civic Pride group.

RECOMMENDATION 7: A Street Pride sub group is created by the Civic Society and the street audit is repeated each year.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Encourage the participation of ward councillors and county councillors in future street audits (with more advance planning), as this would help support follow up action.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

	Recommendation	Responsible
1	A Public Realm Strategy for Cheltenham is developed and agreed with Gloucestershire County Council as a matter of urgency.	CBC
2	The GCC highways contract is amended at the next opportunity to include responsibility for the maintenance of street furniture.	GCC Highways
3	CWEP and BID present the street audit findings to local businesses and agree how improvements might be made.	CWEP, BID
4	Cheltenham Civic Society investigates how it might institute an annual prize for the most improved or best shop front.	CCS
5	CBC develops a strategy for graffiti – including responsibility and policing.	CBC
6	Litter pick groups are formed from volunteers who live and work in the areas concerned.	CBC
7	A Street Pride group is created by the Civic Society and the street audit is repeated each year. This report and the data from the 2018 audit will be used as the base data for progress monitoring and reporting.	CCS
8	Encourage the participation of ward councillors and county councillors in future street audits (with more advance planning), as this would help support follow up action.	CCS

## Appendix 1

- A A-boards
- B Benches
  - Bill boards
  - Bollards
  - Building site hoardings
  - Buildings; condition, graffiti. Street level is important but look up as well.
  - Bus shelters
  - Bus stops
- C Cabinets: usually junction boxes for telecoms/ cable companies (if there is a number stencilled on the box, make a note)
  - CCTV posts (not private CCTV cameras mounted on buildings)
  - Cycle racks
- D Direction/ finger posts
- E Empty shops
  - Event advertising
- F Flytipping
- L Litter bins
  - Litter, includes fallen leaves, bird mess and bird seed
- M Manhole covers (make a note of any initials, e.g. STW, SWEB, BT)
  - Maps (on street pedestrian maps)
- P Paintwork
  - Parking meters, (make a note of the number on the meter)
  - Pavements: uneven surface, dirt, chewing gum
  - Phone Boxes and booths (make a note of the phone number inside the box)
  - Planters
  - Post box
  - Public art
- R Railings
  - Road markings, e.g. yellow lines, zebra crossings
  - Road surface
  - Road works or other on-street maintenance work.
- S Signage
  - Street Lights (make a note of the number on the pole)
  - Street name signs
- T Telegraph poles (make a note of the number on the pole)
  - Temporary traffic signs
  - Traffic lights, also belisha beacons (make a note of the number on the pole)
  - Traffic signs, e.g. Give Way, Parking restrictions
  - Trees

Appendix 2



Business Frontage



Graffiti and poorly maintained cabinet



Litter - Fly tipping example



Pavement - trip hazard and tarmac infill