

**Minutes
Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**18 June 2008
5.30 p.m.
Mayor's Chamber, Town Hall**

Present: Councillors Simpson (in the Chair), Carr, Colledge, Crooks, Martin, Mavin, Mitchell and Turnbull.

Also in Attendance: Councillors Cowper and Wilkes.

Andrew Jackson – Technical Support Manager
Belinda Snow – Senior Neighbourhood Warden

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kelly, Rae, Wilkinson, Wolstenholme and Wynn.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 May 2008

2.1 Subject to an amendment (as set out below in bold) to paragraph 3.3 the Minutes of the meeting held 21 May 2008 were confirmed as a true record.

*"It was noted by Members that wherever possible, Council vehicles had been fitted with Continuous Regeneration Traps (CRT) in order to re-burn exhaust gases in order to reduce particulate size. This in turn leads to improved figures relating to emissions. Unfortunately, some of the smaller Fleet vehicles cannot utilise this technology as the system requires an engine temperature over 90°C. It was also noted that whilst this leads to emissions of only 0.03 kg/l of CO₂, **refuse** vehicles on average only have a fuel economy of 4 miles per gallon (mpg). Members were informed that there are savings made by the fitting of these traps as there is a rebate on vehicle duty, though this is not applicable to the smaller vans within the Fleet. The minutes of the meeting held 21 May 2008 were confirmed as a true record."*

3. Scrutiny Topic – Review – Neighbourhood Wardens

3.1 The City of Durham's Technical Support Manager, Andrew Jackson and Senior Neighbourhood Warden, Belinda Snow were in attendance to give an update to regarding the City of Durham's Neighbourhood Warden (NW) service. A briefing paper was circulated to Members outlining details of the service (attached at Appendix A).

3.2 It was explained to Members that the primary focus of the City Council's NWs was that of enforcement and education, with tackling anti-social behaviour being secondary. This is different to many Council Warden schemes, which place a greater emphasis on attempting to tackle anti-social behaviour.

- 3.3 When the City of Durham scheme was set up in July 2003, there were initially 3 NWs, but this was increased to 6, one NW per operational area. In addition, 2 years ago the post of Senior Neighbourhood Warden (SNW) was created and this has been shown to have helped by providing greater flexibility and better cover arrangements, and also has helped to raise standards across the service as a whole.
- 3.4 The NW service, and individual NWs are accredited under the Durham Constabulary Community Safety Accreditation Scheme which gives NWs additional powers. One of the most useful being the ability to request a name and address from residents in order to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs). Also NWs have the power to confiscate alcohol from those under 18 years old and cigarettes from those under 16 years old.
- 3.5 The NWs have an established their "brand" within the District and are easily identifiable by their distinctive Smart cars. Residents use the NWs as a mobile "on-stop-shop" for issues and NWs can often deal with situations and problems whilst out within their area. However, in cases where matters cannot be resolved on the spot, NWs can pass on information to the relevant people, either within the Authority, at the County Council or to the Police or other relevant organisations. As an aside, the fuel economy of the Smart cars was noted to be 73 mpg. NWs also attend Parish Council meetings where appropriate and are present at Neighbourhood Consultations as required.
- 3.6 A folder containing press cuttings relating to the various successful campaigns carried out by the NWs was circulated for Members' information. It was noted that many of the successes were in respect of environment issues such as the various campaigns to reduce littering, specifically chewing gum and cigarette butts, and campaigns to reduce dog fouling.
- 3.7 Members were given information relating to how the NWs work closely with the Street Scene Team Leaders that share the same operational areas. This enables actions to be taken quickly and that problems can be resolved with the minimum of bureaucracy.
- 3.8 It was noted that the main Partner Organisation to the NWs was Durham Constabulary. It was for this reason that it was felt necessary to invest in the "Airwaves" communication system and so far this investment has proven sound, with many incidents being dealt with far quicker as there is constant and reliable communication between NWs and the Police.
- 3.9 Members were informed that to further enhance working in partnership, NWs and other frontline services meet with the Police on a fortnightly basis so that areas of concern are identified and targeted effectively. NWs also attend Crime and Disorder Partnership meetings, Neighbourhood Forum meetings and Beat Officer surgeries to ensure that they are up to speed with local issues.
- 3.10 NWs have undertaken training in conjunction with the Police, on topics such as problem solving and information gathering / evidence collection.
- 3.11 NWs attend schools within the District to help educate young people regarding issues relating to litter and taking pride in their community.
- 3.12 Members were reminded of the many successful campaigns that have been conducted by the NWs such as those on litter and graffiti.

There have also been schemes such as the Streetsafe Initiative and the provision of skatepark facilities in conjunction with the Durham Skate and Bike Partnership.

- 3.13 The Technical Support Manager and Senior Neighbourhood Warden were keen for the City of Durham model of NWs to be carried through to the new Unitary Authority as they felt that there was evidence to show that the methods currently employed were effective in reducing litter and environmental issues and issues relating to anti-social behaviour were best resolved by the Police.
- 3.14 Members were appreciative of the excellent work already undertaken by the NWs and expressed their support that the service should continue through the Local Government Reorganisation process.
- 3.15 The Panel asked whether NWs were *required* to attend Parish Council meetings, as some Members noted they had not been aware of NWs at their particular Parish meetings. The Senior Neighbourhood Warden explained that the attendance at Parish meetings was usually by invitation by the Parish, and that no NWs had refused to attend when asked. Some Panel Members added that they had regular NW representation at their Parish meetings and found that for many issues the NW could bring resolution quicker than the Police.
- 3.16 Members queried figures on the briefing paper relating to number of incidents relating to dog fouling in comparison to the number of FPNs being issued. Members were informed that this was due to the fact that it can be difficult to gather conclusive evidence in these types of cases and that FPNs cannot be issued without this evidence.
- 3.17 Members queried the 24 hour turnaround as regards removal of graffiti from public buildings. Members specifically asked why this only applied to “public” buildings. Officers explained that in the cases where the graffiti is offensive / racist etc., it is removed regardless of location. Officers noted that the main factor as regards graffiti removal is cost, with any work to remove graffiti from private property requiring the identity of the owner to be ascertained, issued with a disclaimer as regards any potential damage resulting from the graffiti removal, and then for an invoice for the costs being send to the owner. Some Councillors wondered whether it perhaps would be more efficient to simply clean up graffiti as and when required as the cost of carrying out the work (approximately £50 per incident) appeared to be broadly comparable with the average cost for a company, such as a Local Authority, to raise and process an invoice to recharge for the service. The Officers agreed that whilst the costs appeared to be comparable but that this did not take into account the fact that there are not dedicated Staff for the removal of graffiti. The relevant Environment & Leisure Services Staff are trained in the use of the graffiti removal equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) required, but graffiti removal is but one task amongst many for these staff. Some Members agreed and recalled that in the past a large amount of staff time was taken up when the Council operated “graffiti gangs”. Members therefore wondered if, as in the past, they could be assistance in this regard from volunteer groups or from people on probation (via the Probation Service). Officers noted that unfortunately, the additional costs in administration time regarding risk assessments, the provision of additional PPE and all the relevant health & safety issues, render such voluntary schemes non-cost effective.

- 3.18 Officers informed Members that the City of Durham had a resource of an “anti-graffiti varnish” that could be applied to certain painted surfaces, and that the Council would be willing to look at requests for this product in cases where there had been repeated incidents of graffiti.
- 3.19 Members noted that the current number of NWs was in fact 4 with the Senior Neighbourhood Warden in addition, noting one NW had left the Authority and another was on Maternity Leave. The Senior Neighbourhood Warden explained that there was no real issue in relation to maintaining coverage across the District at this time. The Senior Neighbourhood Warden and Technical Support Manager explained however that whilst cover was in place, it would only be feasible to maintain this cover in the short term. Accordingly, Members were keen to ask whether a recommendation to appoint additional NWs would be helpful. Both the Technical Support Manager and the Senior Neighbourhood Warden agreed that *in principle* this indeed would be helpful, that in practise it could prove difficult in the current transitional period prior to the new Unitary Authority coming into effect.
- 3.20 Members queried the levels of provision of “Wardens” in neighbouring Authorities. Officers informed Members that Easington District Council operated with 21 “Street Wardens” and that Sedgefield Borough Council operated with 18 Wardens. However, it was noted that these Wardens differed from the City of Durham’s NWs in that their main focus appeared to be that of tackling anti-social behaviour akin to a Police Community Support Officer.
- 3.21 Members asked Officers what the current levels of fines were as set out by the FPNs issued by NWs. Officers informed Members that they were £50 for incidents of dog fouling and £80 for littering. However, if there was a Dog Control Order in place across the District there would be scope to raise the level of the fine. However, due to Local Government Reorganisation it was considered that it would be more efficient to wait until the new Unitary Authority comes into effect so that the Dog Control Order can be easily brought in across the whole County under a single Order. Officers noted as an aside that free bags for dog Owners to use in disposing of their dog’s waste were available from Cityinfo centres and from certain shops and Post Offices across the District. It was noted that no village was without a supply.
- 3.22 The Chair thanked the Technical Support Manager and the Senior Neighbourhood Warden on behalf of the Panel for their informative briefing paper and thorough answers to Members’ questions.

5. Any Other Business

- 5.1 No further issues were raised for discussion.

6. Actions for the Next Meeting

- 6.1 To consider draft Review Reports on the Topics of Sustainable Procurement Policy, Carbon Emissions from the Council’s Fleet of Vehicles and Neighbourhood Wardens.

The Meeting terminated at 6.30 p.m.

CITY OF DURHAM**NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN SERVICE****REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY PANEL 18TH JUNE 2008**

The City of Durham Neighbourhood Warden Service was established in July 2003 with 3 Wardens initially employed. This has now grown to a team of 6 with each Warden having responsibility for a specific geographic area of the District (neighbourhood). During 2006 a Senior Neighbourhood Warden post was established to enhance the existing team and improve overall service delivery and co-ordination to ensure that similar standards are applied across the District. The role of the City Of Durham Neighbourhood Warden Service is to:

- Be proactive in tackling litter, fly tipping, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles, graffiti, fly posting, vandalism and associated low level anti-social behaviour within parks, play areas and public open spaces through sustained education work with schools, community groups and the population in general; and through patrolling / enforcement work where necessary.
- Encourage pride and ownership in parks, play areas and public open spaces by the whole community.
- Promote safe and secure parks, play areas and open spaces under the control of the Council where all users can happily co-exist.
- Provide a 'one-stop' link between the public and the City of Durham Council's front line environmental services.

Our Neighbourhood Warden Scheme and the individual Neighbourhood Wardens are accredited under the Durham Constabulary Community Safety Accreditation Scheme. This accreditation has been retained during the year. The benefit of this accreditation includes increased information sharing with the Police and additional powers such as:

- Request a name / address for a Fixed Penalty Notice
- Request the name / address of a person acting in an anti-social manner
- Request the name / address for offences that cause injury, alarm, and distress, or damage or loss to another's property
- Confiscate alcohol from young persons under 18
- Confiscate cigarettes / tobacco products from young persons under 16
- Removal of vehicles causing danger or obstruction

The Six Neighbourhoods and their respective Warden

Senior Neighbourhood Warden – Belinda Snow

Neighbourhood 1: Framwellgate Moor, Newton Hall, Pity Me, Brasside, North End, Whitesmocks. **Warden:** Adrienne Hodgkiss

Neighbourhood 2: Pittington, West Rainton, Carrville, Belmont, Sherburn, High Grange Estate. **Warden:** John Halliday

Neighbourhood 3: Shincliffe, Shadforth, Cassop, Kelloe, Quarrington Hill, Bowburn, Coxhoe, Littleton, Sherburn Hill, and Ludworth. **Warden:** Paul Parker

Neighbourhood 4: Langley Moor, Meadowfield, Brandon, Brancepeth, Croxdale, Sunderland Bridge, Hett, and Merryoaks. **Warden:** Kay Hughes

Neighbourhood 5: New Brancepeth, Ushaw Moor, Broompark, Bearpark, Witton Gilbert, Esh Winning, Waterhouses. **Warden:** Danielle Hartley

Neighbourhood 6: Nevilles Cross, Gilesgate, Sunderland Road, Sherburn Road, City Centre. **Warden:** Natalie Phillips

Incident Reports (2007/08)

During the period April 2007 to March 2008 the Neighbourhood dealt with 6,330 incidents in total. These can be broken down as follows:

Dog Fouling -	1776
Litter -	879
Anti-social Behaviour -	262
Vandalism / Graffiti -	79
Abandoned Vehicles -	51
Nuisance Vehicles -	253
Fly tipping -	1468
Waste on Property	350
Other -	1212

Fixed Penalties Issued:

Dog Fouling -	13
Litter -	38

Warning Letters Issued - 705

Engagement with Communities, Partners and Other Stakeholders

Links between the Neighbourhood Warden Service and the Local Community

The Neighbourhood Wardens engage with the local community through the following means:

- Highly visible liveried vehicles (Smart Cars) and uniformed officers
- Regular area 'foot' patrols and Estate walkabouts
- Attendance at Neighbourhood Forum Meetings
- Attendance at Parish Council / Residents Groups / Community Groups meetings
- Attendance at Community Fun Days / Carnivals
- Regular high profile environmental education publicity campaigns

Links between the Neighbourhood Warden Service and Environment Team Leaders

Close liaison between the Neighbourhood Wardens and Environment Team Leaders ensures early identification and rectification of problems. All members of staff are empowered to take responsibility for standards and come forward with suggestions for improvements through their Team Leader, or formally via the team briefing communication strategy. An incident reporting procedure is also in place allowing all staff to report environmental problems such as fly tips or defective street furniture, or make requests for equipment such as additional litter or dog fouling bins.

Links between the Neighbourhood Warden Service and Durham Police

From 1st May 2006 the Police and City of Durham Council formed neighbourhood teams to tackle all issues within the community. The City Council's existing neighbourhood service delivery model was developed to further these new arrangements. The Police revised their beat boundaries and aligned them to the Council's six operational neighbourhoods. For communication purposes three meetings are held (to cover combined eastern, central and western neighbourhoods) on a fortnightly basis involving front line officers from the Services (police, environment, leisure, neighbourhood wardens, community safety, community development and housing). The frequency of meetings ensures closer interaction and sharing of information about local issues between the front line officers involved. Where problems cannot be immediately resolved by these officers they are discussed at the Anti-Social Behaviour Group which is held monthly and is also attended by other agencies. In addition to this a senior management meeting (Neighbourhood Teams Strategic Group), with an escalation procedure from the individual neighbourhood teams, is held every six weeks. This meeting is chaired by the Executive Director and is attended by Managers from all the front-line services.

In developing these proposals regard was also given to the key elements of the Governments Respect agenda. These include 'Strengthening Communities' and 'Effective Enforcement and Community Justice' with a commitment to provide support in those communities suffering the greatest problems and to provide a consistent approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

Lots of management and performance information is collected by each individual service (Police, Housing Management System, Environment Management System, CRM etc). This information from the various services is collated through the Neighbourhood Teams and used by each team to identify 'Hot Spots' so that resources / initiatives from all the services working jointly together can be targeted to deal with the issues concerned.

The make up of the individual Neighbourhood Teams is attached at **Appendix 1**

In addition to the regular neighbourhood team meetings a series of other regular meetings / contact takes place between the Police and the Neighbourhood Wardens as follows:

- Regular estate 'walkabouts' between the Police (Beat Officer's and Community Support Officer's), Neighbourhood Wardens and Housing Officers take place with any actions arising being documented, progressed and evaluated
- Attendance at the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership
- Attendance at Neighbourhood Forum Meetings
- Parish Council / Resident Groups / Community Groups meetings
- Beat Officers Surgeries (some)
- Joint Training Initiatives - to share resource and ensure a consistency of approach across all services the Police offered training for front line Council staff, along with their own officers. Training in Problem Solving techniques has already been undertaken and it is planned to carry out similar training exercises in relation to preparation of intelligence submissions and also breakaway skills.
- Regular informal / adhoc meetings at either Dragonville (Neighbourhood Warden base) or local police stations / offices.

This joint partnership working with the Police also identified the need for a quick and reliable two-way communications system with the Constabulary. The Neighbourhood Warden Service has therefore invested in the Police 'Airwaves' radio communications system. This provides a direct link between the two organisations, improves communication / information sharing and has improved the quality of service provided to our communities.

Links between the Neighbourhood Warden Service and Local Schools

As part of our environmental awareness raising campaign significant work has been done in partnership with local primary and secondary schools to encourage responsible citizenship and a pride in the environment amongst children & young people. Examples of specific initiatives, which have been carried out, include:

- A 'Design a Poster' competition for local schools was organised with prizes sponsored by local businesses. The theme of the competition was to encourage a reduction in littering and dog fouling. The winning designs were used on a poster campaign across the City.
- The views of young people have been taken into account with regards to the most appropriate locations for the siting of litterbins.
- Litter Picks and Clean-up days involving young people have been arranged
- Neighbourhood Wardens have proactively worked with schools to give classroom based presentations on the problems of environmental crimes and the need for responsible citizenship. This has been linked to the national curriculum where possible.

Young people have been given 'rewards' for demonstrating good citizenship such as disposing of litter in a responsible manner or by getting actively involved in an environmental project. Such 'rewards' have included free Leisure vouchers and Environmental 'Goody' bags

Campaigns, Developments and Initiatives

Dog fouling

The Neighbourhood Wardens actively tackle the problem of dog fouling through education and enforcement. They promote responsible dog ownership. Poop scoop bags are issued free of charge and are made available in many public buildings across the District (in 2007 500,000 bags distributed). The Neighbourhood Wardens carry out localised campaigns in dog fouling hot spot areas and fixed penalty notices are issued if dog fouling is not picked up disposed of correctly (currently £50 Fine).

Littering

The Neighbourhood Wardens carry out Local Environmental Quality Surveys across the district and these allow us to identify any problem areas and address the issue. Localised campaigns are carried out in littering hot spot areas and fixed penalty notices are issued if litter is not disposed of correctly (currently £80 Fine).

Smoking Related Litter

The Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 classified cigarette ends as litter. Cigarette litter accounts for over 40% of street litter. The Neighbourhood Wardens have run several high profile smoking related litter campaigns. This has involved distributing information via flyers, posters and the media prior to and during the campaign on the nature of the problem and what the public could do to help. 10,000 stubbi pouches have also been distributed free of charge (they are a reusable pouch that can be used to safely and hygienically extinguish cigarettes).

A local environmental quality survey on smoking litter was carried out prior to the campaign in February 2007 and again 2 weeks after the campaign. The surveys revealed that there was a 27% improvement. After the campaign 37 fixed penalty notices were issued

Graffiti

During the year we carried out partnership working with Durham Police on 26 graffiti related cases. The Neighbourhood Wardens provided the Police with information / photographs and organised 'clean-up' operations (within 24 hours of graffiti being reported to us). As a result of this partnership two arrests were made with the offenders being made to clean off graffiti in the City. In addition another offender was arrested, charged and fined £200 at Magistrates Court

The Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005

This has consolidated and clarified many existing pieces of environmental legislation and extended the concept of Fixed Penalty Notices for a variety of environmental offences. The City Council has adopted the new powers and the Council's Enforcement Policy is to be updated to take into account new guidelines issued in relation to the prosecution of juveniles. Training for the Neighbourhood Wardens in the use of the extended powers has been undertaken.

Streetsafe Initiative

The 'Streetsafe Initiative' is a multi-agency approach led by the Police with assistance from the Neighbourhood Wardens to pro-actively target specific areas of the District to reduce crime, the fear of crime and improve the quality of life for local residents. The aim of the initiative is to create safe and confident communities with a clean, green and healthy environment. 'Streetsafe Initiatives' have been carried out in both Brandon and Bowburn. These areas saw an overall reduction in both crime and anti-social behaviour. Many positive comments were received from the local community about the benefits of the scheme. It is intended to extend this partnership approach to other areas of the District.

Environmental Crime Action Plan

The Durham and Chester-le-Street Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (which includes City of Durham Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police) has worked with EnCams (the 'Keep Britain Tidy Group') to produce an Environmental Crime Action Plan to tackle the affect which anti-social behaviour has on the local environment.

Covert CCTV Camera

A successful application has been made to the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership for funding for a covert cctv camera to carry out surveillance in relation to environmental crime (particularly flytipping and anti-social behaviour)

Provision of Skatepark Facilities

The Neighbourhood Wardens assisted with the development of two new skatepark facilities at Belmont and Meadowfield. The projects were developed by the Durham Skate and Bike Partnership (Durham Police / City of Durham Council / Investors in Children) with finance from the City of Durham's Flourishing Communities Fund. The parks are providing purpose built facilities in a safe environment for young people to take part in their chosen sport. It is expected that they will reduce instances of associated anti-social behaviour largely caused through the use of inappropriate sites for skateboarding activities.

Alcohol Ban

Ludworth and Sherburn Villages are now alcohol free zones with fines of £500 being issued to anyone caught drinking alcohol outside in the two areas

Publicity and Promotion

In terms of communicating with local communities, gathering views and opinions on proposals and action taken, and providing a feedback mechanism to residents the Neighbourhood Warden Service has fully utilised 'Durham City News' / 'Durham FM' radio / 'Radio Newcastle' and the local press. Articles have focused on the individual Neighbourhood Wardens and their contact details, environmental education and enforcement information, and specific environmental publicity campaigns (such as dog fouling or smoking related litter)

Future of the Neighbourhood Warden Service

As has been demonstrated throughout this report the City of Durham Neighbourhood Warden Service, with its clear focus on environmental education & enforcement and associated low level anti-social behaviour, has since its establishment in July 2003 provided a much more consistent approach that has improved the quality of service provided to all our communities.

It is very much hoped that the clear emphasis on environmental education and enforcement, the close working relationship between the Neighbourhood Warden Service and the Environmental Services Operational Teams, and the very successful joint partnership working with other responsible organisations such as the Police will continue to be recognised as 'best practice' by the new unitary authority. This will ensure that an overall improvement in local environmental quality and a reduction in the levels of fear of crime continue into the future.

AJ / 10.06.08

Appendix 1

NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAMS

LOCATION	POLICE	LOCAL AUTHORITY
<p><u>EAST</u> <u>Neighbourhood 2</u> Pittington, West Rainton, Carrville, Belmont, Sherburn, High Grange Estate.</p> <p><u>Neighbourhood 3</u> Shincliffe, Shadforth, Cassop, Kelloe, Quarrington Hill, Bowburn, Coxhoe , Littletown, Sherburn Hill, Ludworth.</p>	<p>Sgt Turner</p> <p>4 Beat Officers</p> <p>4 Police Community Support Officers</p>	<p>Environmental Team Leader, Neighbourhood Warden, Leisure Manager, Housing Officer, Community Development Officer, Tenancy Enforcement Officer, Anti- Social Behaviour Officer, CCTV</p> <p>Plus representation from Registered Social Landlords</p>
<p><u>CENTRAL</u> <u>Neighbourhood 6</u> Nevilles Cross, Gilesgate, Sunderland Road, Sherburn Road, City Centre</p> <p><u>Neighbourhood 1</u> Framwellgate Moor, Newton Hall, Pity Me, Brasside, North End, Whitesmocks.</p>	<p>Sgt Turner, Sgt Williamson</p> <p>4 Beat Officers</p> <p>4 Police Community Support Officers</p>	<p>Environmental Team Leader, Neighbourhood Warden, Leisure Manager, Housing Officer, Community Development Officer, Tenancy Enforcement Officer, Anti- Social Behaviour Officer, CCTV</p> <p>Plus representation from Registered Social Landlords</p>
<p><u>WEST</u> <u>Neighbourhood 4</u> Langley Moor, Meadowfield, Brandon, Brancepeth, Croxdale, Sunderland Bridge, Hett, Merryoaks.</p> <p><u>Neighbourhood 5</u> New Brancepeth, Ushaw Moor, Broompark, Bearpark, Witton Gilbert, Esh Winning, Waterhouses.</p>	<p>Sgt Williamson</p> <p>5 Beat Officers</p> <p>4 Police Community Support Officers</p>	<p>Environmental Team Leader, Neighbourhood Warden, Leisure Manager, Housing Officer, Community Development Officer, Tenancy Enforcement Officer, Anti- Social Behaviour Officer, CCTV</p> <p>Plus representation from Registered Social Landlords</p>

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY TOPIC – SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT POLICY & CARBON EMISSIONS FROM THE COUNCIL’S FLEET OF VEHICLES

1. BACKGROUND

Further to the Panel’s Report on the topic of Climate Change, Members put forward suggestions for two specific areas that they wished to be considered as further topics, those being specifically the Council’s Sustainable Procurement Policy and the Carbon Emissions from the Council’s Fleet of Vehicles.

2. AIMS

It was the remit of the Panel to consider briefing papers prepared by the relevant Officers and to question those Officers at a meeting of the Panel to gain further insight. Members wished to assist Officers from the in improving in these areas if possible, and if not, to help ensure the good practise undertaken by the City of Durham Council was continued by the new Unitary Authority post April 2008.

3. ACTIONS

The Panel invited witnesses from Cabinet, Strategic Services and Property Services to attend a meeting to outline the Council’s current position in relation to the two matters under consideration. Accordingly, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, the Director of Strategic Services and the Council’s Transport/Depot Manager attended a meeting of the Panel in May 2008 to answer Members’ queries.

3.1 Sustainable Procurement Policy

The main driver in developing a Sustainable Procurement Policy was the 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy set out by Central Government which aimed to have the United Kingdom being amongst the leaders in the European Union in relation to sustainable procurement by 2009. Many other policies and strategies followed on from this initial Strategy and an aspect of the City of Durham response was to produce its Procurement Strategy 2007-2010. It was noted that the direction given from Central Government was always influenced heavily from the Private Sector. Indeed Sir Neville Simms, a leading private sector proponent of sustainability was asked to head up the Government’s Sustainable Procurement Taskforce.

“Sustainability” does not purely refer to environmental concerns, but rather encompasses those concerns alongside economic, social and commercial issues. A balance between these elements must be achieved in order to secure any truly sustainable resource or system. Accordingly, a “whole-life” approach must be taken, rather than a simple view only encompassing the “best” initial cost or perceived environmental benefit. This whole-life approach fits with the Council’s Corporate Policy of “Working for a cleaner and greener local environment” and is reflected within work relating to the Local Strategic Partnership and Community Plans.

3.2 Carbon Emissions from the Council's Fleet of Vehicles

The City of Durham obtained useful data relating to the carbon emissions from the Council's fleet of vehicles from an audit of the Transport Section. This audit was carried out in conjunction the Energy Saving Trust who provided 2½ days consultation, free of charge.

4. OUTCOMES

4.1 Sustainable Procurement Policy

The tendering process at the City of Durham contains within it a set of criteria relating to sustainability. Harmonisation across the North-East in relation to these criteria, amongst others, has led to Contracts being much more uniform across Authorities, enabling Companies to focus on achieving higher standards of Tenders, rather than wasting resources drafting many forms of Tender to match varying stipulations.

The City of Durham, within its Sustainable Development Policy, encourages local companies in efforts to minimise their impact on Climate Change. The Council has also helped in achieving a "Fair-Trade" status for the City and the Council sources from Fair-Trade Suppliers wherever possible.

By utilising electronic procurement and by working with other Local Authorities in the "Durham Virtual Procurement Partnership", efficiencies have been made. The Council also has a role in providing advice to small and medium sized enterprises in informing them how they themselves can become more efficient and translate this into a positive reduction in any negative impact on the environment.

Through using the "Local Multiplier 3", a tool for calculating local, regional and national impacts of Local Authority spending, it has been possible for the Council to perform a benchmarking process that will enable meaningful measurement of progress in the future. With approximately 33% of the Council's total spend in 2006 / 2007 being spend with local Suppliers, i.e. a payment address within the City of Durham; and approximately 58% of the total spend being made within the North-East area, there is a clear demonstration of commitment to supporting the local economy.

Where appropriate, the Council utilises the North East Purchasing Organisation and Office of Government Commerce methods of securing Contracts. This not only helps ensure value for money to the Council, but also offers sustainable solutions that could be utilised a local level. The City of Durham has adopted Durham County Council's Temporary Agency Workers Contracts, which ensures that the level of equality given to those workers providing a service for the Council is the same as if they worked for the Council itself.

4.2 Carbon Emissions from the Council's Fleet of Vehicles

Wherever possible, Council vehicles have been fitted with Continuous Regeneration Traps (CRT) in order to re-burn exhaust gases in order to reduce particulate size, in turn leading to improved figures relating to emissions. Unfortunately, some of the smaller fleet vehicles cannot utilise this technology as the system requires an engine temperature over 90°C.

A reduction in emissions of 30 tonne of CO₂ has been achieved by using a 5% blend of bio-diesel. The bio-diesel is secured via an Office of Government Commerce contract which helps ensure that the bio-diesel is obtained from sustainable sources.

Vehicle drivers within the City Council have access to training that can help to teach them efficient driving techniques to help give improved performance in relation to emissions and fuel economy.

Review and monitoring are crucial and the Council's Transport/Depot Manager regularly attends meetings of the Council's Transport Group where many issues relating to efficiencies are brought forward and developed.

The majority of the Council's fleet of vehicles are on average 9 years old. This figure is slightly skewed by the inclusion of older agricultural vehicles that are only used periodically and that would be impractical to replace on a regular basis. Accordingly, the average replacement age for the majority of fleet vehicles is broadly comparable with the national average.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel gained an insight into the work that has been undertaken by City of Durham Officers and appreciate that this work was not undertaken in isolation, but rather through discussions with other Local Authorities and Partner Organisations. Through these joint working relationships a robust and practical set of policies have been drafted and adopted.

Therefore the following recommendations are made by the Panel:-

1. The Panel endorse the work undertaken by the City of Durham Council in relation to both Sustainable Procurement (as set out in its Procurement Strategy 2007-2010) and in relation to minimising carbon emissions from the Council's fleet of vehicles. Accordingly, the Panel urge the new Durham Unitary Authority to adopt a similar approach in relation to both of these areas.
2. The Panel note that in November 2007 the Cabinet had agreed that, in the event of a Transitional and new Unitary Authority being established, to urge those Authorities to develop a programme to maintain or increase the proportion of local spend. Accordingly, the Panel would also wish to encourage the new Durham Unitary Authority to adopt this course of action.

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY TOPIC – REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS

1. BACKGROUND

The topic of Neighbourhood Wardens was originally looked at by the Panel in late 2004 and in light of the Local Government Reorganisation within County Durham and suggestions from Scrutiny Members the topic was tabled for review by the Panel.

2. AIMS

It was the remit of the Panel to consider a briefing paper prepared by the relevant Officers and to question those Officers at a meeting of the Panel to gain further insight. Members wished to assist in helping Officers from the City of Durham Council in improve services within this area if possible, and if not, to help ensure the good practise undertaken by the City of Durham Council was continued by the new Unitary Authority post April 2008.

3. ACTIONS

The Panel invited witnesses from Environment & Leisure Services Department to attend a meeting to outline the Council's current position in relation Neighbourhood Wardens. Accordingly, the Technical Support Manager and the Senior Neighbourhood Warden attended a meeting of the Panel in June 2008 to speak to Members.

3.1 Focus

The primary focus of the City of Durham Neighbourhood Wardens is that of enforcement and education, with tackling anti-social behaviour being an important, but secondary goal. This is in contrast to many other Local Authority Warden schemes, which place a greater emphasis on tackling anti-social behaviour more akin to a Police Community Support Officer. Examples of these types of Warden can be found within Easington District where there are 21 "Street Wardens" and Sedgefield Borough where there are 18 Wardens.

3.2 Staffing and Training

Initially, the City of Durham scheme had 3 Neighbourhood Wardens, but this was increased to 6 to provide a Warden per each operational area. In addition, the post of Senior Neighbourhood Warden was created in order to help in the coordinating role and to provide an experienced Officer in a position to cover an area should the need arise.

Neighbourhood Wardens are accredited under the Durham Constabulary Community Safety Accreditation Scheme which gives them certain powers, one of which is being the ability to request a name and address from a person in order to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs). Also Neighbourhood Wardens have the power to confiscate alcohol from those under the age of 18 and cigarettes from those under the age of 16.

The Council invested in the “Airwaves” communication system that is used by the Police and this enables many incidents to be dealt with quickly as there is a constant, reliable connection between Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police.

Neighbourhood Wardens have undertaken joint training in conjunction with the Police, on topics such as problem solving and information gathering / evidence collection.

3.3 Branding and Communication

Neighbourhood Wardens have established themselves as a “brand” and are easily identifiable out in the District by their distinctive Smart cars. Residents recognise the practicality of using the Neighbourhood Wardens as a mobile “on-stop-shop” for many issues.

To further enhance working together, the Neighbourhood Wardens and other frontline services meet with the Police on a fortnightly basis and together areas of concern are identified so that resources are targeted effectively. Neighbourhood Wardens also attend the Crime and Disorder Partnership meetings, Neighbourhood Forum meetings, Beat Officer surgeries and Parish Council meetings in order to keep up to speed with, and feedback on, local issues.

Neighbourhood Wardens also attend schools within the District to help educate young people on issues relating to litter / taking pride in their community. This is considered an important role within the Wardens job remit.

4. OUTCOMES

4.1 In Practise

By working closely with the Street Scene Team Leaders for their area, Neighbourhood Wardens are able to get positive action on issues quickly so that problems are resolved with the minimum of bureaucracy.

Many successful campaigns have been conducted by the Neighbourhood Wardens including campaigns to reduce littering (smoking litter and chewing gum), in preventing graffiti, Streetsafe Initiatives, reducing incidents of dog fouling, and in helping to bring about the provision of skatepark facilities in Belmont and Meadowfield in conjunction with the Durham Skate and Bike Partnership (Durham Police, City of Durham and Investors in Children).

The current staffing level within the Neighbourhood Wardens section is 4 Neighbourhood Wardens and the Senior Neighbourhood Warden. The Senior Neighbourhood Warden is undertaking covering duties across the District but realistically this would only be feasible in the short term.

However, any recommendation by Members to appoint additional Neighbourhood Wardens, or to provide assistance from other City of Durham staff, could prove difficult as spending during the transitional period leading up to the new Unitary Authority in April 2009 is limited by the agreed “Transitional Plan” and the usual budget documents.

4.2 Future Model for Durham

Officers from the Neighbourhood Warden service felt that evidence gathered to date showed that the methods currently being employed by the current Neighbourhood Warden Scheme were highly effective in tackling environmental issues and that issues relating to anti-social behaviour were more efficiently dealt with by the Police.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel gained insight into the work that has been undertaken by City of Durham Neighbourhood Wardens and the progress the service has made since its inception in 2003.

Therefore the following recommendations are made by the Panel:-

1. The Panel recognises the many achievements of the City of Durham's Neighbourhood Warden service and urges the new Durham Unitary Authority to continue to maintain the high level of service provision in the future. The Panel also acknowledges that the visible success in the City of Durham District can be attributed to a focus on tackling issues primarily through enforcement and education, carried out by well trained and highly motivated Officers.

