

Report to: **Executive**  
Date: **4<sup>th</sup> September 2007**  
Report of: **Executive Member for Liveability**  
Subject: **Appointment of Project Officer (North Peterlee Pathfinder Area)**

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek approval for a grant funded fixed term appointment of a Project Officer to drive reductions in criminal damage and secondary/deliberate fires in the North Peterlee Area.

## **2. Consultation**

- 2.1 In preparing this report consultation has taken place with the Director of Community Services, Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives and the Environmental Services Manager (Enforcement) who have all influenced the contents of the report. The Head of Personnel has advised on the human resource on the implications.
- 2.2 The Project has been subject to a detailed appraisal by the North Peterlee Pathfinder Board, who have approved the grant support to this scheme as it accords with their local priorities.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Criminal damage is a “high volume” crime nationally and includes any crimes where a person without lawful excuse intentionally or recklessly destroys or damages any property belonging to another. Examples of criminal damage are wide ranging and for example might include damage to dwellings, cars or commercial premises. In 2006/7 it contributed to 47% of total British Crime Survey (BCS) recorded crime in the District, broadly comparable with many other areas.
- 3.2 The type and frequency of criminal damage does vary throughout the District, and whilst it is taken seriously in all areas, the greatest improvements are achieved through targeted interventions responding to the needs of those communities that have the highest levels. In 2006/7 the North Peterlee area accounted for 22% of the District total criminal damage incidents, and therefore is a high candidate for intervention work. This has already begun in part of the area (Eden Hill) through a 3 month action plan (commenced August 2007) being jointly implemented with the Council, Police, Fire and East Durham Homes and residents groups involving a variety of education and enforcement measures. This is expected to bring immediate benefits, but it will be important to maintain momentum beyond this period through on the ground coordination, and also to extend the approach across North Peterlee.
- 3.3 Another area where further improvement is required is in relation to secondary/deliberate fires, an important “stretch target” within the County Durham Local Area Agreement. Easington has the highest levels of secondary/deliberate fires in County Durham (2006/7) and whilst the North Peterlee Area does not have significantly higher levels of incidents than the District average, combining efforts with the criminal damage work (for example preventing misuse of refuse bins, securing empty properties), brings mutual benefits to both measures, and more importantly greater impact within local communities.

- 3.4 Members will also be aware that the Council has also recently extended their Partnership working with the County Durham Probation Service, and have a team that are being deployed six days a week for local clean ups and other environmental improvements. It is proposed to make full use of this Team, together with other resources from partners in seeking further reductions in criminal damage and secondary fires in the North Peterlee area.

## **4. Position Statement and Option Appraisal**

- 4.1 An application to the North Peterlee Pathfinder Board was presented and accepted on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2007. This application proposed the employment of a Project Officer to work on an environmentally based interventions to impact on criminal damage and secondary deliberate fires in the North Peterlee Area.

- 4.2 The intervention outlines that a Project Officer work 5 days per week exclusively within the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Area. When working within the Pathfinder Area the Project Officer will be supported by such agencies as the Probation Service and Clean & Green Teams in carrying out operational work and by enforcement teams (Police, St Wardens & Technical Officers) in targeting persons/properties.

- 4.3 The Project Officer will be directly linked to this intervention to join up existing resources, to:

- ✓ Proactively identify environmental improvement schemes and facilitate works with agencies such as the Probation service
- ✓ Provide a swift response unit to remove flammable and potentially dangerous materials and 'special collection' items working with the Probation service & DOE Clean & Green Teams.
- ✓ Proactively work with landlords to provide a proactive house clearing service to reduce the likelihood that contents are fly tipped and subsequently set on fire or provide materials for criminal damage.
- ✓ Proactively work with businesses/ landlords / tenants to improve waste management and recycling to impact on fly tipping, secondary fires and the local environmental quality.
- ✓ Where working with stakeholders does not work then robust enforcement will be facilitated through action taken by the Project Officer and working with enforcement teams (Police, Housing providers and DOE).
- ✓ Join up service delivery there by reducing the potential for re occurrence through future education and enforcement.
- ✓ Develop and deliver educational and awareness messages to be promoted through various methods and impact on the environment now and for the future.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Financial**

- 5.1.1 The total employee costs of providing a full time Project Officer over 18 months to March 09 are as follows:

Total employee costs	£55,470
Administration /Management costs/Training	<u>£13,800</u>
Total	£69,270

5.1.2 These costs will be met by the North Peterlee Pathfinder. These will however be matched by an “in kind” contribution to costs associated with management, administration, labour support and other areas which were agreed as part of the bid. These costs are to be covered by DOE, Probation, Police, Fire Service and other stakeholders from within existing budgets.

## 5.2 **Legal/Policy Implications**

5.2.1 None identified

## 5.3 **Risk Assessment**

5.3.1 A risk assessment has been completed for this Project and is within the Councils appetite.

## 5.4 **Communications**

5.4.1 If approval is granted, the postholder, working with partners will develop a communication/engagement plan the aims of which would be to keep local Members and residents fully engaged in the intervention work.

## 5.5 **Human Resources**

5.5.1 An interim evaluation of the post has been carried out by the personnel section and evaluated the Project Officer post as a grade 8. Completion of the evaluation is planned for the beginning of September.

5.5.2 The postholder will be employed through the Council, with line management from the Environmental Service Manager, reporting on a regular basis to the Pathfinder Board. The base for the postholder has yet to be determined, but in any event will be located within the North Peterlee area.

5.5.3 A job description for the post is attached in **Appendix 1**. In view of the short term nature of the post, it is proposed that it is open to secondment opportunities.

## **6. Corporate Implications**

### 6.1 **Corporate Plan and Priorities**

6.1.1 This post and intervention will contribute to making the District Safe and Clean and Tidy Communities. Attention is drawn in particular to MDS2 (Crime and anti-social behaviour is reduced through working in partnership) and the high level actions to reduce criminal damage (6% in 2007/8 from 2003/4 baseline) and secondary fires (12.5% reduction target on 2008/9 from 2004/5 baseline).

6.1.2 A range of performance indicators for the North Peterlee Area have been developed to gauge the effectiveness of the proposed intervention.

6.1.3 Secondary Fires reduction has been selected as a stretch target in the County Durham LAA. There are also LAA indicators/targets for crime reduction, of which criminal damage forms an important part.

### 6.2 **Equality and Diversity**

6.2.1 No implications

## 6.3 **'E' Government Issues**

6.3.1 None identified

## 6.4 **Procurement**

6.4.1 None identified

## 7. **Conclusion**

7.1 This post and intervention will contribute to important corporate plans and priorities and deliver a neighbourhood level intervention anticipated to have a real impact on criminal damage and secondary deliberate fires.

## 8. **Recommendation**

8.1 To approve the fixed term appointment of Project Officer for the North Peterlee Pathfinder area.