

Item no.

Report to: **District Council**
Date: **14th July 2005**
Report of: **Executive Member for Environment and Transport**
Subject: **Development of the Street Warden Service**
Ward: **All**

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To feedback on recent consultation regarding Street Warden Services, and proposed measures in response to these findings.
- 1.2 To seek approval to fully mainstream the Street Warden Service, outlining how this may be achieved within the existing budgetary framework.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 This report is based on the consultation findings from an event held on 16th June 2005 with a wide variety of stakeholders connected with the Street Warden Service, including Elected Members, Residents Associations, Parish Councils, and other interested organisations. Furthermore it also builds on consultation work with the Street Wardens themselves, including a focus group meeting held on 17th May 2005 and a workshop to reflect and respond to the consultation findings held on 30th June.
- 2.2 The Executive Member for Environment and Transport, and Community and Culture together with the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager and the Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives have been consulted and agree with the contents of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the meeting of Executive on 13th January 2004 a decision was made to extend Street Warden Services throughout the District. On 14th December 2004 Executive resolved to mainstream nine Street Warden posts when external funding finishes in April 2006. At the time, there was a presumption that the remaining nine posts would be mainstreamed with support from East Durham Homes and Housing Associations. This is now considered most unlikely and therefore the Council need to consider a range of options from mainstreaming all posts to retaining only the nine to which the Council is already committed.

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- 3.2 Members have previously expressed strong support for street warden services and the work they do in combating anti-social behaviour and environmental degradation. The contribution they make is recognised not only locally (for example referenced in a report into anti-social behaviour by Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, reported to Executive on 5th July 2005), but also nationally for example Neighbourhood Management Case Studies, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005. Full mainstreaming of street warden services, working with others, would allow an opportunity to build on the success to date, and improve still further the positive impact they are having in the community.
- 3.3 A range of options for the future development of Street Warden Services exists. Potential issues for debate include the balance between enforcement vs diversionary activities; priority areas for Street Warden work; foot vs vehicle patrols; profile of the Street Wardens in the community; new powers of enforcement under the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005, and seeking views on proposed operational arrangements with the Police.
- 3.4 A Consultation Seminar was held on 16th June 2005 attended by a range of stakeholders from Elected Members to Residents Associations, Community Representatives, Parish Council, and interested organisations to gauge views on these options for service delivery. In total over 70 people attended this event. The seminar covered issues of “where are we now?” with Street Warden Services, and through audience response equipment asked baseline questions such as satisfaction and awareness levels. It also addressed “where should we be going?” by posing questions of future service delivery and seeking views on outline proposals.
- 3.5 This report summarises the main findings arising from this consultation, and more importantly, proposes a series of measures in response to these findings. It also seeks approval to the full mainstreaming of Street Warden Services.

4. Position Statement and Option Appraisal

- 4.1 Appendix 1 describes the consultation feedback and proposed response. An outline action plan has been prepared and this is attached as Appendix 2. In summary the main findings and measures can be concluded as follows:

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Roles and Responsibilities: There was strong support for the continued involvement of Street Wardens in both environmental (e.g. graffiti, dog fouling) and community safety (e.g. anti-social behaviour) work, with a widespread recognition that the two issues are interrelated. There is however within this, a clear priority for work to combat youths causing annoyance/anti-social behaviour.

Examples of work to be undertaken in response to this theme include:

- Accreditation training of street wardens over the next 6 months to give all increased enforcement powers (2 wardens have already received this).
- Increased collaboration on the ground with other enforcement agencies, for example introduction of joint patrols with PCSOs.
- Developing a directory of different organisations, contacts and roles including Senior Elected Members, so the Street Wardens can improve their awareness, improve knowledge of respective roles, and assist where necessary in referring on appropriate matters.

Communication: Whilst awareness levels among those consulted about Street Warden Services was high, there was a feeling that considerably more needs to be done in this area, to raise the profile further amongst the wider community. There were clear messages from the relatively low satisfaction rates expressed, that the communication should not be just about raising awareness of the service, but also about promoting the achievements in terms of performance. There is also a need to further clarify for the community the different roles and responsibilities of Street Wardens, Police and PCSO's.

Examples of work to be undertaken in response to this include:

- Feedback procedures introduced with immediate affect to afford everybody who contacts the street wardens with an opportunity to receive feedback after street wardens have attended an incident.
- Street Warden 'roadshow' to be devised that can be utilised at events, forums and shopping centres.
- "Know your Street Warden" promotion and raising awareness of performance through review of the existing monthly newsletters.
- Training for telephone operators, including Envirocall to best direct calls from the public to the relevant agencies.

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It will be important as part of the communication process to manage expectations. There are limited numbers of street wardens, and they have broad areas of responsibility to cover.

Operational improvements: There was endorsement for close partnership working with the Police, and for tactical based meetings to coordinate intelligence and target work on the ground. There was also agreement that Street Wardens should be involved in both enforcement and engagement work, but the latter only as time allows. There were however concerns that Street Wardens spend too much time in their vehicles, and do not get out and attend incidents often enough. Furthermore there was mixed opinion about shift patterns, with the most popular feeling being that they need a fundamental change.

Examples of work to be undertaken in response to this include:

- Procedures introduced with immediate effect for Street Wardens to get out of vehicles in all cases, except there is a risk to personal safety.
- 'Saturation' foot and bicycle patrols in targeted areas to improve local visibility.
- Street Wardens organising local community clean ups, and trained in use of graffiti removal machine so they can utilise this at weekends and other off peak periods.
- Shift patterns at off peak times (particularly Sundays) to be reviewed.

Flexibility: There was endorsement for Street Wardens to take on the new powers afforded through the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 as well as the additional powers afforded through accreditation. There was agreement to the need for flexibility in response, and to be sensitive to community needs.

One mechanism for achieving regular community feedback is through a Community Evaluation programme, based on an Office of the Deputy Prime Minister model. This would involve the establishment of a Community Panel, who, working with the Street Wardens; would utilise an "Evaluation Toolkit" specifically designed for Street Wardens. The North East Wardens Resource Centre have indicated that funding would be available for consultants time to facilitate wardens' evaluations. It is proposed that this is explored.

It may be of interest to note that the focus group with Street Wardens held on 17th May identified that the highest job satisfaction came after feedback of a successfully completed task to the complainant. This is not surprising, but reinforces the importance of communication. Other features popular with the Street Wardens are the airwave coms systems, although there is a responsibility for the Police here to direct the Wardens to incidents only in appropriate circumstances. One frustration for the wardens, which has

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now been addressed, is ensuring simple procedures for arranging the boarding up of at risk void properties.

Whilst several people at the 16th June event were critical of Street Warden Services, and clearly there is work to do in increasing public confidence, there was also an appreciation for the work that they do, and the difficult job they face. This is being made more difficult by the temporary contracts (currently until March 2006) the Street Wardens are on, reflecting in recruitment and retention difficulties.

Should Members approve the full mainstreaming, it is proposed to later consider the financial implications of establishing a relief register, or “bank” of Street Wardens beyond the full complement of 18 staff which would help to cover in periods of sickness, holidays or vacancies. Details of how this register would work, together with costs would be submitted in further reports to Members.

5. Implications

5.1 *Costs*

The estimated cost of mainstreaming the further nine Street Warden posts is £220,000 per annum. It is emphasised however that external support will continue to be sought to offset these costs, although unlikely that this could be sustained in the long term.

Details of the budgetary requirements required to support these costs will be provided as part of the 2006/7 budgetary setting process, but a significant proportion is proposed to come from savings from the termination of the Cheshire Waste Contract, and from cross Directorate budget efficiencies.

Further work will be undertaken in considering the establishment and utilisation of a relief register of Street Wardens. Training costs associated with this proposal would be minimal as it is heavily subsidised through the Warden Resource Centre based in Middlesbrough.

5.2 *Legal*

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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5.3 *mçããÁó=*

There are no policy implications arising from this report.

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A risk assessment has been completed

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Street Wardens are already high profile, but this report outlines further improvements which are required in this area. Subject to Council approval a press release will be issued to highlight the strong Council commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour and environmental degradation through the mainstreaming of street warden services.

6. Corporate implications

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The work of the Street Wardens is consistent with Community Strategy priorities for Clean and Tidy Communities and Safer Communities.

6.2 *bèì -ãíó--ãÇ-ÇãíÉéãíó*

There are no equality or diversity issues arising from this report.

6.3 *bJdçíÉéããÉãí*

There are no e-government issues directly arising from this report, although it is important that the environmental monitoring and enforcement work of Street Wardens makes full use of technology.

6.4 *mèçÁì éÉãÉãí*

There are no procurement issues arising from this report.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- i) Fully mainstream the Street Warden Service.
- ii) Endorse the outline action plan for improvements which responds to the recent consultation.

Background Papers/Documents referred to:

Executive Meeting 13th January 2004

Executive Meeting 14th December 2004

Executive Meeting 5th July – Report of Partnership Scrutiny Committee into Anti-Social Behaviour

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) Neighbourhood Management – working together to create cleaner, safer communities (Easington Street Wardens cited as an example of best practice).

Development of the Street Warden Service/1/OS/CS