

CMT Briefing Note on Neighbourhood Warden Services 26 March 2020

Purpose

The purpose is:

- To brief Corporate Management Team on the Neighbourhood Warden services in light of the impact of Covid-19; and
- To agree a temporary change to the service delivered.

The Service

There are 41 Neighbourhood Wardens deliver services that tackle some of our communities most reported issues including:

- Environmental Crime (litter, dog issues, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, graffiti, bins and other waste related issues that are traditionally managed by Environmental Health and Consumer Protection);
- Low level anti-social behaviour; and
- Other special projects such as Durham City begging.

To do this they:

- Operate through the day and into the evening 7 days per week;
- Work with partners (Police, Fire and Rescue Service, ASB team, Civic Pride and Clean & Green etc.); and
- Take an education through to enforcement approach.

The Neighbourhood Warden team have been successful at this work seeing continued reductions in fly-tipping, dog related issues and are always ready to step into special projects.

It should also be noted that interviewing has been completed for the growth as agreed by the council to start at some point in the future.

How has Covid-19 Changed Things

Neighbourhood Wardens are not identified as key workers.

Like many services self-isolation and childcare has led to 40% of the staff currently being away from the physical workplace. Some are working from home although the scope of their work is limited.

A further 10% are currently working in critical areas such as Bereavement and Refuse and 10% are also on holiday.

This leaves a significantly reduced workforce on the ground and has led to changes with prioritising workloads and the impact of social distancing making tackling some issues difficult; such as tackling groups of people.

As a consequence, the service has changed already to 9am-5pm each day to concentrate the staff and ensure they are safe.

With the changes in areas such as waste disposal (e.g. household waste recycling centres) it is not reasonable to continue to tackle waste on private residential land.

Proposals

It is proposed that a skeleton staffing (8) is maintained Monday-Friday 9am-5pm each day to focus on a few core areas which can be undertaken to meet statutory requirements of specialist areas and these would be:

- Stray dogs;
- Loose horses; and
- Fly-tipping investigation and CCTV deployment.

The council would also require 2 team leaders to deliver the service but also develop the plans for the future additional wardens especially around fly-tipping.

This would allow 30 further staff to be deployed to support other critical services. The risks associated with this approach are:

- Impact on external partners such as the Police and Fire and Rescue Service who rely on deployed staff to respond to issues although the council have reduced this already;
- Impact on internal partners such as the ASB team, Clean and Green team and Refuse team; and
- Not continuing to tackle residential waste will leave a latent issue and impact on the proliferation of rats.

Recommendations

Corporate Management Team are asked to:

- Note the work outlined in this briefing paper and the challenges for the future months; and
- Agree to the temporary change.

Briefing Paper for Corporate Management Team
26 March 2020
Options for Grounds and Street Cleansing

1. Absolute Minimum

- Grave digging (extra resources being called), on call basis only, no presence in cemetery;
- Emergency arbor work and other emergency call-outs (e.g. road spillages and carcasses etc.);
- Emptying dog and litter bins for public health reasons;
- Removal of fly-tips;
- Removal of sharp/offensive graffiti; and
- Mechanical sweeping for significant accumulations (usual maintenance ceased).

ALL WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING/LONE WORKING

2. Reduced Service

- Cemeteries maintenance (carried out by grave digging staff);
- Grass cutting in recreation areas and parks in accordance with public use for exercise;
- Grass cutting for contracted areas of open space (e.g. Believe Housing); and
- Weed spraying from vehicles.

ALL WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING/LONE WORKING

What are the *implications*:

- Significant reductions in cleansing standards but alleviated by less footfall;
- More evident grass and weeds across general open spaces; and
- No flowers/bedding plants/displays especially for winter. Potential of a CARE piece using winter bedding plants.

Recommendations

Corporate Management Team are asked to:

- Approve Clean and Green operating at reduced levels as outlined above;
- Highlight this in communications; and
- Regularly review in the light of Coronavirus impacts.