

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

16th September 2014



Progress of Recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of the Neighbourhood Warden Service

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with progress of recommendations following the Committee's previous review of neighbourhood wardens.

Background

2. In June 2013, members of the committee agreed to undertake a review on the Council's Neighbourhood Warden Service. The aim of the review was to look at the impact of partnership activity and raise the profile of the service.
3. The review gathered a wide range of evidence through working group meetings, video footage, field study observations and desktop research to produce its report on this topic.
4. The report highlighted that neighbourhood wardens are an accredited community safety service provided by Durham County Council covering all areas of the county. They aim to improve the quality of life for residents by reducing the level of anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime. The service was inherited from four former district councils in 2009 as part of local government reorganisation. It was expanded countywide in 2009 and underwent further harmonisation in 2012 to include responsibility for stray dogs and introduce a seven day week shift pattern and in 2013 took on responsibility for stray and tethered horses.
5. Legislation allows for a variety of different neighbourhood warden service models to be adopted. A number of national evaluations and research into councils both within and outside the region highlight there is no best practice or ideal model. Each local authority has developed its own approach to suit its local circumstances.
6. The review identified that the approach in Durham is delivered through education, engagement and enforcement. Education initiatives include working with sessions with school children, producing displays to provide information on littering and responsible dog ownership. Engagement initiatives have included assisting communities with Community Payback Schemes, volunteer clean ups and organised litter picks. Enforcement is a tool that wardens can use with regard to environmental issues and to

confiscate alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco products from persons under 18yrs, request the name and address of a person acting in an anti-social manner, require the removal of vehicles causing a danger or obstruction. Other councils have adopted differing approaches that focus on either education and engagement or enforcement.

7. The report focused on their role in addressing community concerns of dog fouling, litter and waste and fly tipping. Performance information highlights an increase in demand for the service. A key theme within the report is the wardens' contribution together with partners to improve confidence and raise the profile of their work and awareness of their role through exploring the development of locality confidence plans, feedback with residents and increased use of social media.
8. Wardens have a wide range of tools and powers that focus on environmental issues and share a number of powers with Police Community Safety Officers which are complementary, provide greater coverage and equally important to their own distinct areas of responsibility. Performance data within the report shows an increase in the level of enforcement activity undertaken by neighbourhood wardens during the current year. The report also illustrated the potential impact of adopting restorative approaches as a tool to tackle problems, looked at an approach to contribute to community concerns of car parking and the potential impact of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime Bill.
9. Partnership working with external agencies was identified as key component of the duties undertaken by the council's neighbourhood wardens. The report contained evidence from a housing provider and Durham Constabulary on the value of partnership working and examples to identify the impact of environmental campaigns and joint police operations. Members of the Committee also undertook field study exercises with wardens and partners that provided an insight to the role of neighbourhood wardens, the diverse range of their work, partnership activity and the potential conflict situations that can occur within the role.
10. The Committee's report was presented by Cllr Boyes to Cabinet on 16th April 2014 and included the following nine recommendations:
 1. That Cabinet note the valuable role Neighbourhood Wardens provide to communities in line with Council priorities and their contribution to partnership working with a wide range of partner organisations.
 2. That consideration be given for all Neighbourhood Wardens to undertake training to use restorative approaches as a tool to tackle problems within their role.
 3. That the Neighbourhood Warden Service should look to raise its profile through exploring mechanisms to circulate the monthly newsletter to residents groups, partners agencies and neighbourhood watch. In addition, consideration be given to explore the use of social media as a tool to improve confidence and gather intelligence with the Council's Corporate Communications Team.

4. That the neighbourhood wardens explore development of locality based confidence plans in line with local priorities and also contribute to area based confidence plans produced by Durham Constabulary.
5. That the Neighbourhood Warden Service in addition to offering feedback to improve confidence explore implementing a system where if action needed is outside their responsibility and they have referred to another service or agency, inform the resident of action they have taken and contact details for the relevant service or agency.
6. That attendance at community meetings is a very important format to engage and communicate with residents, but if there are capacity issues to attend community meetings that the Neighbourhood Protection Manager liaise with the local Neighbourhood Police Chief Inspector and/or Inspector and County Council members to identify the most appropriate meetings for the wardens to be attending.
7. That the Neighbourhood Warden Service prepare for implications from the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill to become an Act and review tools and powers to ensure that appropriate training is undertaken for staff and changes are communicated to residents, businesses and communities.
8. That Neighbourhood Wardens have the contact details for the Parking Enforcement Team to report any issues relating to car parking raised as a community concern and following concerns raised at PACT meetings these are also shared with the parking services team.
9. Cabinet are asked to consider the recommendations contained in the report as part of the approach through systematic review and provide a progress update on recommendations in six months time.

11. Appendix 2 provides progress on implementation of each of these recommendations and Ian Hoult, Neighbourhood Protection Manager will be in attendance at the Committee's meeting to provide further information and respond to Members questions in relation to this topic.

Recommendation

12. Members of the Committee are asked to note information contained within this report and comment accordingly.

Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Review, Neighbourhood Wardens, Cabinet April 2014

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – information within the report is aimed at reducing crime and disorder, Anti-Social behaviour and environmental crime

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP REPORT – Neighbourhood Wardens
REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
1) That Cabinet note the valuable role Neighbourhood Wardens provide to communities in line with Council priorities and their contribution to partnership working with a wide range of partner organisations	Cabinet considered the report on the 16 th April 14 and approved the report and recommendations.		Completed
2) That consideration be given for all Neighbourhood Wardens to undertake training to use restorative approaches as a tool to tackle problems within their role.	Some Neighbourhood Warden teams have undertaken RA training in specific areas with a plan to complete this over the next 6 months.	Dave Riseley (Enforcement Manager – Neighbourhood Protection)	March 15
3) That the Neighbourhood Warden Service should look to raise its profile through exploring mechanisms to circulate the monthly newsletter to residents groups, partners agencies and neighbourhood watch. In addition, consideration be given to explore the use of social media as a tool to improve confidence and gather intelligence with the Council's Corporate Communications Team	Work has been carried out to continue to raise the profile, including, a specific article in the Summer edition of Durham County News, the Newsletter has an increased circulation list with the addition of new resident groups along with continued press articles. Currently corporate communications are working on a social media strategy with services to respond to the growth of social media and a further update will be provided.	Ian Hoult (Neighbourhood Protection Manager)	March 15
4) That the Neighbourhood Wardens explore development of locality based confidence plans in line with local priorities and also contribute to area based confidence plans produced by Durham Constabulary.	Durham Constabulary no longer have locality based confidence plans and work is ongoing to develop confidence plans around key community priorities raised through PACT meetings including, speeding, alcohol and environmental crime (dog fouling, litter	Ian Hoult (Neighbourhood Protection Manager)	March 15

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
	& flytipping). These plans will include other sections of the council and partner agencies.		
5) That the Neighbourhood Warden Service in addition to offering feedback to improve confidence explore implementing a system where if action needed is outside their responsibility and they have referred to another service or agency, inform the resident of action they have taken and contact details for the relevant service or agency.	Feedback has been improved with additional checks being put in place by team leaders. Contacts have been clarified and reviewed.		Completed
6) That attendance at community meetings is a very important format to engage and communicate with residents, but if there are capacity issues to attend community meetings that the Neighbourhood Protection Manager liaise with the local Neighbourhood Police Chief Inspector and/or Inspector and County Council members to identify the most appropriate meetings for the wardens to be attending	Meetings have been reviewed and where appropriate local discussions have taken place. The contacts for Neighbourhood Wardens have been reviewed and streamlined including dedicated team leader mobiles through working shifts.		Completed
7) That the Neighbourhood Warden Service prepare for implications from the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Bill to become an Act and review tools and powers to ensure that appropriate training is undertaken for staff and changes are communicated to residents, businesses and	Lead by the ASB delivery group work has been ongoing since early 2014 to ensure that the new powers can be implemented in a timely way. Currently it is projected that the bill will be enacted in late October 2014.	Ian Hoult (Neighbourhood Protection Manager)	Projected November 14

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
communities.			
8) That Neighbourhood Wardens have the contact details for the Parking Enforcement Team to report any issues relating to car parking raised as a community concern and following concerns raised at PACT meetings these are also shared with the parking services team	All Neighbourhood Wardens have the correct contacts for the Parking Enforcement Team		Completed
9) Cabinet are asked to consider the recommendations contained in the report as part of the approach through systematic review and provide a progress update on recommendations in six months time.			Completed