



Coventry City Council

To all Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

6th January, 2009
Our ref: C/JMc

Dear Member,

Meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee – 14th January, 2009

Please find attached a briefing note which replaces report 4.1 – Neighbourhood Wardens Report which is to be considered at the above meeting.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on the telephone number shown above

Yours sincerely

Joy McLellan.

Joy McLellan

Principal Committee Officer

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Coventry City Council

4.1

Briefing note

To

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date 14th January, 2009

Subject

Neighbourhood Wardens Review

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 To address the matters raised by the call in of the Neighbourhood Wardens report to Cabinet on 16 December 2008 as set out below;

2 To better understand the impact of the withdrawal of the city centre team on crime and disorder in the city centre.

2.1 Although the establishment for the city centre wardens team is five neighbourhood wardens over the last year or two there have only been four wardens due to long term sickness of a warden who no longer works for the authority. The remaining four wardens work in pairs from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm across two shifts of 8.00 – 4.00 and 12.00 – 8.00.

2.2 Data for the last two years indicate far fewer occurrences and referrals have been reported by the city centre team in 2007/08 compared to 2006/07. There has been little community work done within the city centre and the team have not utilised their community initiatives budget in the way that neighbourhood based teams have done. These circumstances led managers to conclude that there is no longer a need for a permanent city centre team.

2.3 It is accepted that there are times of the year when there is a need for additional support in the city centre to provide further resilience to policing in the city centre. For example both last year and this year additional warden patrols have been provided in the build up to Christmas on Wednesdays 8.00 pm – 10.00 pm, Saturday's 9.00 am – 5.00 pm and Sunday's 10.00 am – 6.00 pm. These patrols are undertaken by wardens from across the city and are paid for as overtime funded by the AIMS budget and the warden budget. This provides a uniformed presence in the city centre on some of the busiest days of the year and enables police rosters to be adjusted to cover the policing of the night time pub and club activity – a clear priority for the police.

2.4 It is also anticipated that the Neighbourhood Impact Officers will patrol the city centre on Saturdays 10.00 am – 6.00 pm, again enabling police personnel to be available to deal with policing matters later into the evening and overnight on Friday and Saturdays when most crime and disorder in the city centre occurs.

- 2.5 It has also proved necessary in the past couple of years to provide temporary patrols in neighbourhoods where there has been a hotspot that has needed attention for a period of time. This has been done by using wardens from quieter areas and has proved successful in addressing the issues so that they cease to be hotspot areas. A similar approach can be taken to the city centre if the need arises.
- 2.6 This flexibility in warden deployment will continue when there is no longer a city centre team and can be targeted at when a warden presence is most needed in the city centre and avoid the under use of warden knowledge and experience at times when it is not needed. Plus the deployment of Neighbourhood Impact Officers on Saturdays leads officers to conclude that it is unlikely that the withdrawal of the city centre team will have any impact on crime and disorder in the city centre.

3 To better understand the impact of the consultation had on the decision making processes

- 3.1 A range of stakeholders were sent copies of the draft Neighbourhood Warden report and asked to feedback their comments on the proposals in it. The report was also made available alongside a summary of the key issues in it on the Council website.
- 3.2 The report was also discussed at meetings of the Coventry Public Service Board, Coventry Community Safety Partnership, the AGM of the Community Empowerment Network (CEN), seven Ward Forums and at a meeting with a residents' focus group.
- 3.3 Overall there was a mixed response from the feedback we received but there was considerable support for the extension of wardens working hours and for the pilot of the enforcement team. There was however some concern raised by the trades unions and individual wardens regarding the need for working until 10.00 pm all year round. In the light of these concerns it was decided that the most need was during the period of the year when evenings get lighter up until 5 November and perhaps less need during the winter, and that different rosters for different times of the year would be an appropriate adjustment to the proposals in the report.
- 3.4 There was also some concern regarding the introduction of enforcement powers from the trades unions. However consideration was given to the fact that the move towards enforcement had been as a response to the public's and stakeholders' desire for a more robust approach to some environmental issues and that this is initially being piloted. It was therefore concluded that the pilot should proceed as planned and reviewed regularly to ensure that none of the concerns have occurred in terms of damage to the whole wardens service from working in this way.
- 3.5 The proposal to reduce the overall numbers of wardens also received mixed responses. The trades unions, elected members and some residents including CEN did not support any reduction in overall numbers of wardens. Many responses to the consultation did not refer to these reductions at all, and people attending the ward forums where the proposals were discussed did not comment on this element of the proposals. The residents focus group were not happy at the suggestion to reduce warden numbers but were more concerned to ensure that there were wardens patrolling where they should be and that the enforcement wardens could be utilised in any neighbourhood if needed. In some of the ward forum discussions residents did appear to understand that a change in policing to neighbourhood policing and the introduction of over 100 PCSOs meant that neighbourhood wardens were not the only solution or the best solution to the problems they encounter in their neighbourhood.

- 3.6 Police feedback was provided on behalf of all three Operational Command Units to the Community Safety Partnership and Public Service Board by Chief Superintendent Harrod. She expressed their view as being generally supportive of the proposals especially introduction of the enforcement wardens and of extending the working hours. Chief Superintendent Harrod also added a note of caution around the type of uniform that the Neighbourhood Impact officers wear – avoiding the 'robocop' look was her advice. She also advised that there can be a tendency for there to be a lot of paper work with enforcement activity and this needs to be kept to a minimum to ensure the street based presence of these officers is their main priority.
- 3.7 Subsequently there has been a view expressed from Chief Superintendent Glover around the reduction in warden numbers and particularly the disbanding of the city centre team. He has been given reassurances that the wardens' service will continue to be flexible and responsive as possible, but we believe that there is no need of a permanent city centre team for the reasons stated in 2. above.
- 3.8 All of the proposals will be reviewed regularly as part of the pilot and where there is any further changes needed these can be addressed.

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