

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities)

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Executive Director – People

**Ward(s) affected:**

Whoberley

**Title:**

Report in response to a petition asking the Council to improve the environment and security of the Hearsall area of Earlsdon in Coventry.

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive Summary:**

A petition containing 184 signatories was submitted on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014 by Councillor B Singh and Councillor Howells, Whoberley Ward Councillors.

The petition asks the Council to implement measures to address environmental issues which is likely to improve the security of the Hearsall area of Earlsdon, in the ward of Whoberley.

The petitioners outline issues including local roads and pavements in need of repair, fly-tipping, and obstruction caused by wheelie bins. Additionally they request that estate/letting agency signs should be removed and that all alleyways and entryways should be gated and any existing gates to be repaired to a good working order.

Signatories feel that such measures would significantly improve the environment and therefore deter and/or reduce crime and nuisance behaviour also.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Member is requested to:-

1. Acknowledge and endorse the work of officers to date as detailed in the report
2. Acknowledge the work of the Police who have also targeted additional patrols to the area responding swiftly to any issues raised or identified.
3. Request Officers to continue to work with local residents to explore opportunities to secure community funding with which to make local environmental and safety improvements to their area.

4. Request Officers to provide a further progress report to Cabinet Member meeting in October.

**List of Appendices included:**

Petition text - Appendix 1

**Background papers:**

None

**Other useful documents**

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel, or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## Report title:

Report in response to a petition asking Coventry City Council to improve the environment and security of the Hearsall area of Earlsdon in Coventry.

### 1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 A petition was submitted to Cabinet on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014 By Councillor B. Singh and Councillor Howells. The petition calls for the City Council to improve the cleanliness and address environmental issues which if addressed will subsequently improve the safety and security of the Hearsall area of the City.
- 1.2 In October 2013 a report was provided by West -Midlands Police to consider incidents of burglary in a defined number of streets in the Earlsdon/Whoberley area of the City. The report focused on six roads in the area including Broomfield Road, Kensington Road, Bristol Road, Kirby Road, Farman Road, and Latham Road. A site visit was conducted by officers and a number of issues were identified for which the Local Authority and partner agencies took interim action including: re-issuing of contact details for appropriate agencies, visiting individual properties that had been highlighted in regard to rubbish in gardens, having for sale/letting signs removed that had been in situ for a long period of time, police officers visited the area and offered advice, to residents in regard to security and their individual properties and encouraged the residents to form a network of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. The work is on-going and officers from the various agencies and departments visit the area to address issues as they are reported.
- 1.3 Since this action was taken there has been a significant reduction in incidents of crime including burglary. This is evidenced by the reduction in the number of reports to the police as follows:-

#### Crime

2013/14 = 57 offences, 26 fewer offences (31% reduction on previous year)

2012/13 = 83 offences

#### Crime: Burglary Dwelling offences

2013/14 = 12, 13 fewer offences (52% reduction on previous year)

2012/13 = 24

Additionally, further reductions in nuisance behaviour have also been recorded including:-

#### Reports to police regarding public place nuisance

2013/14 = 17, 26 fewer incidents (60% reduction on previous year)

2012/13 = 43

Reports to Council regarding nuisance behaviour (predominately associated with residential premises as opposed to public place nuisance)

2013/14 = 26, 1 incident less than the previous year,

2012/13 = 27

- 1.4 There have been a slight increase in the number of fly tips in this area; in 2013/14 there were 43 reported cases compared to 32 in the previous year (this represents 0.04% of City's total fly tipping episodes). However the City Council treats every fly tip seriously and will pursue cases where there is sufficient evidence. It is therefore important that residents report fly tipping to Coventry Direct promptly so that any available evidence can be secured. Any information received from residents as to who is responsible for the fly tipping will also be gratefully received. It is only by working in partnership with local people that the Council is able to reduce this blight on neighbourhoods.
- 1.5 Residents are also concerned by the number of wheelie bins stored/left on the pavements in between waste collection days. This is part of a much wider issue in the City and the Council is currently reviewing the evidence and options available before determining the best course of action to address this specific issue.
- 1.6 The lead petitioner has been contacted in relation to advice and guidance to support the implementation of a resident-led gating scheme to improve the security to their privately owned properties and entry ways.
- 1.7 The Highways Inspector has advised that roads and pavements are inspected regularly and repairs undertaken as required.
- 1.8 The Planning Enforcement Team have confirmed that they receive a large number of enquiries concerning the display of lettings boards within the area. The display of a 'To Let' board or 'For Sale' board is deemed consent under Class 3 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 and consequently, subject to compliance with various limitations concerning the size and period of display, advertisement consent from the local planning authority is not required for the display of such boards. The above regulations require that the board shall be removed within 14 days after the completion of the sale of the property or the grant of a tenancy, and it is only after this 14 day period has elapsed that the local planning authority can formally request the board to be removed. The problems associated with the continued display of such boards are becoming more prevalent in areas of the City where there are a high number of properties to let, and this problem is not unique to Whoberley Ward. When officers become aware of a board which may have been displayed beyond the 14 day period (usually upon the receipt of a complaint from a local resident) the appropriate action (which is determined on an individual basis), is taken to secure the removal of the display once officers have themselves witnessed the breach in the legislation. In most cases the board is removed within three or four days of officers contacting the estate agent / letting company involved, without the necessity to undertake formal legal action.

## **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 As part of the response West Midlands Police have patrolled the area and will continue to do so. A schedule of street briefings will be arranged including some specifically aimed at the student population in this area. In addition 3 Police action days have been scheduled for Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014, and 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014.
- 2.2 Target-hardening measures have been offered to the residents. These included individual crime surveys, registration of electrical goods via the "immobilise initiative", and the distribution of target-hardening products (i.e. window alarms, shed alarms, anti-vandal paint, window stickers, and personal attack alarms and DNA marking for products). Residents are also able to register their valuable property on the 'Immobilise' scheme and appropriate stickers, signs, window alarms, fence protectors, and anti-vandal paint have been provided.

- 2.3 The Coventry Police Community Engagement Officer has encouraged residents to establishing a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme for this area and will support residents in its implementation.
- 2.4 Contact details and various methods of reporting have been provided to the residents to encourage reporting of incidents as and when they occur.
- 2.5 Guidance in relation to establishing a self- help resident-led gating schemes has been provided to the lead petitioner and has been further distributed by the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.
- 2.6 Environmental Protection will continue to visit the area and consider all cases of fly-tipping/rubbish dumping and obstruction of refuse bins and will take appropriate action to address the issues as they arise.
- 2.7 The City Council's Planning Department continues to investigate the displaying of estate/letting agency signs and will take action on an individual basis as and when identified to them.
- 2.8 The City Council's Highways Department will continue to conduct scheduled inspections of the area and will carry out repairs identified through these inspections or in response to reports by members of the public,

### **3 Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 Officers have engaged with the residents and are in regular contact with them, addressing issues as they arise.
- 3.2 Residents have been encouraged to report incidents to the relevant organisation as they occur. They have been furnished with relevant contact information and are encouraged to use the methods of reporting available to them.
- 3.3 Groups of individuals displaying behaviours likely to cause harm, alarm, or distress are challenged and their details taken. If suitable the individuals are referred to the relevant Local Case Management Forum.
- 3.4 Residents have been encouraged to set up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in the area which will be supported by the West Midlands Police Neighbourhood Policing Team.
- 3.5 Target-hardening opportunities have been offered to the residents and have included the provision of some target hardening products including the 'DNA' marking of property, registration of property on 'Immobilise', appropriate stickers and signs, window alarms, fence protectors and anti-vandal paint where this has been applicable.
- 3.6 Local Street Briefings have been arranged, including student awareness events, particularly around the September to November period as the students return to the City.
- 3.7 The Highways Department has responded to individual complaints about the state of repair of the Highway and will conduct scheduled inspections as normal.
- 3.8 The Planning Enforcement team has responded to individual complaints about the estate/letting agency boards and will continue to do so as and when issues are reported.

#### **4 Timetable for implementing this decision**

4.1 The Local Safer Neighbourhood Group will monitor the area and works which are ongoing.

#### **5 Comments from Executive Director, Resources**

##### **5.3 Financial implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

##### **5.4 Legal implications**

None

#### **6 Other implications**

None

##### **6.3 How will this contribute to the Council Plan ([www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/))?**

###### **Crime and Disorder**

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour through partnership working is central to the delivery of the Police, Crime & Community Safety Plan and Strategic Assessment 2014/15.

##### **6.4 How is risk being managed?**

1. The Community Safety Officer continues to monitor crime and disorder levels in the area.
2. Police and Council Officers continue to incorporate the area in their patrol strategies and work schedule and will monitor behaviour of individuals and the condition and cleanliness of the area.

##### **6.5 What is the impact on the organisation?**

None

##### **6.6 Equalities / EIA**

N/A

##### **6.7 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

The purpose of taking action to address graffiti, vandalism, and fly-tipping is in an attempt to improve the environment and wellbeing of the community.

##### **6.8 Implications for partner organisations?**

None

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<b>Members:</b>				
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Appendices

