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Cabinet Member (Policing & Equalities)

02 October 2014

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Policing and Equalities - Councillor Townshend

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Executive Director – People

**Ward(s) affected:**

Whoberley

**Title:**

Progress report in response to a petition asking the Council to improve the environment and security of the Hearsall area of Coventry

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive Summary:**

A petition of 184 signatories was originally 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 are likely to improve the security of the Hearsall area, in the ward of Whoberley.

The petitioners outlined issues including fly-tipping and obstruction caused by wheelie bins. Additionally they requested 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.

This report provides further details of additional measures taken by Council Officers to address these issues as recommended by Cabinet Member on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Member is recommended to:-

1. Acknowledge and endorse the additional work of Officers since the last Cabinet Member meeting as detailed in section 2 of this report.
2. Request Officers to:
  - a. Continue the Care for Our Area/Hot Street project until the relevant alleyways have been cleared and the project reaches its conclusion.
  - b. Continue to offer advice and guidance to residents on the implementation of self-help 'gating schemes' where appropriate.
  - c. Continue to investigate and respond to reports from residents concerning the unauthorised use of for sale and letting boards.
  - d. Report back to Cabinet Member on progress made before the end of the calendar year.
  - e. The Community Development Service to continue to engage with residents.

**List of Appendices included:**

None

**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

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**Report title:**

Progress report in response to a petition asking the Council to improve the environment and security of the Hearsall area of 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 called for the City Council to improve the cleanliness and address environmental issues, which if addressed would subsequently improve the safety and security of the Hearsall area of the City. Officers reported on actions to be taken at a Cabinet Member meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014.
- 1.2 Further to that report, Cabinet Member requested that additional measures be implemented in the following streets: Broomfield Road, Kensington Road, Melbourne Road, Kingston Road, Bristol Road, Kirby Road, Farman Road, Latham Road, and Sovereign Road. These measures included:
  - a) A review of gating in entry ways by Officers from the Community Safety Team to establish the effectiveness of the existing gating and provide findings with which residents could consider the implementation of new self-help gating schemes.
  - b) The Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer Team (NEO) to implement the Care for Our Area/Hot Street project during the summer months in 16 specific streets in the Hearsall area of the City. The aim was to reduce the number of cases of fly-tipping and the number of wheelie bins stored/left on the pavement between collection days. This was to be accomplished through a dual track approach to targeted education for residents alongside enforcement where appropriate and necessary.
  - c) The Planning Enforcement Team to carry out a review of the 'for sale and to let' boards in Hearsall, and to report back on matters of concern including any abuse of deemed consent by letting and estate agents.
- 1.3 A meeting was held on 13th August 2014 which included representatives from Community Safety, Planning, Street Pride, Community Development Service, Environmental Control, Cllr Bally Singh and community members. Residents wanted to ensure the council understood their concerns and discuss the potential action for community involvement.

**2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 Following the Cabinet Member meeting, the area of Hearsall specified by the Cabinet Member was surveyed and additional streets were included in the initiatives for practical reasons. The projects were consequently focused on: Broomfield Place, Laytham Road, Shakleton Road, Melbourne Road, Farman Road, Kirby Road, Sovereign Road, Collingwood Road, Hawkins Road, Ludlow Road, Kingston Road, Centaur Road, Bristol Road, Broomfield Road, Kensington Road, and Beaudesert Road.
- 2.2 **Gating of Alley Ways.** A full review of gating in entry ways of the roads identified has been undertaken by the Community Safety Team, all of which are on private land and therefore cannot and do not fall under the Council's responsibility. However residents were offered advice and guidance on how to implement 'self- help/resident led gating

schemes' in their Community and have been issued with self-help gating scheme guidance.

Officers surveyed 153 entry ways in the 17 roads identified, of which 10 were ungated and being used as a cycle route and 2 are open public rights of ways. There were 17 gates missing and 17 gates in need of maintenance, the remaining 107 were in a good state of repair.

- 2.3 **Storage of Wheelie Bins on the Street and Fly Tipping.** Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (NEOs) surveyed all the roads mentioned in paragraph 2.1 and the alleyways that service these roads. As part of the Care for Our Area/Hot Streets Project, all households within the area were visited to explain what we were attempting to achieve. This has led to a significant drop in fly-tipping, and almost all of the bins which were previously stored on the street are now being stored in rear gardens or within the curtilage of the particular property. Relatively few alleyways were blocked by rubbish and we are currently working with the Probation Service to utilise the Community Payback scheme to clear these alleyways.
- 2.4 Officers will continue to monitor the storage of wheelie bins on the street and where persuasion has not resulted in residents storing their bins on their own property, enforcement action will be used. To date the use of our enforcement powers has not been required. NEOs are engaging with the residents on a regular basis and addressing any issues as they arise. Residents have also been encouraged to report incidents through Coventry Direct.
- 2.5 There is recognition that the Council will not be able to offer permanent dedicated support to this area. Therefore the NEO Team has been working with the Residents' group to equip these individuals with the skills and materials to monitor and deal with the influx of new residents or any other households that deviate from the required way of storing bins. The NEOs will however still be available to deal with difficult individuals.
- 2.6 **For sale / letting boards.** Following the previous Cabinet Member meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014, Officers from the Planning Enforcement Team met with petition representatives to discuss their concerns regarding the display of 'for sale / lettings' boards. Officers were provided with a list of 16 addresses where boards were potentially being displayed unlawfully within the Hearsall Area. Officers investigated each of the properties concerned and identified 7 displaying unauthorised signs. Officers contacted the estate agents concerned and the authorised signs have now all been removed. Officers have subsequently undertaken some limited monitoring of the area which has resulted in several further breaches being identified which have been quickly resolved. The City Council's Planning Enforcement Team has also explored whether it is possible to restrict the use of letting and for sale boards in the Hearsall area of the City through Part 4 'Areas of Special Control' of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, as suggested by petition representatives. Unfortunately, because this area does not have heritage status or specific buildings of note which are listed, it is the opinion of Officers that it would fail to meet the relevant tests to be declared 'An Area of Special Control' by the Secretary of State and consequently the Council cannot use this legislation to restrict the displays. However, Officers from Planning Enforcement will continue to respond and investigate specific complaints about the displaying of estate/letting agency signs and will take action where possible to remove

authorised displays. The effective reporting of such unauthorised displays has been discussed with petition representatives and improvements have been made to ensure the fast and efficient reporting of suspected breaches to allow Officers to effectively target resources within the Hearsall Area.

- 2.7 The Community Development Service has engaged with residents and can support them in organising community events such as litter picks. A Community Development Officer has attended resident association meetings and will continue to work proactively with residents.

## **2.8 Recommendations.**

- a) To continue the Care for Our Area/Hot Street project until the relevant alleyways have been cleared and the project reaches its conclusion.
- b) To continue to offer advice on 'gating schemes' where appropriate.
- c) To continue to respond to requests from residents concerning the unauthorised use of for sale and letting boards.
- d) Report back to Cabinet Member on progress made before the end of the calendar year.
- e) The Community Development Service to continue to engage with residents

## **3 Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 Officers from the Council have attended local resident group meetings and have been in regular contact with the lead petitioner.

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

### **4.1 Financial implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. All activities are financed from within existing budgets.

#### **Legal implications**

None

## **5 Other implications**

None

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

- 5.2 There are clear research findings that show that the local environmental quality in a person's living environment has a significant impact on their health and well-being. Residents in areas which have a low environmental quality often have an increased "fear of crime". This particular tool will contribute to the Council's key objectives to 'create an attractive, cleaner and greener city' and 'make communities safer together with the police, to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour'

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

- 5.4 Officers will continue to patrol the area for the duration of the initiative. Thereafter, Officers will respond to individual service requests from this area on a case by case basis.
- 5.5 **What is the impact on the organisation?**  
None
- 5.6 **Equalities / EIA**  
N/A
- 5.7 **Implications for (or impact on) the environment**  
See paragraph 5.2.
- 5.8 **Implications for partner organisations?**  
None

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