
Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

23rd July 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities– Councillor Townshend

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of People

Ward(s) affected:

St. Michael's

Title: Report in response to a petition regarding Street Drinking and drug taking in Hillfields

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

A petition containing 70 signatures was submitted to the City Council by Councillor Jim O'Boyle on 17th June 2015. The petition outlines residents' concerns in relation to street drinking and drug taking in the Hillfields area and of individuals harassing local residents and businesses. Additional reports of discarded needles and drugs paraphernalia has been found in locations across Hillfields.

This report provides a response to the petition and details action being taken to address the issues highlighted.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member is recommended to:-

1. Note the work of officers and partners to date and provide comments and/or additional recommendations for action to address the issues.
2. Acknowledge that officers have increased engagement with local businesses and community groups to continue to deliver action, monitor, and regularly review incidents related to street drinking and problematic individuals in the Village Square and surrounding area.
3. Request Police to continue to dedicate patrols to hotspot locations within the Hillfields area, responding swiftly to any issues raised or identified, and to exercise their powers to obtain identities and disperse individuals in groups that are likely to cause public nuisance and/or offending behaviour.

4. Request that all agencies ensure that problematic individuals and households are identified, challenged and provided with appropriate treatment and support to address issues, needs and change behaviour.
5. Request Council Officers to ensure that multi-agency case management through relevant forums should continue to monitor behaviour and effectiveness of interventions to support change and enforcement action taken where engagement is refused.
6. Note that as a result of an initiative brought about by the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities, and ratified by the Coventry Police and Crime Board, that there will be an intake of ten special constables for St Michaels Ward in September 2015. These officers will be tasked to assist in measures to combat street drinking, crime and associated problems in the area.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 – Hillfields Action Plan
Appendix 2 – WMP Tiered policy for street drinkers

Background papers:

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 regarding Street Drinking in Hillfields

1. Context (or background)

1.1 A petition containing 70 signatures was submitted to the City Council by Councillor Jim O'Boyle on 17th June 2015. The petition outlines residents' concerns in relation to street drinking and drug taking in the Hillfields area and of individuals harassing local residents and businesses. Additional reports of discarded needles and drugs paraphernalia has been found in locations across Hillfields.

1.2 There is an existing Hillfields plan that is operational to address matters around anti-social behaviour, this report will look to highlight actions already taken or planned to be taken as well as any subsequent measures identified as a result of the issue being revisited.

From reviewing reports received by partners it appears that the issue doesn't appear to be getting reported to agencies in numbers that would indicate the prevalence of the issue as felt by the community. West Midlands Police received 3 reports regarding street drinking in Hillfields from the start of 2015 up until Mid-June

1.3 Tackling public place crime and nuisance continues to be a priority for agencies operating in the Hillfields area and this is reflected in a dedicated Hillfields Community Safety improvement plan developed by officers and members of the Community in 2014. A copy of this plan with progress up until March 2015 can be found at **Appendix 1**.

The plan seeks to identify and react to locations and premises of concern in the area with to which resources and action are targeted. Contained within the plan are a number of measures intended to address such problematic behaviour, including street drinking.

1.4 Street drinking is also a priority for the City Centre and a significant focus for the work of a multi-agency Night Time Economy task group which was also established in 2014. This includes ;

- The management and enforcing of a City-wide Designated Place Protection Order (DPPO) currently in place in Coventry. This order makes it an offence if someone drinking alcohol does not dispose or hand the alcohol to a Police Officer when directed by them to do so. Whilst it does not make it a criminal offence to drink alcohol in a public place/space; the offence is committed when refusing to comply with an officer's instruction.
- The current signage relating to the DPPO has been reviewed to ensure more signage is provided to areas that now require such due to alcohol related issues. To improve awareness of this in Hillfields, Officers have arranged for additional signage to be located throughout Hillfields including in the village square and Homelessness service areas. Key areas identified throughout the City are also getting new DPPO signage, with funding from the PCC Community Safety grant. This is an operational matter that has been progressing before this petition was received.
- A defined process which exists for Police officers when dealing with street drinking and drinkers who continually choose to ignore the DPPO. It shows an incremental process from a verbal warning, to fixed penalty notice through to issuing of a summons to court. This process can be seen in **Appendix 2**.

- 1.5 The Village Square is subject to specific patrol plans by Police including a minimum of 3 patrols a day with each patrol lasting at least 15 minutes. The Village Square will also be included on the patrol plans for the Night Time Economy to ensure a greater overview throughout the day and evening.
- 1.6 The Police Inspector for North West Coventry,, has directed officers to ensure they proactively approach businesses and community groups and encourage them to formally report to Police when there are issues rather than assume Police will be aware. Police also to link in with Social Housing Landlords i.e. Whitefriars to ensure that any of their tenants identified as problematic will then be subject to challenge and enforcement where appropriate for breach of tenancy conditions through inappropriate conduct and behaviour. Additionally, Police licensing officers will continue to visit all off licences in the area to remind them of their responsibilities around serving problematic or intoxicated individuals
- 1.7 The disparity between the number of reports made to the Police in relation to street drinking and the public perception as reflected in the petition shows the need for awareness to be raised with the public about reporting issues as and when they occur. The community and local businesses will be reminded of correct reporting procedures and telephone numbers.

2 Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The Hillfields Action Plan will remain to be the operational document used. This will be updated with the additional actions as identified in operational discussions between partners to address street drinking and other matters that cause residents concern. Local case management forums will be the place where problematic individuals are discussed and actions decided to challenge and support individuals
- 2.2 There are opportunities to use and apply new civil tools and powers to address some of the issues should they continue. These include matters such as the congregation of groups above a certain number of people. Agencies could look to use powers such as Dispersal Orders or Public Space Protection Orders. The use of such orders would need to be defensible and as such we would need to be able to demonstrate the impact of such matters through reports received by agencies.
- 2.3 The apparent issue of under reporting of matters will be addressed by partners' proactively engaging and reminding individuals of the importance of reporting matters as and when they occur. Retrospectively agencies are now receiving reports about individuals and we are looking to target those identified.
- 2.4 In the new Coventry Drug Strategy, residents in deprived areas, such as Hillfields, are identified as a priority group. Pathways are already in place to refer alcohol users into local treatment agencies and there are no waiting times for accessing treatment. Alcohol workers from the Recovery Partnership will accompany Police or Community Safety Officers to jointly deliver assertive outreach to street drinkers as appropriate.

3 Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Working Actively To Change Hillfields (WATCH) has been central in the production of the petition received and therefore it is appropriate for agencies to look to primarily engage with them and take guidance with regards to any other identified businesses in the area. All businesses surrounding the Village Square will be visited and supported should they be

experiencing problems. We will ensure that WATCH and other key community partners are aware and able to influence the oversight and governance of the Hillfields action plan.

- 3.2 Referrals of suitably identified individuals and families continue to be made to the multi-agency local case management forum.
- 3.3 Officers continue to develop good working relationships with the residents and are engaging with many hard-to-reach groups and communities within the area.

4 Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 All actions outlined in this report are currently ongoing, including the additional DPPO signage which is being progressed and should be in place over the summer.
- 4.2 The local case management forum meets on a monthly basis and agrees measures, interventions, and enforcement action on a case by case basis.
- 4.3 Actions associated with these matters will be updated on the Hillfields Action Plan following comments and approval from Cabinet Member.

5 Comments from Executive Director of, Resources

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial costs as a result of the recommendations in this report.

The approximate total cost of the alcohol signage project across the City is estimated to be in the region of £10k. The funding for this will be met from the 2015-16 West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (WMPCC) Community Safety Grant.

5.2 Legal implications

None

6 Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)?

Crime and Disorder

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

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The Community Safety Officer(s) continues to monitor crime and disorder levels in the area.

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.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.4 Equalities / EIA

N/A

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The purpose of taking action is to address Street Drinking, in an attempt to improve the environment and wellbeing of the community.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The multi-agency action plan outlines the individual and collective commitments from agencies to respond to the issues in the petition.

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