

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services
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To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 14 January 2015

Subject: 14/00127 KCC Community Warden Service – Public Consultation Response

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet 28 January 2015

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary: This report provides a redesign proposal for the KCC Community Warden Service following thorough analysis and careful reflection on the feedback of a six week public consultation exercise. A preferred option is presented which will achieve a budget reduction in the region of £700k savings to the service.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to Cabinet, the preferred option for the future delivery of the KCC Community Warden Service as outlined in paragraph 8.2 of this report.

1. Introduction

1.1 In light of the significant financial challenges facing Kent County Council and the need to reduce the budget allocation to the KCC Community Warden Service as detailed in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) from 2015/16, a full service review has been completed. The management of the service have explored opportunities to redesign the KCC Community Warden Service with the aim of providing maximum value to the residents of Kent within budgetary constraints. A proposed option was subject to a public consultation exercise that was undertaken between 29 September and 9 November 2014.

1.2 The KCC Community Warden Service has, since 2002, been a recognised and valued service to the community, with the overall aim of the service being able to assist the people of Kent to live safely and independently in their neighbourhoods and communities.

1.3 The Service's core objectives are to:

- Promote community confidence and cohesion.
- Identify and assist in problem resolution.
- Act as “eyes and ears” for other agencies.
- Improve access to local authority services.
- Be a trusted friend for the community.

1.4 Management action, in the form of vacancy management, had to be taken in 2012 to absorb a 10% budget reduction to the KCC Community Warden Service. At the same time arrangements were put in place to make the service more flexible in deployment, to become more engaged with major strategic priorities such as Troubled Families; Predictive Policing; Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) case

management support; to increase its focused work with vulnerable individuals and to take on front line emergency response and recovery responsibilities.

1.5 Also during this period opportunities were taken to reduce management and support overhead costs and following a request to the Chief Constable, KCC Community Wardens have been accredited with formal powers associated with limited highways control and ASB.

1.6 Since 2012 the service has been operating with an average of 80 uniformed staff. There were 74 wardens, including uniformed warden supervisors, in post as of 1st December 2014. The 2012 service redesign has proved successful in terms of more efficient business support, matrix management, performance monitoring and budgetary control arrangements. The KCC Community Warden Service is now part of the recently formed Public Protection Unit in the Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate.

1.7 The KCC Community Warden Service activity system indicates that in the last 12 month period (September 2013 to August 2014) addressing crime prevention and ASB is the most prominent category of reported warden activity, making up 41% of the total activities. The next three categories are environment (i.e. fly tipping, highways issues etc.) 25%, vulnerable people (i.e. concern for welfare, person(s) at risk, bogus callers/rogue traders) 22% and youth (i.e. youth engagement, nuisance youths, concern for welfare) 7.3%.

1.8 The majority of these activities are usually carried out as part of and in support of strategic, county wide operations such as the successful KCC Trading Standards "Scam Busters" programme, the Kent Police Operation Nonagon (addressing rural crime) and Operation Themis (addressing ASB), the Predictive Policing Programme activity as well as the Troubled Families Programme, the County Council's safeguarding vulnerable people responsibilities and the County Council's category 1 responsibilities in the event of emergencies and civil contingencies.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 The background to the proposals contained in this report is that the MTFP included financial reductions for the KCC Community Warden Service from April 2015 of £1.28m which is approximately a 50% reduction in budget.

2.2 The Community Warden transformation project implemented during 2012 to deliver a 10% budget reduction laid the foundation for a major redesign of the service in order to deliver the MTFP budget implications from April 2015.

2.3 The preferred option detailed in this report will deliver a reduction in the region of £700k savings in the cost of delivering the KCC KCC Community Warden Service from April 2015.

3. Consultation

3.1 Following a deep-dive service review and the examination of a range of possible management actions, a draft proposal was produced and subjected to an extensive six week public consultation process, which has recently concluded with a large volume of feedback in terms of online and hardcopy consultation feedback,

many letters, emails and other types of correspondence. An external agency, Lake Market Research (Lake), was commissioned to analyse the responses and their feedback and a summary of all responses is attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 The final comprehensive executive report has been received from Lake and can be made available upon request. The key message from the public consultation was that 86% of respondents did not support the proposal to reduce the warden budget by £1.28m. Respondents also did not support the concept of community wardens covering wider geographic areas and wanted their local community focus to be maintained.

3.3 As well as the formal responses to the consultation, 10 e-mails and 19 letters were received from a wide range of responders, these can be found at Appendix 2.

3.4 Eight written petitions and 1 e-petition were received. Details of these can be found at Appendix 3.

3.5 The public consultation included feedback that a number of Parishes wanted to explore options for fully or partly funding a Community Warden in their area. As part of the redesign process, it is proposed that further discussions are held with Parishes individually and with the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) in order to develop commissioning arrangements, where appropriate, to increase the resources available to the service.

3.6 Also of note was a measure of support to recruit and train volunteers to support the KCC Community Warden Service and to work closely in individual Parishes. Discussions have taken place with Kent Police and other KCC services that utilise volunteers regarding this proposal and they have all confirmed their support for this measure and that they would assist KCC officers to develop the proposal.

3.7 As part of the consultation feedback, Kent District Chief Executives submitted a formal offer to take over the management and supervision of their local KCC Community Wardens and incorporate them within their district based community safety units. This option has been carefully considered within KCC and also discussed with county partners. It is felt that such an arrangement would only offer minimal cost savings in terms of the reduction in supervisory overheads and there would still be a requirement for KCC to retain some management commissioning ability and provide some business support arrangement which would incur cost. There would be complexities around maintaining service accreditation and identity aligned to the risk of the service being fragmented over 12 districts, with core local activity being lost. A more significant risk to the County Council is the potential operational loss of the ability to task wardens to engage in pan Kent operations and in times of emergency response such as severe weather, flooding and civil contingencies. Therefore, because of the above, it has been decided that this offer will not be pursued

3.8 However, it is intended, within the preferred service redesign, to explore with district authority colleagues where further support could be provided to district community safety units by the KCC Community Warden Service via the local tasking and coordination systems.

4. Redesign Proposal

4.1 Following careful and thorough reflection of the public consultation feedback and responses to the consultation, letters received and the e-petitions, the original service redesign in the consultation has been adjusted and put forward for consideration the option that the community warden uniformed service should be maintained close to its current level of 72 uniformed posts.

4.2 Also, given the many expressions of interest from parish councils within the consultation responses, the proposal includes, via the Kent Association of Local Councils and Parish Councils, to establish a cadre of volunteer community wardens during 2015/16 and to explore with Parish and District Councils the potential for assistance in resourcing community wardens.

4.3 This amended service redesign proposal will preserve as much community based front line delivery resource as possible and will maintain the essential “local knowledge element” in the KCC Community Warden Service (which 77% of responders indicated as the services greatest strength).

4.4 All other areas of expenditure will be reviewed in order to streamline business support arrangements, update procedures and reduce management overheads.

5. Service Redesign – Deployment

5.1 KCC Community Wardens have for many years been associated with and or been based in specific areas often associated with parish boundaries. Since 2012 more flexible deployment has been adopted as wardens vacancies have arisen with the aim of maintaining individual parish boundary cover but also responding to local district or pan Kent priorities. However, the importance of the close working relationship between community wardens and individual parishes and communities is recognised and was highlighted in the consultation feedback, therefore it is proposed to maintain these working relationships and there will be no suggestion of a centralisation of resources.

5.2 Parishes and communities that currently have a nominated community warden contact will continue to have a designated officer contact point. The resource allocation will mirror the current uniformed presence across the county which has been reduced since 2012 from 101 posts to 72 posts using vacancy management. It is therefore not proposed to reduce the uniformed presence to the level proposed in the public consultation proposal. KCC community wardens will be required to continue and build upon the flexible working arrangements that are currently in place and will only expand their boundaries to include other priority areas where resources allow and on demand. It is important to stress that wardens will continued to be based and work in Parish/community locations.

5.3 There are several resignations and retirement requests from warden staff pending so it is probable that the uniformed establishment of the service will be reduced to 70 posts.

5.4 The service will continue to work with KCC services, in conjunction with external partners, to identify those most vulnerable residents and individuals to ensure they receive priority attention from the KCC Community Wardens.

5.5 The service, in collaboration with KALC and Kent Police, will work closely with the voluntary sector, in particular volunteers who are currently associated with current KCC and police services, to recruit during 2015 /16, volunteers to support the KCC Community Warden Service to work closely with Parishes and local communities. Informal discussions to explore the possibility of establishing this and other types of parish level service provision have already commenced with Kent Police colleagues who manage the Kent Special Constabulary. If this option is approved a definitive model and an action plan will be developed and a further report will be prepared for consideration.

6. Service Redesign – Management, Supervisory and Business Support Arrangements

6.1 It is proposed to still implement the change to the supervisory role with the introduction of a uniformed Team Leader role, which will be very different to the current uniformed District Supervisor role as it would be much more operational in focus, with the role undertaking operational activity, having area responsibilities as well as a supervisory role. Each Team Leader will have 10 to 12 Wardens (depending upon the area), to deploy across their two districts, to work largely on KCC work-streams, mirroring the current situation but also enabling more flexible deployment to respond to KCC priority work-streams. A proportion of the Community Warden staff are currently available to accept tasking's from District based Community Safety Units and it is proposed to review and refresh this working arrangement.

6.2 Due to the reduction in uniformed establishment, there would no longer be a requirement to have 3 administrative officers based across Kent. It is recommended that all 3 posts are deleted and that a single business support officer, supported by an apprentice, is based centrally to cover all administration for the service. Where necessary in times of sickness or annual leave the Community Safety Unit support staff can assist. Storage for all unit equipment (emergency response etc.) would also be required and should be located and managed centrally by the business support officer. The business support officer would be responsible for completing a wide range of tasks, including financial returns, ordering supplies/uniforms, dealing with Trading Standards reports and collating diary sheets, for all teams as well as routine administrative support work.

7. Other Resources

7.1 The service would retain the 12 vehicles currently held, although these will be replaced with vans with a larger seating capacity to allow for teams to attend incidents, and respond to local tasks, without the need for casual user mileage being claimed, which will present a considerable saving for the organisation.

7.2 Two of the vehicles are larger 4x4 vehicles that are fully equipped to respond to emergencies across the county and are able to reach areas impassable with a regular vehicle in times of flooding or snow.

8. Options

8.1 There is an option to do nothing. However, this option will not deliver the MTFP savings required from the service to contribute towards the significant savings that KCC has to accommodate over the next few years.

8.2 The preferred option is to maintain the current reduced establishment. Using vacancy management the uniformed establishment would be reduced to 70, which is a reduction of 31 posts from the original establishment. This could deliver savings in the region of £700k savings in a full year. As vacancies are currently unevenly spread across the county some service redesign would still be necessary to balance service delivery. Integral to this option, work would commence over the next 12 months to explore the potential of developing local service provision arrangements with Kent Police and also to recruit volunteer wardens to support the service at a Parish level. Formal exploratory discussions would also commence with interested Parish Councils (supported by KALC) and District Councils to determine the feasibility of funding income to supplement resources. Discussions would also take place with districts to determine if community wardens could increase their support to the work of local community safety units by accepting appropriate additional operational duties from this source.

8.3 The service could use vacancy management to reduce numbers to the level determined by budget availability over a longer period. This would deliver savings over a longer time but as vacancies are likely to arise unevenly across the county some service redesign would still be necessary to balance service delivery and maintain operational cover.

9. Recommendations:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to Cabinet, the preferred option for the future delivery of the KCC Community Warden Service as outlined in paragraph 8.2 of this report.

10. Background Documents

Public Consultation Executive Report – produced by Lake

11. Contact details

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