

From: **Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services**
Barbara Cooper – Corporate Director Growth, Environment & Transport

To: **Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 17 November 2016**

Subject: **Volunteer Support Warden Scheme – Review of the Pilot and Plans for a Full Scheme**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary: This report sets out the result of piloting a Volunteer Support Warden Scheme as part of the Kent Community Warden Service, in seven areas across Kent. It describes the background to the pilot, the methodology of the review as well as the successes and lessons learnt. It also asks the Cabinet Committee to note the intention to offer a full Scheme to all local councils from April 2017, with costs shared between participating local councils and KCC.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the progress of the pilot scheme, and the intention to offer local councils throughout Kent the opportunity to participate in the Volunteer Warden Scheme.

1. Introduction

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

1.2 Its 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.

1.3 As part of Kent County Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), proposals to significantly change the KCWS were subject to a public consultation in November 2014. The results of the public consultation demonstrated significant public and Parish Council support for the service and a number of respondents to the consultation, notably from parish

councils, suggested that the KCWS could be enhanced by the addition of volunteers.

- 1.4 To this end, **a pilot project was set up to explore the feasibility of a Volunteer Support Warden service** and to assess the benefits and costs of such a scheme, before exploring a fuller roll out of such a scheme.
- 1.5 A Steering Group was set up, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Services and involving KCC officers and representatives from the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC). Kent Police were also invited to participate in view of the close working relationship between the Community Wardens and Kent Police.

2. Volunteer Support Warden Pilot Scheme

- 2.1 Developed in partnership with KALC, the pilot involved 11 parishes and one Town Council, reflecting a wide range of area characteristics. The pilot has been funded jointly by KCC and the Kent Community Safety Partnership using the grant provided to the partnership by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 2.2 Following a comprehensive advertising and recruitment campaign throughout January and February 2016 involving the production of volunteer posters, leaflets, social media advertising, promotion on Parish Council websites and at parish meetings in the chosen pilot areas, 18 applications for volunteer wardens were received.
- 2.3 From this initial pool of candidates, eight individuals were selected and on completion of their training, deployed across five parish and two town council areas. Unfortunately following deployment, two of the candidates experienced a change in their personal circumstances meaning that they were no longer able to volunteer.

The role of the Volunteer Support Warden (VSW)

- 2.4 As defined by the Steering Group, **the role of the Volunteer Support Warden (VSW) is to work alongside Community Wardens and supplement their work** by getting to know their local community, and thereby enhancing the service to residents and creating more resilient neighbourhoods.
- 2.5 As such, in the pilot, VSWs were asked to identify issues and talk to residents feeding back and liaising with organisations including, Trading Standards, the Police, Neighbourhood Watch, Victim Support and Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS). Additionally, a key part of their role was to engage with local groups, providing advice on topical issues and provide local residents with crime prevention materials and advice. Each volunteer was expected to give at least five hours per week, but there was no formal requirement or commitment.

3. Review of the Pilot

- 3.1 During the “analyse” phase of the project’s commissioning cycle, a logic model was developed to ensure that appropriate review criteria were set and that information was collected against those criteria. This model involved

determining the objectives of the VSW scheme, its inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and expected impact on KCC's strategic priority "*Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life*". The detailed model used is at Appendix A.

- 3.2 The success criteria for the scheme are that each VSW has added value to the KCWS in the area they serve and is considered by their local council to be providing a valuable service. Details of the evidence collected are in Appendix B.
- 3.3 During the pilot, the remaining six VSWs have made a significant number of local contacts and have contributed to local events in their communities. They have taken a number of initiatives; examples include:-
- Signposting to relevant agencies relating to boundary dispute,
 - Advising on issues relating to anti-social behaviour and graffiti;
 - Supporting a project to remove overgrown foliage in a local cemetery;
 - Highlighting problem of dog fouling within the community and working with the parish council to educate local residents;
 - Assisting Speedwatch volunteers in a variety of contexts, including demonstrations at a village fete and a car rally.
 - Attending to support local events including beacon lighting, Queen's birthday celebrations and picnic in the park; and
 - Making links for residents and local groups with Trading Standards, parenting support group, and local Neighbourhood Watch schemes.
- 3.4 The evidence collected suggests that the scheme has achieved the expected benefits of both enhancing the KCWS, helping people to enjoy a good quality of life and assisting Kent's communities to be resilient and provide a safe and strong environment.
- 3.5 A risk register was maintained throughout the project as there were perceived risks that the lack of powers could affect their effectiveness and that the public would expect VSWs to be able to deal with the full range of issues. These risks have not materialised, as the communication of the VSW role was clear and understood by the target communities.

4. Lessons learnt

- 4.1 The first lesson learnt was that it is necessary to allow a longer lead in time and wider publicity to attract volunteers than it is for recruiting paid staff. Additionally, in order to successfully recruit volunteers, more targeted promotion with the public was needed particularly with the support of the local councils in the area.
- 4.2 The pilot identified that **management and support of the VSWs requires dedicated resources**. During the pilot, this was undertaken by existing KCWS Team Leaders and administrative staff. However, following reductions to the supervisory and business support functions necessitated by current financial pressures, there is insufficient capacity to undertake this for a full

scheme. This burden can be reduced through the use of an IT based booking on and off facility and built-in escalation process. At £50 per VSW, the cost of this is more cost effective than a dedicated resource. The existing out of hours supervision support could then provide any further support needed.

- 4.3 The review also showed that **supporting volunteers whilst resource intensive is essential if morale, enthusiasm and commitment are to be maintained**. In part this can be done through normal supervision but other volunteer schemes have shown that there is a particular need to provide access to support over and above normal supervision. The successful Countryside Access Wardens scheme is a good example of how this can be implemented and discussions have taken place to share this resource across Public Protection.
- 4.4 Even when recruited, it is not certain that volunteers will be capable and willing to take up the role. The lesson learnt from this is that it **may be prudent to stage the training and the investment in equipment** for each VSW, allowing them a period of time to undertake the role before providing them with the full uniform and training. This approach will be used when the Scheme is fully rolled out.
- 4.5 Finally, during the pilot, VSWs were recruited and deployed in the area in which they lived – an arrangement which worked well for some but for others, had its challenges. For instance, VSW's who worked in their community could potentially be drawn into issues beyond their remit. It is therefore important that **the location of each VSW deployment is considered on a case by case basis** moving forward.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 For the period of the pilot, the total direct costs for all the VSWs amounted to £5,000. Of this, £3,768 of the expenditure was grant funded by the KCSP, with the remaining amount absorbed by the existing Community Warden budget. Supervision, administration and training have been provided by existing staff and partners.
- 5.2 Whilst such support has been possible for the purpose of a short term pilot, if the pilot is to be rolled out, a more sustainable funding arrangement is required. Extensive discussions have been held with KALC in order to achieve a formula for funding a full Scheme that also offers a value for money proposition to local councils.
- 5.3 The **principles of the proposed finance arrangements** are as follows:-
- Participating local councils will bear the costs directly linked to the recruitment and deployment of a VSW in their parish (the “running costs”).
 - KCC will bear the management and other overhead costs of operating the scheme (the “fixed costs”).
 - Costs to local councils will be set annually and will not be altered in year.
 - KCC will bear any reasonable, unforeseen costs relating to uniform, equipment or training and will manage the risks associated with this

commitment by managing both the size of the Scheme and the timing of recruitment.

- Local Councils must agree to participate in the Scheme for a minimum of two years.
- 5.4 To ensure financial viability of the scheme, it is proposed that a minimum number of 12 participating parishes and a maximum number of 24 will be set for 2017/18. If less than 12 parishes agree to participate the Scheme will not be cost effective or financially viable and therefore will come to an end in 2017/18.
- 5.5 Some of the costs will recur annually (e.g. expenses) while others will only occur at the time of recruitment (e.g. uniform). This mixture of fixed and recurring cost means that the cost in the first year will be higher than the following years. The costs will be as follows:-
- Direct costs to be borne by each participating local council (or cooperating local councils who are seeking to share a VSW and associated costs) - £1,075 per VSW in year 1 and £585 per continuing VSW in year 2.
 - Fixed costs associated with the scheme – approximately £15,000 per annum to be borne by KCC.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications for this proposal.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 There are no equalities implications in this proposal.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The pilot VSW Scheme has demonstrated enthusiasm and support from the participating local councils. Furthermore, the VSW's have worked effectively with the KCWS to enhance the benefits it provides. The addition of VSW's supports KCC's strategic priorities. It is therefore intended to explore a full Scheme in conjunction with Local Councils and, subject to the appropriate level of interest and commitment by Local Councils, to implement a full Scheme.

9. Recommendation(s)

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the progress of the pilot scheme, and the intention to offer local councils throughout Kent the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the cost of the Volunteer Warden Scheme.

9. Background Documents

Appendix A: Logic Model

Appendix B: VSW Pilot Review

10. Contact details

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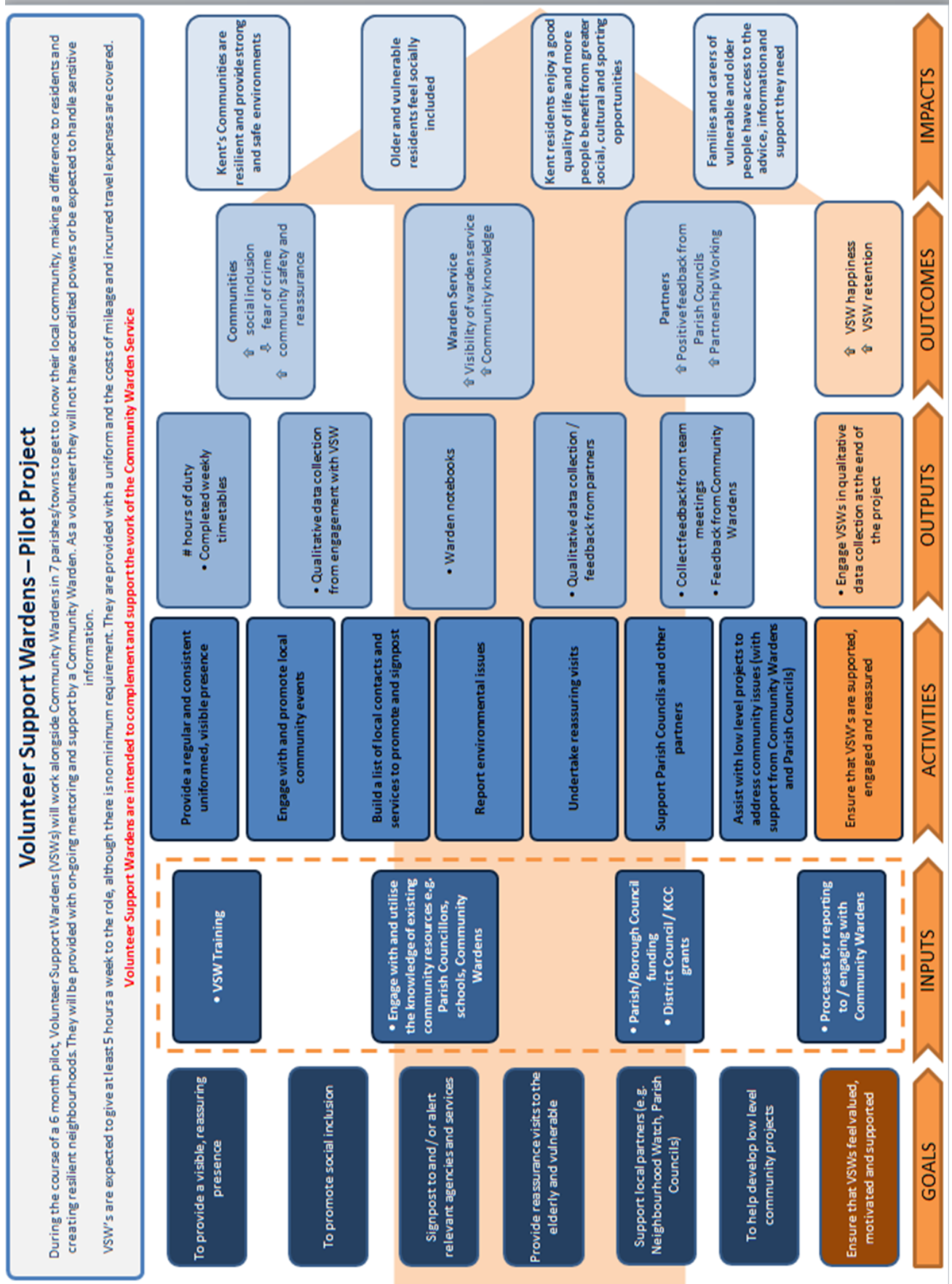
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Appendix A



Appendix B

VSW Pilot review

The logic model was used to identify the desired outputs from the VSW Scheme that would impact positively on the Community Warden service as a whole and would support KCC's strategic outcome "Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life". The model was also used to identify whether the benefits to parishes were such that they were likely to see value for money in contributing to the ongoing cost of the Scheme.

Desired outputs	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and consistent uniformed visible presence • Visits to local people • Engagement with local community • Promoting and signposting, using list of local contacts • Report issue of concern • project involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most, but not all, VSW's have provided an average minimum of 5 hours uniformed presence each week • Networking with local residential home & youth club • Strong links with Parish Clerks • Signposting to relevant agencies relating to boundary dispute • Advising on ASB • Advising on graffiti • Involved in project to remove overgrown foliage in cemetery • Highlighting problem of dog poo and educating local residents (spraying with coloured chalk) • Designing leaflet for families dissuading them from feeding bread to wildlife • Early plans to install skate park; part of a multi-agency team on issues around ASB • Attended local primary School • Assisting with Speedwatch volunteers including demonstrations at village fete and car rally • School road safety presentations • Attended local events including beacon lighting, Queen's birthday celebrations and picnic in the park • Attended Residents Association AGM • Visited dementia café • Made links with Trading standards, Speedwatch, Breastfeeding support group, NHW

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VSW concerns are being raised and addressed • Each VSW is happy in role and wants to remain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All VSWs have had regular contact with supervisors • 1 VSW wanted more independence in the role • 6 current VSWs happy to remain (although 1 has applied to be a Community Warden)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that VSW visits have provided reassurance • Evidence that Parishes feel supported by VSWs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish councils all report contact with VSW • Most VSW's have built constructive relationships with Parish Clerks • Parish councils are aware of the community links and activities listed above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound working relationships with Community Wardens 	<p>All 7 worked well with CWs There was some initial concern by some CWs as the pilot followed a period of CW service re-alignment but these concerns have passed. All VSWs attend Community Warden team meetings</p>

Lessons learned

- It is necessary to allow a much longer lead time and much wider publicity to attract volunteers than it is for recruiting paid staff.
- Even when recruited it is not certain that volunteers will actually be able and willing to take up the role. It may be better not to fully invest at the outset by buying all necessary uniform and giving all the training before their initial deployment. Instead it may be better to provide them with basic uniform and initial basic training, and then to allow them a period of time to undertake the role (rather like probation for a paid member of staff) before providing them with full uniform and training.
- Management and support was undertaken by existing Community Warden Service supervisors and administrative staff. VSWs (who will often work outside “office hours”) must inform supervisors when and where they are working and have access to supervision when required. There is a need for a log on and off facility and then the existing out of hours supervision support will then provide any further support needed.
- Supporting volunteers is a resource intensive activity but is essential if their morale and commitment is to be maintained. In part this can be done through normal supervision but other volunteer schemes have shown that there is a particular need to provide access to support over and above normal supervision.

- It is important to explain fully during the recruitment and training period the nature of the commitment. Volunteers cannot be directed to the same degree as paid staff but volunteers must understand fully that they must give a certain level of commitment.
- Deploying VSWs in the area they live in sometimes led to VSWs using their role to pursue personal agendas. However, the attraction of the role for some was being able to work locally. This point must be carefully considered in the recruitment and training process.