

From: Mike Hill, KCC Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport.

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 28 June 2023

Subject: Review of the Kent Community Warden Service

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Past pathway of paper: N/A

Future pathway of paper: The post consultation analysis will return to a future Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee for decision by Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Summary: The Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) was established in 2002. One of its original aims was to form a key part of the County Council's response to its statutory responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006)¹. The budget for 2022/23 for the service was £2.4m; comprising mostly front-line staffing costs.

In February 2023, in order to achieve a balanced budget for 2023/24, Members approved the proposal to reduce the net budget for Community Wardens by £1m over two years.

This report sets out proposals for a public consultation on potential future service models to achieve the planned savings. It is expected that the public consultation will launch on 12 July and run for 12 weeks.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and comment on the public consultation proposals alongside an updated geographical allocation policy, to help identify where wardens will be placed.

1. Background

- 1.1 On the 9 February 2023, Members of KCC approved the Council's planned budget for 2023-24. In order to achieve a balanced budget the Community Wardens Service budget has been reduced by £1m to be delivered over two years.
- 1.2 A public consultation is planned to start on 12 July on how this reduction may be achieved.

¹ Under Section 6 of the 1998 Act, KCC must work with the other responsible authorities in the local government area to tackle local crime and disorder. Under Section 17 of this Act, KCC must consider crime and disorder implications for all their functions and decisions.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Community Warden service was first established in 2002, with the main aim of forming a key part of the Council's response to its statutory responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006).
- 2.2 The service's remit has evolved and expanded from the initial crime and disorder focus and the service now also contributes to KCC's duties under the Care Act 2014. Under Section 1 of this Act, KCC must promote individual wellbeing, and under Section 2, KCC must prevent needs for care and support. Wardens contribute to these duties by having knowledge of the communities they serve and being able to connect residents to what will promote their wellbeing or prevent care and support needs. This could be financial support, housing, information and advice, carers support, social connections, and activities.
- 2.3 Currently, the service is structured with 70 Wardens (including six Team Leaders); two Area Managers; one Volunteer and Apprenticeship Scheme Manager; and one Business Coordinator. The service's £2.4 million budget is mostly accounted for through these staffing costs. The remaining £135k of this budget is utilised for uniforms, equipment, training, materials, vehicles, and travel expenses.
- 2.4 There are six teams covering two districts each. The service operates with wardens assigned to a particular area. These areas are villages, parishes, towns and suburbs. However, the service also flexibly responds to needs beyond this, allowing for coverage of most of the county.

3. Development of proposals

- 3.1 Future delivery options have been shaped by feedback from staff, partners and service users.
- 3.2 Common themes from across the feedback gathered include:
 - A large majority view that the service's objectives and remit is right. (That wardens' broad remit and the autonomy of wardens was a strength.) This is further supported by the outcomes from the service user survey, along with the reasons given for wardens providing support, spanning all four of the service's objectives, showing residents use and value the broad remit of the service.
 - A large majority view that wardens should continue to be based within communities. (The ability to respond flexibly is a strength of the service.)
 - A large majority view that there should be a warden presence in all districts.
 - The most often selected criteria to use in identifying where a warden should be based were deprivation and elderly populations, with barriers to accessing services, low life satisfaction and rural areas closely following.
- 3.3 The volunteering aspect of the service has also been considered. Attracting and retaining volunteers is resource intensive. KCWS teams work closely with local groups of volunteers who may be from an existing community group or organisation. These informal arrangements are working effectively and are likely to be more sustainable than a specific service hosted scheme should KCWS have smaller teams, a smaller footprint and less resources.

4. Review of KCWS – Proposals

- 4.1 The KCWS had a budget of approximately £2.4m (2022/23). As the majority of the budget is staffing costs, there will need to be staff reductions to achieve the proposed savings.
- 4.2 Drawing on the staff, partner and service user feedback the proposed operating model would retain:
- the service's wide remit.
 - the community based proactive nature of the service.
 - a presence in all 12 of Kent's districts.
- 4.3 **Proposed operating model: Minimum service level across the county with more warden presence in areas of highest need** – Considering the above, it is proposed that the service would continue with six teams, covering two districts each. There would be a minimum of three Wardens and one Team Leader in each team, with the remaining wardens allocated based on need (see 4.6).
- 4.4 All Wardens would have an area in which they are based (identified by need) but these areas would be larger than many of the current deployments/areas covered, and with the expectation that Wardens would work more flexibly, responding outside of these areas when the need arises. This retains the community-based approach and presence in all districts so that the service can maintain local knowledge, links with Community Safety Units (CSUs) and community groups, take referrals and respond at times of crisis across all districts. It would also allow districts with greater levels of need to receive a greater level of support based on criteria suggested by stakeholders.
- 4.5 **Alternatives considered and rejected:**
- 4.5.1 Reactive** - A centrally managed service with no community presence, responding to referrals only, would allow the service to provide support across as large a geographical footprint as possible with the staff available. However, the strength of the KCWS lies in its community presence and the ability to understand community need by operating within the community. A reactive operating model is therefore not recommended.
- 4.5.2 Simple and equal distribution across teams** - Wardens would be split into equal teams and distributed evenly across all 12 districts. This model is not recommended as pre-consultation responses identified key criteria to use when placing Wardens which may identify some districts have a higher local need which would benefit from higher Warden numbers and coverage than other districts.
- 4.5.3 High need ward coverage only** - Using data to identify areas of need for Wardens to be based would result in the majority of the service being focused in east Kent. This model is not recommended as pre-consultation responses identified support for retaining a level of coverage in all districts. This model would mean not all districts would benefit from the services contribution to adult social care and public health outcomes and would also restrict the ability of the service to respond in times of crisis or emergencies across the whole county.

- 4.6 **Geographical Allocation Policy (GAP)** - If the proposal for the new operating model is supported and adopted post consultation, then it will necessitate a geographical allocation policy to identify which communities would have a Warden allocated and this will be part of the public consultation. The policy would be used to identify the areas to be covered under the proposed operating model, i.e., a minimum number per district (areas of highest need), with further Wardens placed according to need relative to the whole county.
- 4.7 The proposed policy will utilise data / indicators of need, alongside consideration of:
- Changes to public transport and community buildings (which may highlight areas of greater isolation)
 - Conversations with Adult Social Care (inc. impact of new locality model)
 - Kent Police’s new neighbourhood policing model
 - Areas of high crime for which warden placements are not appropriate
 - Areas already well supported by services whose remit overlaps with KCWS
 - Conversations with district and borough councils and local CSUs
 - Conversations with Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)
 - Feedback from the consultation process

5. Consultation - Next steps

- 5.1 An extensive consultation over 12 weeks is required to minimise risks of challenge and comply with legal and consultation advice. Key timings and milestones for the 12-week public consultation are shown below.

Activity	Key dates
GEDC Cabinet Committee	28 June
Public consultation	12 July - 3 October
Data input and analysis of responses. Draft and finalise recommendations in Cabinet Committee report and update EqIA.	October/November
Trade Union and Staff briefing	December
Report (consultation outcome) to GEDC Cabinet Committee	January 2024
Cabinet Member decision	January 2024

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 In order to achieve a balanced budget, it is proposed to reduce the Community Wardens Service base budget by £1m net.
- 6.2 Under these proposals, there would be redundancy and potentially pension costs which will need to be considered to ensure the full planned savings target is achieved.
- 6.3 The proposal above delivers £1.11m of gross savings in a timescale required which accounts for consultation and governance requirements. This timescale assumes the gross £1.11m saving will commence at the start of 2024/25. The £500k saving in 2023/24 will not be fully delivered as this would have required implementation of the

new structure from October 2023. However, current vacancies are being held which allows a significant proportion of this year's savings target to be met.

- 6.4 The £1.11m gross saving from 24/25 will be offset, in the short term, by both redundancy costs and pension obligations. These are not known at this current time as the public consultation, and then the staff consultation process, have not yet been undertaken. Due to the age/length of service profile of this staffing cohort, these costs could be significant.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 KCWS was set up as part of the County Council's response to the statutory responsibilities under the **Crime and Disorder Act 1998** (amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006). Section 6 of the 1998 Act requires the responsible authorities (commonly referred to collectively as a Community Safety Partnership (CSP)) in a local government area to work together in formulating and implementing strategies to tackle local crime and disorder in the area. Additionally, [Section 17](#) places a duty on local authorities to consider crime and disorder implications for all their functions and decisions.

- 7.2 Under the **Care Act 2014** KCWS's broader role in communities contributes to delivering KCC's duties under [Section 1 Promoting individual well-being](#) (which places the general duty on a local authority to promote individual well-being), and [Section 2 Preventing needs for care and support](#) which states that a local authority must have regard to;

2 a - the importance of identifying services, facilities and resources already available in the authority's area and the extent to which the authority could involve or make use of them in performing that duty.

2 b – the importance of identifying adults in the authority's area with needs for care and support which are not being met (by the authority or otherwise).

- 7.3 KCWS also supports Trading Standards in relation to potential or actual scam victims contributing to KCC's duties under [Section 42 - Enquiry by local authority \(inc. financial abuse\)](#).
- 7.4 Legal advice and recommendations from KCC General Counsel and the Strategic Lead for Consultations have been taken into consideration when planning the public consultation timeframes.

8. Equality Implications

- 8.1 Four groups - the elderly, females, people with a disability or long-term impairment, and those with carer's responsibilities - have been identified as being at risk of being more impacted by these changes as they represent the majority of the Wardens' current service users.
- 8.2 The equalities implications for the various options are expected to be moderate to significant. An EqIA has been undertaken to inform the proposal and will be available

during the public consultation. Feedback will be sought to assist further reviews and updates of the EQIA.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 KCWS proactively supports the work of:

- Trading Standards by engaging on the service behalf supporting scam victims.
- Adult Social Care and Health through welfare visits and engagement with hard-to-reach residents.
- Public Health by supporting the Positive Wellbeing model which addresses wider determinants of health such as loneliness and social isolation.
- Emergency Planning; as part of the Council's response to emergency situations such as flooding and especially during the Covid 19 pandemic.

10. Governance

10.1 Stephanie Holt-Castle, Director of Growth and Communities, to inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation.

11. Conclusions

11.1 In order to deliver a balanced budget, the Community Wardens Service base budget is to be reduced by £1m over two-years.

11.2 Proposals to take to public consultation have been developed utilising pre-consultation feedback gained from staff, key partners and service users.

11.3 The public consultation is due to launch on 12 July, running for 12 weeks until 3 October. The aim is to return to a GEDCCC in January 2024 with the outcomes of the public consultation and resulting recommendations.

12. Recommendation(s):

12.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and comment on the public consultation proposals, alongside an updated geographical allocation policy, to help identify where wardens will be placed.

13. Appendices

Appendix A: Proposed data for use in geographical allocation of wardens

14. Contact details

Report Author: Shafick Peerbux Head of Community Safety, Public Protection Service 03000 413431 shafick.peerbux@kent.gov.uk	Relevant Director: Stephanie Holt-Castle Director of Growth and Communities 03000 412064 stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk
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