

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

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 11 March 2016

Decision No: N/A

Subject: **Community Warden Service Transformation update**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary: This report provides an update on the transformation of the Community Warden Service following the public consultation in November 2014 and subsequent budget reduction of £700k in 2015/16 as indicated in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and outlines the development of a Volunteer Support Warden pilot scheme.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the transformation of the Community Wardens' Service following the public consultation and the savings contribution made to the MTFP.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Kent Community Warden Service 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), a public consultation on proposed changes to the Community Wardens Service was conducted in November 2014 with a view to making the proposed savings (£1.28m) in the 2015/16 fiscal year.

- 1.4 The results of the public consultation demonstrated significant public and Parish Council support for the service. The consultation responses placed significant emphasis on a number of key messages, not least the importance of their role being community based.
- 1.5 Following the public consultation, in January 2015, Cabinet agreed upon a service redesign of the Community Warden Service, retaining an establishment of 70 uniformed staff that continued to be firmly community based and with a revised savings target of £700k.
- 1.6 The purpose of this paper is to provide Cabinet Committee Members with an update on the resulting transformation process and to outline the developments planned for the service in the coming financial year.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The background to the Community Wardens Service transformation outlined in this report is the significant financial challenge facing KCC as outlined in the MTFP. The report highlights the £700k saving achieved towards the MTFP in 2015/16 through the transformation process with a further £100k saving agreed for 2016/17.

3. Service Redesign and Transformation

- 3.1 The response to November 2014 public consultation was to redesign and transform the KCC Community Warden Service, preserving as much community-based front line delivery resource as possible, with all other expenditure being reviewed. Focus areas included streamlining business support arrangements, updating procedures and reducing management overheads. As articulated in the results of the consultation, a key factor in the service redesign was the importance of ensuring that the Community Wardens retained their ties to the communities they served whilst building upon working relationships with District/Borough Community Safety Units (CSU).

Service Structural Changes

- 3.2 There has been a considerable reduction in management, supervisory and business support for the Community Wardens Service in order to preserve the frontline. The service is now overseen by a single Unit Manager supported operationally by two Area Managers. Each Area Manager has the responsibility for six districts. The West Kent area includes Dartford, Gravesham, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells. The East Kent area includes Ashford, Swale, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover and Shepway.
- 3.3 In terms of streamlining the business support; due to the changes to areas and reduction in numbers, there was no longer the requirement to have three separate administrative area offices across Kent. The business support

arrangements have therefore been streamlined into one central office managed by a single Business Support Coordinator and supported by the integrated Community Safety Unit where necessary.

- 3.4 The number of frontline supervisory roles has been reduced from 12 to 6. The new uniformed Team Leader role is much more operational in focus, accepting taskings and having area responsibilities as well as a supervisory function. Each Team Leader currently has up to a maximum of 12 Wardens (depending upon the area), to deploy across their two districts, to deliver KCC obligations or priorities, some of which are statutory including enabling more flexible deployment to work closer with the district-based Community Safety Units and working closely with the Kent Resilience Team to respond to emergencies as required. These latter two functions are fundamental in meeting KCC's statutory responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and obligations as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- 3.5 The previous uncertainty over the future of the service combined with impact of the above changes left a significant imbalance in terms of countywide community warden coverage, specifically a deficit in the West Kent area as job opportunities appeared more readily available here. In order to address this imbalance there have been a number of personnel changes as well as two separate recruitment drives to boost numbers in that part of the county. Nevertheless there are still vacancies particularly in the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells area which the service will look to address in the next recruitment campaign.

Review of Deployment Areas

- 3.6 KCC Community Wardens have for many years been based in specific areas often associated with parish boundaries and the importance of retaining these community ties emerged as a key requirement from the public consultation. It was therefore agreed by KCC Cabinet that those parishes/communities that had a nominated community warden contact would continue to have a designated officer contact point moving forward.
- 3.7 Since 2012 the Community Wardens Service had been operating approximately a 20% vacancy management policy due to the budgetary challenges it faced. This policy had resulted in more flexible deployment being employed within the service in order to meet demands of the communities it served. The transformation of the service has seen this flexible approach to deployment adopted more systematically and formally in consultation with affected parishes (approximately 40) to ensure that there has been little or no detrimental effect upon the service that the residents of those communities receive.
- 3.8 Over the last year, KCC community wardens have been required to continue and build upon these flexible working arrangements and to expand their boundaries to include other priority areas where resources allow, working closely with District/Borough Community Safety Units. The new team leader role has been vital in developing these local relationships and promoting an understanding of the role of the community warden.

- 3.9 It is important to stress that wardens have and will continue to be based and work in parish/community locations and that they form just one part of a multi-agency response in tackling crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour across Kent.

Intelligence Led Tasking

- 3.10 KCC Public Protection has been developing an intelligence led approach to commissioning with the formal process commencing in September 2015. Although still in its infancy, the Tasking and Commissioning Board (TCB) allows for the allocation of work based upon commissioning principles. The benefits of this process can already be seen with Community Wardens working much more closely with Trading Standards, other KCC Services and partners to identify and support vulnerable individuals to live safely and independently in their communities. The best example of this service integration is the 'Stop the Scammers' joint working between Trading Standards, the Intelligence Team in KCC Public Protection and the Community Wardens which has received very high profile media coverage including national television coverage and awards for the service.
- 3.11 Over the coming year, the Community Wardens Service will be exploring the use of technology to further facilitate the intelligence led process and aid the tasking process.
- 3.12 In addition to the above, KCC Public Protection and the Community Wardens Service recognise the impact of its work across the wider KCC agenda and have been working closer with the KCC Strategic Commissioning Manager in Social Care, Health and Wellbeing as part of a number of pilots exploring the use of 'Community Connectors'. The 'community connector' pilots are seeking to address the issue of social isolation and loneliness amongst older and vulnerable people in the community with the added benefit of reducing demand on some of our high end, high cost services such as adult social care. There is currently a year-long pilot with the Community Warden in Wye which is due to be concluded at the end on March 2016. A report to the relevant Divisional Management Teams will follow the completion of the independent evaluation of these pilots.

4. Development of Volunteer Support Warden Pilot Scheme

- 4.1 The public consultation prompted proposals for a volunteer wardens scheme, particularly from parish councils. Some parishes also stated that they would be willing to engage further in developing this model. Officers were asked to pursue the suggestion.
- 4.2 Initial discussions were held with representatives of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC), to which over 90% of parish councils in Kent belong. Those discussions demonstrated a clear desire by KALC to work in partnership with KCC to develop a scheme to use volunteers to complement and support the Community Warden Service. Accordingly a Steering Group was set up, led by the KCC Cabinet Member for Community Services and involving KCC and KALC officers. Kent Police were also invited to participate in view of the close

working relationship between the Community Wardens and the Police. It was decided to start by piloting the concept of volunteers within the community warden service and, if that proved viable, to look to expand the scheme across the County.

The role of Volunteer Support Wardens

- 4.3 The Scheme will provide volunteers to work alongside Community Wardens and to supplement the work they do by getting to know their local community, enhancing the service to residents and creating resilient neighbourhoods. Volunteer Support Wardens (VSW) will identify issues and feed back to organisations including Trading Standards and the Police. They will talk to local residents and liaise with organisations including Neighbourhood Watch, Victim Support and fire services. They will engage with local groups and provide advice on topical issues. They will provide local residents with crime prevention materials and advice to reduce their fear of crime. VSW's, unlike Community Wardens, will not be given any accredited powers by the Chief Constable and will therefore not be expected to handle sensitive information or to directly tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour.
- 4.4 In summary, they will complement rather than replace the work of Community Wardens by acting as the eyes and ears of their area, communicating with their local community and feeding back to Community Wardens and other agencies. The role has the full support of Kent Police and KALC. It will be expected that each volunteer is willing to give at least 5 hours per week.

Training and uniform

- 4.5 VSW's will receive a similar but tailored training package to Community Wardens. This will include input from Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Service to ensure a partnership approach. VSW's will get background information and advice on how to act while undertaking the role. The training will include practical work within their parish and each VSW will have a Community Warden mentor. VSW's will be given a uniform that is very similar to that of Community Wardens but includes the word "volunteer" on badges.

Pilot Scheme

- 4.6 As the pilot scheme has been developed in partnership with KALC, an invitation was issued to all KALC members to take part. 21 Parish Councils and 3 Town Councils expressed interest in taking part in the pilot. The Steering Group decided that, in order to keep the scale of the pilot at a manageable level, a maximum of 12 parishes/towns should be involved. 11 parishes and 1 town Council were selected to participate in the pilot reflecting a wide range of characteristics. A funding application was made to the Kent Community Safety Partnership to meet the costs of the uniform and equipment utilising the money provided to the partnership in a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner. KCC has funded the costs of the advertising, recruitment and training for the pilot with some support from partners on the latter.

Current position

- 4.7 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 were received for the specified areas.
- 4.8 Following the interviews, eight individuals have been selected and they will be deployed across five parish and two town council area, following completion of their training in March 2016.

Review

- 4.9 Before any decisions are taken on whether or how to extend the Scheme, a structured review will be undertaken to learn lessons from the pilot and to assess the full cost, resource implications of administering and managing a full Scheme. This review will be undertaken over the next 6 months. Following the review, a clear decision will be made as to potential expansion of the scheme and if so, the financial contribution required from participating parishes. This in turn will enable each parish to decide whether it wants to be part of a full Scheme in April 2017.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The transformation of the Community Warden Service has ensured that the essence of the service remains deeply rooted and valued in the communities they serve.
- 5.2 The Volunteer Support Wardens will work to complement and enhance the Community Wardens service by acting as the 'eyes and ears' for their respective communities, providing crime prevention advice and vital links to services.

6. Recommendation

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the transformation of the Community Wardens Service following the public consultation and the savings contribution made to the MTFP.

7. Background Documents

None

8. Contact details

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