

From: Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Mike Hill, KCC Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Decision No: 20/00051

Subject: Kent Community Warden Service – Enhance and Expand – Implementation

Divisions Affected: County Wide

**Summary:** The purpose of this report is to set out how a base investment of £1m can further build upon the outcomes achieved by the Kent Community Warden Service. This is through a proposed programme of activities which will enhance and expand the Service in line with the objectives of the KCC Strategic Delivery Plan (2020-2023), and, enable the Service to provide a vital component of the county’s ongoing response to, and recovery from, COVID-19

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services is asked to agree to enhance and expand the Kent Community Warden Service.

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) has, since 2002, become a recognised and highly valued service to Kent’s communities, helping to create stronger and safer communities – its overarching purpose. The service forms 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) delivering a frontline response to local issues in partnership with the other statutory responsible authorities.
- 1.2 The Community Wardens provide a proactive and preventative approach to addressing local issues in their areas through their uniquely trusted relationship with the communities they serve, acting as the “eyes and ears” for those areas and providing a vital link to services. Their visible presence serves as a significant deterrent to low level crime and anti-social behaviour improving the quality of life for residents.
- 1.3 The decision to support the proposed activities to enhance and expand the KCWS, will benefit other areas of the council’s work. The Community Wardens provide a valuable role in engaging with older and vulnerable residents, enabling them to live in their homes for longer independently – ultimately keeping those residents away from the need for statutory social care where possible.
- 1.4 During 19/20 KCWS undertook over 5,500 taskings related to older Kent residents, almost a third of whom suffered poor mental health and/or dementia. From this particularly vulnerable group the Wardens were able to solely address

the need in 65% of the cases. The welfare visits, installation of security equipment or provision of advice to the vulnerable and homeless, diverted this demand from other services and prevented an escalation of circumstance. In addition, Wardens are often called upon to support the work of Adult Social Services (ASS) through welfare visits and provide support to the assessment process. In 19/20, KCWS undertook 519 tasks referred in by ASS for older or vulnerable residents. A third of these were dealt with by KCWS with no onward referral required.

1.5 The return on investment for KCWS can be challenging to define, but the benefits and positive community impact are understood by residents, colleagues and Members. Some aspects of KCWS's financial value can be indirectly estimated as follows:

- *KCWS includes capabilities similar to social prescribing which has been shown to reduce demand on health services, and it would be reasonable to extrapolate this to include social services. Family Action's 2014 Impact Report<sup>1</sup> found that investing in such preventative activities could yield social returns as high as £5.96 for every £1 invested.*
- *It has been found that "when compared to people who are never lonely, older people who are lonely are on average... 3.5 times more likely to enter local authority-funded residential care." If just 10 residents are prevented from needing to move into KCC funded residential care, using the average cost of residential care in the South East of the UK<sup>2</sup>, that is a saving of approximately £390,000 per year.*
- *Elderly people "that have been defrauded in their own homes are 2.5 times more likely to die or go into care within a year". Reporting provided by KCC Trading Standards show that work related to scams (that the Wardens play a significant role in) resulted in savings of £4,256,811 in FY18/19*

1.6 In response to challenging budget savings facing the authority in 2015, significant reductions were proposed to staffing levels. However, following public consultation and strong support of the service the severity of the proposed reduction in staff was lessened with the agreed reduction being from 101 to 70. This was deemed to be the minimum at which the community-based approach to the service could be preserved. In addition, all management and support functions were streamlined.

1.7 With the backdrop of these reductions, the service explored the use of uniformed volunteer wardens with the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC). A model was established, and a pilot was run. The full Volunteer Support Warden (VSW) scheme has run since 2017. However, recruitment has proven to be an ongoing challenge and a 2019 review of the scheme identified recommendations for change. These are detailed in Section 3.

1.8 Whilst retaining its broad remit, the KCWS has adapted and evolved over the years to effectively build upon the original aims as it responds to local issues

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.family-action.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/08/FA\\_Impact-report\\_28pp\\_Issue-1-1.pdf](https://www.family-action.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/08/FA_Impact-report_28pp_Issue-1-1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.payingforcare.org/how-much-does-care-cost/>

including preventing crime and scams, supporting vulnerable residents, tackling social isolation and leading community development activities. The result has been that requests for assistance from various KCC departments, partnership agencies, external organisations and charities as well as public demand has been on the rise<sup>3</sup>. Given the current climate and of course the current COVID-19 pandemic, the demands and need for the service have never been greater.

- 1.9 This report sets out the proposed programme of activities aimed at meeting the growing local need for the Community Wardens, within the context of COVID-19 Recovery and the KCC Strategic Delivery Plan (2020-2023).

## **2. Continuous Improvement**

### Vision, Purpose and Objectives

- 2.1 The following updated 'Purpose', 'Vision' and 'Objectives' below will provide a supporting framework for the proposed recent and coming changes to the KCWS as described in this report.

#### Purpose

Providing a proactive and visible presence in Kent's communities to improve residents' quality of life and promote stronger and safer communities.

#### Vision

To be a trusted community-based service that anticipates and addresses local concerns by implementing preventative and early intervention measures. Collaborating with partners to deliver solutions which will allow Kent's residents and communities to thrive.

#### Objectives

##### **1. Assist with navigating public services**

Wardens will work closely with internal and external partners, maintaining knowledge in order to support residents. Wardens are a KCC front line service and will embody the 'one council' and no wrong door approach.

##### **2. Support the elderly and vulnerable**

Wardens will work with those most vulnerable in their communities with the aim of improving wellbeing, supporting independent living, reducing social isolation and loneliness, and facilitating access to care and services.

##### **3. Foster community cohesion and wellbeing**

Wardens will improve community wellbeing by working in a range of environments and across all age groups (as is appropriate for the location), setting up new groups and events where needed through community development projects.

##### **4. Strengthen community resilience (Stronger, Safer Communities)**

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<sup>3</sup> Origin of Community Warden tasks in FY 2018/19 and **FY 2019/20** includes; KCC Adult Social Services (317 / **519**), KCC Education/Schools (780 / **1159**), KCC Libraries (223 / **340**), KCC Trading Standards (139 / **308**), Kent Police and CSUs (1134 / **2096**), Parish/District/Borough Councils (757 / **1225**).

Wardens will equip residents to prevent and recover from being victims to scams. They will address low level crime and antisocial behaviour through deterrence, prevention and partnership working. They will support communities in challenging times, from floods to pandemics.

### **3. Implementation of the new Volunteers and Apprentice Schemes**

- 3.1 The Volunteer Scheme is being developed in line with the recommendations identified during the 2019 review of the VSW Scheme. Changes to the scheme will focus on introducing greater flexibility for volunteers, reducing barriers to recruitment identified under the previous approach where VSW numbers only ever reached seven or eight.
- 3.2 In addition, a new apprenticeship standard for 'Community Safety Advisor' was made available in 2019. It is well suited to the KCWS and will allow the service to take advantage of national policies supporting apprenticeships. Both the volunteer and apprenticeship schemes provide additional capacity and scope for early career development opportunities and succession planning.
- 3.3 A £215,000 commitment was secured from GET's 18/19 underspend which was realised in September 2019, and the one-year pilot continues into 20/21. (The full year effect of the pilot is a roll forward commitment as part of 19/20 outturn.) The new Volunteers and Apprentice Schemes Manager took up post in November 2019 to progress the two schemes. Key aims are increasing volunteer numbers and to have 6 apprentices successfully complete their apprenticeship in the early part of 21/22. Included within the secured funding is a budget for the apprentices' uniform, kit, additional training and salary, and a budget for full kit and training for 20 volunteers. However, the flexibility of the new scheme will allow greater numbers than this as kit and training requirements will be bespoke.
- 3.4 The successful roll out of these schemes are impacted by COVID-19 and the timing of their respective launches is therefore still under review as we await clarity on the Government's social policy around Lock Down and for better understanding of any subsequent waves of infection and the further disruption that will then cause. For the apprenticeship standard we continue to await a suitable End Point Assessor (an individual/organisation registered to assess apprentice competence) being in place.
- 3.5 If these schemes prove to be successful following an evaluation, the Service will necessarily seek additional funding via the MTFP process, or indeed a further bid to the SDB £3.5m budget line for early 21/22 onwards to ensure their continuation.

## **4 Enhancing the KCWS**

### **Review of Community Warden job description and proposed introduction of a career grade structure**

- 4.1 The KCWS has evolved and adapted to community demand and needs over the years. A key area being the support for older and vulnerable residents to live safely and independently. Wardens utilise their local knowledge to identify

those who would benefit from their service and how best to support them, leveraging the networks and trust they build in the community. Many Community Wardens are now managing their own caseload of vulnerable residents, providing support to those in need and as recognised by the KCC Select Committee for Social Isolation and Loneliness, the Wardens are informally undertaking a 'Social Prescribing' role in these cases.

- 4.2 A small number of staff from the KCWS are currently taking part in an EU Interreg funded project called Connected Communities. This project involves several partners in both England and France who will be developing, trialling and evaluating a social prescribing model which seeks to reduce loneliness and social isolation. Aspects of this model will be adopted by the KCWS, formalising social prescribing functions and practices as part of the role of a warden. KCC Strategic Commissioning – Adults are a key partner on this project.
- 4.3 Before looking to expand the Service in response to the increasing demand, priority will therefore be given to re-evaluating the Community Warden job roles in order to address issues of recruitment (particularly in the west of the county) and retention, professional development and staff morale issues raised through the Staff Survey (2018 & 2019). The aim of the evaluation will be to ensure the job descriptions, training and financial reward accurately reflect the expectations of the service as well as enable future developments for the service to be incorporated.
- 4.4 The service is exploring a career grading structure and it is anticipated that this will fit alongside the apprenticeship and volunteer developments leading to greater professionalisation of the service. A review of the structure and roles within the KCWS is required to ensure they remain fit for purpose and ensure the roles are set at the right level allowing career progression and retention of staff. The review, subsequent consultation and implementation will be prioritised to start as soon as possible in 20/21 (subject to extenuating circumstances of COVID-19) and should be completed within four months.

### Supervision

- 4.5 As outlined within the above section, community wardens are now beginning to manage their own 'caseload' of vulnerable people within the community alongside their community work. There is an essential need to professionalise the service and ensure that there is comprehensive and adequate supervisory support for these lone workers. As such, the streamlined management and support structure of the service is under review and there is an identified need to encompass further supervisory/management posts to provide the necessary oversight and support to staff moving forward.

### Case Management System and ICT equipment

- 4.6 Alongside the structural developments, community wardens require a system of managing caseloads and ensuring that appropriate records can be kept and tracked. Currently some of the technology limits the wardens' ability to utilise a Case Management System (CMS) effectively whilst out in the community and progress is already underway to develop a new system. It will provide

consistency across the county, the ability to monitor demand, third party referrals and provide intelligence to help steer the strategic direction of the service. The improved data collection will support improvements to data sharing providing more targeted and coordinated intelligence led service delivery.

## Public Engagement

- 4.7 The KCWS is very much a public facing Council service and as such, requires a highly proactive approach to public engagement. This is already the service's ethos and the development of the public facing referral system mentioned above will very much underpin this as the service expands. The Service will continue to explore and ensure that messages and promotion of warden activities are shared via other means such as social media. This is an area that has proved to be particularly effective during the current COVID-19 climate with Public Protection's extensive social messaging networks widely promoting wardens' activities.
- 4.8 Working closely with Trading Standards and Public Protection's Development team, the service will develop a public facing 'blog' during 20/21 to share safety messages, promote warden activities and highlight good news stories. The site will also host another link into the public facing referral where residents can request support from the service. These public engagement needs, and activities have already been identified, and development of the Service's communications strategy will continue.

## **5 Expanding the KCWS**

- 5.1 Expansion of the service is required to meet the existing high demand which is expected to continue increasing, not just in terms of the progressively complex criminal and societal problems but also as the 65+ population increases by an estimated 24.9% over the next 10 years<sup>4, 5</sup>. Once the new structure is in place, activity to expand the service will begin. This will enable the Service to increase numbers of frontline, uniformed staff (including the apprentice wardens and supervisors).
- 5.2 To clearly measure and empirically demonstrate the impact of the additional investment, relevant data including the mapping of demand from referrals utilising the newly developed Case Management System will be captured and analysed. This will include the assessment of further suitable urban areas that KCWS can support, utilising the good practice and model of the Multi-agency (Margate) Task Force (MTF) where a Community Warden is embedded. In addition, there will be learning to incorporate from the Kent Together response to COVID-19 which the Service has been on the frontline for. Wardens were immediately on hand to serve the communities and vulnerable residents already known to them. The circumstances have also linked Wardens into vulnerable residents who were previously not known to the service, but who can now benefit from the service now and in the future.

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<sup>4</sup> [KCC Population and Census data](#)

<sup>5</sup> KCWS undertook over 3000 taskings related to older Kent residents in 18/19. This increased to more than 5,500 in 19/20. Adult Social Services referrals increased from 317 to 519 from 18/19 to 19/20.

## 6. Financial Implications

6.1 The enhancements identified in Section 4 is profiled to cost £290k pa\*, with the expansion (identified in Section 5) estimated at £710k pa\*\*, albeit that cost is phased over the following two years. In aggregate this comes back to the £1m investment that had been previously shared with Members.

*Table 1 illustrates the costs associated with the enhancing and expansion of the KCWS.*

	Total	20/21	21/22	Base or	
	£000	£000	£000	One-off	
JD review/uplift*	220	220	0	Base	Ongoing
New staff**	670	155	515	Base	Recruited in two phases, approx. 10 staff ½ yr cost) in 20/21 and full year effect plus approx. 10 staff in 21/22.
Uniform, Kit, Training**	20	20		Base	Ongoing cost
ICT/ equipment*	30	60	-30	Base	Includes one off cost of £60k for upgrades, £30k ongoing
Public Engagement, Case Management*	40	20	20	Base	Ongoing cost - ½ year for 20/21
Vehicle Lease and Fuel**	20	5	15	Base	3 months/remaining 9 months
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>520</b>		

## 7. Legal and Equalities implications

7.1 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006, requires responsible authorities to consider crime and disorder (including antisocial behaviour and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the exercise of all their duties, activities and decision-making. This means that in all policies, strategies and service delivery there is a need to consider the likely impact on crime and disorder.

7.2 The changes being introduced to the volunteer scheme have been subject to an equality impact assessment, with an outcome of 'low adverse' impact alongside a number of positive impacts due to the more flexible nature of the new scheme.

7.3 The implications of the role review, career grading and structural changes will be subject to a full EqIA as part of the business plan and consultation documents for the changes proposed. Working with HR advisors, any process for the implementation of the new structure, including promotions, will be fair and transparent.

## 8 Other corporate implications

- 8.1 The additional provision of Community Wardens could allow the number of visits for older Kent residents to increase by approximately 2,200 (from the 5,500 figure for 19/20), alongside increased capacity to deliver community development projects, engage with schools and young people and be a visible presence in the community. Further supporting the various partners already mentioned such as Adult Social Care and Trading Standards.

## 9 Conclusions

- 9.1 The KCC five-year strategic plan (2020-2025) included objectives for the KCWS. Although we acknowledge that that five year plan will be entirely recast to reflect the 'new norm' of a post-COVID Kent, the need for community resilience will in fact be even greater than before, hence Community being one of the four cells (foci) of the intended Kent and Medway Recovery approach. With Health and Social Care Economy a second of the four cells, the demand and need for community wardens embedded at the heart of local communities but also supporting agencies' interventions will never be more needed. The plan outlined in this paper for how KCC can enhance and expand the service will support the Recovery of Kent 'plc'.
- 9.2 In summary the additional investment will deliver a strengthened and demonstrable additional impact through
- an improved career structure for wardens enabling us to attract and retain the very best of our staff
  - an improved service structure to enhance supervision and management in support of professionalisation
  - supporting software and technology to further enable and maximise the support to communities and
  - increases to warden numbers, enabling more communities to directly benefit from a warden, including in urban settings

## 10. Recommendation

10.1 The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services is asked to agree to enhance and expand the Kent Community Warden Service.

## 11. Appendices

- 11.1 Proposed Record of Decision

## 12. Contact details

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