



**St Matthews, Birchills and Leamore Local Neighbourhood Partnership
23rd January 2005**

Improving Security in Local Neighbourhoods– Update Report

Service Area: Safer Walsall Borough Partnership

Background

This report outlines progress towards a borough wide scheme to impact on crime, disorder and drug misuse by implementing targeted environmental/situational improvements.

Improving community safety is a major concern of the people of Walsall Borough and is a priority for the Council who through partnership working aims to reduce the fear of crime and create safe and confident communities. Community intelligence and research indicates that alleyways and other environmental issues often facilitate crime and disorder causing considerable disruption to the community. Situational crime interventions can have a significant impact upon these locations and as such improve the quality life of those directly affected by them.

The aim of situational improvements is to detect and deter crime by making crime difficult to commit. Coinciding with actual crime reduction the physical appearance of a situational intervention can significantly reduce the fear of crime within an area. Residents are able to actually see the intervention taking place and feel increasingly secure as a direct result of this.

A policy has been developed covering all interventions of this nature and was approved by cabinet on 19th October 2005. The purpose of this document is to clearly define the policy and procedures followed by WMBC in relation to situational crime interventions and crime prevention on public rights of way.

The policy and the programme to which it applies is fairly broad in its approach and in terms of the interventions to which it is relevant. Examples are as listed below.

- Alley Gating
- Fencing
- Vehicle Barriers and Bollards
- Street Lighting
- Security/Amenity lighting

Suggestions for potential situational interventions and environmental improvements have been identified by a number of mechanisms including

Local Neighbourhood Partnerships, Police and other partners of the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership.

The policy contains two distinct sections:

- A. Outlines policy on broader situational interventions to be undertaken under the Improving Security in Local Neighbourhoods programme.
- B. Outlines policy on the closure or diversion of public rights of way using sections 118(b) and 119(b) of the Highways Act 1980, which must follow strict legal processes.

Criteria for Interventions

Sites currently put forward as priorities for situational interventions under the Improving Security in Local Neighbourhoods Programme must meet a specified criteria as outlined within the policy. The following points are considered during prioritisation:

- the level of recorded crime and anti social behaviour (including environmental crime)
- the level of any supplementary or anecdotal evidence
- the likely impact of a given intervention
- the level of risk associated with a given intervention
- the ease with which an intervention can be implemented
- the estimated cost of any given intervention
- whether a situational measure is the most appropriate intervention.

All sites put forward as priorities have demonstrable levels of crime and disorder as they fall within borough hot spots or hot locations. It is accepted that recorded crime and disorder reports may not in all instances identify the full extent of any given problem. In order for locations where this applies to be considered under the scheme, other forms of evidence will be considered. Any sites that fall within this category would require strong Police Architectural Liaison Officer support and act either as a generator of, or contributory factor towards, crime and disorder levels. It is however envisaged that identified hot spots will be the primary focus of the programme.

The policy also details the complicated steps required to close a public right of way and the Council's current approach to the closure of such footpaths. Current improvements to Public Rights of way are proposed under the current programme. Consideration of closure will be given at a later stage should crime levels remain an issue, as specified within the policy and requirements of the relevant legislation.

The above is only a brief summation of the contents of the policy and a complete document can be made available to each respective LNP if required.

Current Situation

The below list of sites has been put forward by the St Matthews, Birchills and Leamore Local Neighbourhood Partnership:

- 1. Croft Street, Mary Street and Lewis Street (including Stafford Street and Green Lane)**
- 2. Northcote Street and Hospital Street**
- 3. Canal Entrance on Birchills by Golden Lion Pub**

With the following being put forward by other local agencies

1. Northcote Car Park Area
2. Small Street, Brace Street
3. Brewer Street

Croft Street, Mary Street, Lewis Street including Stafford Street and Green Lane), Northcote Car park, Small Street, Brace Street and Brewer Street all fall within a borough hot spot, or are listed as a hot location and have been put forward for improvements under the Improving Security in Local Neighbourhoods programme this financial year.

The plans for each are varied but can incorporate gating, various forms of fencing, anti vehicle barriers and general tidying up. More details of what is proposed for each site will become available as they are actually drawn up and would be very difficult to supply until this has been completed. Whilst every attempt where possible is made to take into account the wishes of the suggesting organisation specific intervention are based on the results of site visits, the issues specific to a location and professional advice. Further details of the intervention to be employed for each scheme will be available in due course.

Canal Entrance on Birchills by Golden Lion Pub does not fall within a borough hot spot, or is listed as a hot location and therefore has not been put forward for improvements under the Improving Security in Local Neighbourhoods programme this financial year

Northcote Street and Hospital Street – to monitor impact of development and consider appropriate further actions

It is appreciated that of these schemes not put forward for the programme that LNP's may be aware of further relevant issues in support of interventions in these locations and may wish to put them forward for implementation this financial year as part of their own funding programme. Ways in which capacity can be increased to carry out these works are currently being investigated. Clearly any works of this nature would need to be both feasible, achievable and comply with all legal and planning requirements.

Consideration for LNP's when identifying priorities

It is important to note that there are a number of issues that can affect delivery of situational interventions. When putting forward requests for intervention the following needs to be considered.

- Where highway rights exist (including public footpaths) it is not possible to simply fence or gate off a site - access must be retained or relevant legislation followed to extinguish Highway Rights, which is subject to strict criteria and a lengthy process.
- Owners permission is needed before interventions can be installed. Generally where the sites are either Council Owned or WHG owned the schemes can be implemented more easily as relevant consents can be obtained. If land is in private ownership, please ask LNP's to consider if private owners are likely to support the scheme, as without their consent it may be difficult to proceed. If there is unregistered land or vacant properties, it may be difficult or impossible to obtain consent and this is also likely to affect delivery.
- If there are private access rights to properties, this also needs to be retained, which is usually achieved by issuing those with private access rights with a key to lockable gates.

Recommendations

1. That the LNP's note the report, and to continue to submit requests for further interventions as part of the rolling programme next year. A request form has been developed as a part of the policy (available upon request), which LNP's are encouraged to use when submitting requests for situational interventions. As much information on the levels of crime and antisocial behaviour experienced and additional supporting information should be attached to the form in support of the request, as this may help to identify the site as a priority during prioritisation for future financial years.
2. To identify any priority sites (based on crime and disorder reported to the LNP or other local representatives) that they would like to take forward this financial year funded by the LNP itself. These schemes will be implemented subject to officer capacity and deliverability.

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