

Report to Palfrey and Pleck Local Neighbourhood Partnership

5th January 2005

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's response to a petition submitted to the Palfrey and Pleck LNP and a request by residents to install a gate at the side of 102,104,106 and 108 Newmills Street, Palfrey.

Resource and Legal Considerations:

The Safer Walsall Borough Partnership has access to an amount of Single Regeneration Budget Funding to carry out a limited gating scheme based on reported crime and anti-social behaviour within SRB areas. Palfrey and Pleck wards are both designated SRB areas. Whilst a larger borough wide scheme based on the same principles is in operation all current resources are allocated and the level of future funding is at this time unknown.

There are a number of legal issues associated with alley gating/fencing projects and the council must be seen at all times to act in accordance with the law.

Citizen Impact:

Directed alley gating and other environmental improvements are proven to have a positive impact upon levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. They can also help to reduce the overall fear of crime, all of which are positive benefits felt by local residents.

Environmental Impact:

Appropriate situational interventions can help reduce fly tipping and the residue of certain types of anti-social behaviour. As such making the environment both safer and cleaner.

Performance Management and Risk Management Issues:

The council has experience in carrying out this type of work and will manage all risks accordingly.

Equality Implications

The alley gating/environmental improvement programme covers all sections of the community directed by crime and reported anti social behaviour.

Consultation

Widespread consultation is necessary in any scheme of this sort and suggestions as to appropriate sites from LNP's are welcome, such sites must however meet inclusion criteria and be prioritised accordingly.

Links to Vision 2008:

The project sits well within the vision of the council impacting directly upon several of the key priorities.

Background information

This report outlines a scheme within Single Regeneration Budget Five areas to impact upon crime, disorder and drug misuse by targeted environmental improvements and alley gating. All interventions to be evidence led and based on reported crime and anti social behaviour levels. Adopting this approach provides a clear frame of reference whilst at the same time directing limited resources where they should have the greatest impact. The intervention will be managed by an officer within the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership who will work closely with officers within the councils Environmental Regeneration Department to achieve implementation.

A crime analysis carried out by the partnerships analyst will be used to direct the programme and identify areas in which work could be carried out. Suggested sites for inclusion may also be received from SRB members and Local Neighbourhood Partnerships. It is envisaged however that all sites included will be done so on the basis of reported crime levels and anti social behaviour problems.

An initial survey by council officers based around the crime analysis has identified areas for possible inclusion. This would however require considerable further investigation due to the large geographic area covered by SRB(5) and site visits by a qualified Crime Reduction Officer. This to ensure that interventions as much as possible adhere to Secure by Design principles.

Following the identification of a number of sites an intensive period of consultation and investigation will follow. This including the drawing up of plans by a qualified Landscape Architect (within Environmental Regeneration), confirmation of land ownership and consultation with all owners and interested parties. Only if all parties have been consulted and are in agreement can the intervention proceed. This can be a lengthy and complicated process the outcome of which is not always certain. At this stage an order can be placed for the work to proceed.

The partnership is currently in the process of drawing up a Schedule of Rates Contract that will cover all of this type of work across the borough. This should reduce the time required to reach installation and allow individual projects to be quickly priced. It is envisaged this will be operational by the beginning of the next financial year and will be the route by which these interventions are implemented.

It should be noted that this intervention will not cover any alleyways that have associated Rights of Way.

Whilst this can be a lengthy process the end result can significantly improve the quality of life of community members and serve to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour within SRB(5) areas

It should also be noted that whilst a larger borough wide programme is planned its initial resources are already committed and future funding is at this time not confirmed. As such if the council were to meet this request it seems most likely at this time that it would be via the smaller scale SRB scheme.

New Mills Street:

An initial investigation has begun into the possibility of including the gate adjacent to numbers 102,104,106 and 108 New Mills Street.

An initial site visit has taken place and has revealed that whilst a locked wooden gate is currently in place and is essentially functional it would benefit from the erection of a sturdier metal version. There are however a number of alleys within that area with no gate that it could be argued are perhaps equally in need of security improvements.

A crime search carried out by the partnership analyst has revealed that the police beat in which New Mills Street is located has demonstrated a burglary dwelling problem, although New Mills Street itself does not seem to be one of the hot spots. It is also of note none of the properties served by the gate have reported any recent burglaries or problems associated with the alley. There have however been three burglaries in the street since the beginning of this year and streets in the vicinity (although not New Mills itself) have demonstrated problems associated with anti-social behaviour.

Recommendations

It is recommended that New Mills Street remain on the list of possible sites for inclusion and that a future report will indicate finally the result of the request and whether or not a gate is to be installed. There is still considerable work to be done to identify possible sites for this project (funding only just being approved) and these must then be prioritised accordingly. As such it would not be prudent to make a final decision at this time.

It is also recommended that LNP's continue to submit requests for situational type work as this is a valuable means by which community concerns can be identified.

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