

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY & PERFORMANCE PANEL
DATE: 5 October 2006

RE: COMMUNITY WARDENS

Purpose

This note has been prepared at the request of the Scrutiny and Performance Panel following revisions to the Panel's remit and the movement of the Wardens Service to be under the auspices of the Neighbourhood's Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Commentary

1.0 The Wardens' programme was instigated and managed by Walsall Housing and Regeneration Agency (WHRA). The agency successfully applied for funding for the service through several short term government initiatives. Over a period of time the service was developed to employ some 40/50 Wardens, including Wardens deployed in the New Deal for Communities Area.

2.0 The Community Wardens' programme has been promoted to provide greater public reassurance by carrying out high visibility patrols aimed at: reducing incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour; reducing fear of crime; fostering community cohesion and enhancing the role of Neighbourhood Watch groups and Street Champions.

3.0 Problems arose as the time limited Government funding came to an end and no arrangements had been put in place to find "mainstream" funding for the service. At this juncture the funding gap was met through Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). Members will be aware that NRF is also time limited funding, now linked to the delivery of the outcomes contained in the Local Area Agreement. The amount of NRF made available by the Local Strategic Partnership to fund the Warden's Service was reduced significantly in the current year with the result that the Community Wardens Service has been reduced to 10 Wardens plus a Co-ordinator and Administrator. In addition Community Wardens continue to be employed and funded by New Deal for Communities within the New Deal area.

4.0 The management of Community Wardens remains with WHRA but the Wardens are now deployed through the Community Safety Intervention Group (CSIG). CSIG is a multi-agency group led by the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership targeting resources on an intelligence led basis to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour 'hot spots' in the Borough.

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5.0 Through the engagement of a Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor work is now ongoing to determine:

- a) the effectiveness of the Community Wardens' service and the ability of the service to contribute to the achievement of LAA targets
- b) the sustainability of the service after March 2007, in particular options for partners to 'mainstream' the service
- c) the need for the service with the advent of community policing, Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) and Street Champions
- d) the issues which would result if Wardens were to be given limited enforcement powers
- e) the need to review the management arrangements

Summary

The Wardens' Service is valued by the community but the service is not sustainable without an injection of money by partner organisations. The effectiveness and efficiency of the service needs to be reviewed in the light of additional community resources being made available through increased numbers of PCSOs and Community Champions. The management arrangements with WHRA need to be reviewed. A report compiled by the Neighbourhood Renewal advisor will be available in time to enable the Council and partner organisations to consider options for delivering community reassurance before the 2007/08 budget round.

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