

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: NEIGHBOURHOOD SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

DATE: Thursday, 7th December 2006

RE: A Review of the Wardens Service

1. Purpose of Report

To present and make recommendations upon the Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor's (NRA's) report and option appraisal of the Wardens' Service.

2. Background

2.1 A copy of the NRA's report is appended (**appendix 1**). The critical finding of the report is that although the Wardens' programme is perceived as making a significant contribution to the Neighbourhood Renewal agenda, this cannot be evidenced. In this context, since the report was written, WHRA have agreed to appoint a consultant working through their resource centre, to develop generic performance measures which can be used in the evaluation of Wardens Services. A small steering group has been formed to oversee the project. I have been asked to be a member of this group in my capacity as Interim Partnership Director.

2.2 The report contains an appraisal of four options and makes comment on significant management and operational matters. The work was undertaken at a time when a new role for Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) and a move towards community policing was emerging. Such a fundamental change to policy arrangements is clearly germane to the role of Community Wardens. It is evident that there needed to be the opportunity for the new policing arrangements to become embedded before the role of Community Wardens in Walsall could be fully appraised and developed.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

3.1 Option (3) be adopted "to seek funding for a further year using NRF resources linked to a review and evaluation programme".

3.2 A Target Driven Action Plan be submitted to the LSP Executive incorporating the role of Warden and the contribution to be made to achieving LAA targets.

3.3 The Partnership Director be authorised to work with WHRA in developing a set of generic indicators for the Wardens Service. This work to be completed before March 31st 2007.

3.4 More formal governance arrangements be put in place. This to incorporate a service level agreement specifying outcomes to be achieved

and a strengthening of the commissioning role of the Safer Stronger Communities Partnership.

3.5 All wardens be required to be trained to 'accredited' status with limited enforcement powers and that the Board receives a report to their April 2007 meeting outlining the arrangements to be put in place within the Council's Neighbourhood Services Directorate to support effective integration of the enforcement role of Wardens within the wider enforcement powers exercised by Council officers.

3.6 Working with the two OCU commanders, whg, Local Neighbourhood Partnerships and WHRA, the Partnership Director be required to prepare a report to the October 2007 board meeting that will comment upon performance of the service against target, in particular LAA outcomes; the effectiveness of the service linked to community police, PCSOs and community champions; make recommendations upon the sustainability of the service having worked with Partner organisations to identify income opportunities.

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FINAL REPORT

REVIEW AND OPTION APPRAISAL OF THE WALSALL WARDENS PROGRAMME REPORT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL ADVISOR

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government Office for the West Midlands issued a brief for a Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor (NRA) to undertake a review and option appraisal of the Walsall Wardens Programme in early October 2006. The brief required the NRA to determine:
- a) the achievements and procedures of the Community Wardens Service and the ability of the Service to contribute to the delivery 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 Support 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.
- 1.2 The NRA was appointed on 16th October and the programme of work was to be undertaken within a total of 5 days with completion by 26th October.

2. Process Undertaken

- 2.1 In order to complete the review in the very short timeframe it was necessary to interview representatives from as many of the key organisations as possible and obtain relevant background information. Between the inception meeting on 18th October and the initial review meeting on 27th October meetings or telephone interviews therefore took place with representatives from the Safer, Stronger Communities Partnership (SSCP), previously known as the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership (SWBP), GOWM, Walsall Housing Regeneration Agency (WHRA), Walsall Local Strategic Partnership, the Intelligence Analyst for West Midlands Police and Walsall Borough Council (at Senior Officer and Cabinet Member level).
- 2.2 In addition an extensive review of publications and reports relating to the Wardens Programme was undertaken. A list of publications reviewed is attached as Appendix A.

3. National Overview

- 3.1 Neighbourhood Wardens have been in operation for some years. Government viewed their introduction as potentially making a significant contribution to the Community Safety aspect of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. NRF funding supported 84 schemes across England from 2000/01.
- 3.2 A National Evaluation of the first round of schemes was undertaken in 2004. The Evaluation noted that the wardens were “a new generation of officials who know the problems, face the people and take the action. Wardens’ success lies in their ability to link people and agencies together”. It concluded that the key impacts of the Programme related to increased resident satisfaction; reduced fear of crime, particularly for older people; considerable decline in the overall rate of residents experiencing crime; perceived improvement in environmental problems such as graffiti, fly- tipping, litter and dog fouling; and a decline in the residents perception of youth ASB as a problem. **The Evaluation found that the vast majority of programmes represented Value for Money and had secured mainstream funding or expected to do so.**
- 3.3 A recent survey by regeneration magazine New Start (1 September 06) found that many warden schemes were expanding, though some had joined with the more recently introduced PCSO (Police Community Support Officer) initiative. Unlike some initiatives that do not survive the withdrawal of Government funding support, New Start found that the wardens programme in a number of areas had actually expanded, with an estimated 3000 wardens employed nationally, most notably in Hull with 160, and in Southwark and Knowsley with 100 each.

4. The Walsall Community Wardens programme

- 4.1 The Community Wardens service in Walsall was introduced in 2001 to serve the Brownhills, Caldmore, Darlaston and Willenhall areas. It is provided by Walsall Housing Regeneration Agency (WHRA), which is a partnership between the Borough Council, Accord and Caldmore Housing Associations and the people of Walsall. Subsequently time-limited funding was secured to expand the Service into the New Deal for Communities area and additionally to cover Mossley, Palfrey, Rough Hay, Alumwell, Pleck and Walsall Town Centre. At its peak the Service employed over 70 wardens.
- 4.2 In the first phase of the programme funding came direct from Government (DETR/Home Office) to WHRA and there was a direct relationship with the GOWM. From September 2004, however, the funding arrangements changed with the Wardens Programme being funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund administered by the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Authority.

- 4.3 It should be noted that WHRA has a remit that is wider than the Wardens Programme. It focuses on neighbourhood regeneration activities aimed at improving training, employment, housing and enterprise opportunities in Walsall. By August 2005 a total of 47 wardens were employed. At the time of writing this report the number had reduced further to 25. 11 deployable wardens are NRF funded. In addition the Borough Council funds 5 youth wardens, the NDC funds 6 wardens, Walsall Housing Group fund 2 wardens, and Help the Aged fund 1 (with a further 2 to be recruited). **It is important to note that this report relates specifically to the remaining 11 NRF funded posts.**

5. Reviews or assessments undertaken

- 5.1 In October 2004 a Best Value Review of Community Safety by the Borough Council noted that the previous Crime and Disorder Partnership had been weak but that the Neighbourhood Wardens service had been one of the “bright spots” and was highly valued by the community. The Council considered that the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership (SWBP) should take a strong commissioning role and that:

“the Wardens Service should be improved and refined to reflect a more strategic approach by SWBP in particular SWBP should develop a unified approach to deploying wardens with different schemes”.

It was recognised that until the 3 year Crime Strategy was agreed there would be a need for interim funding. The report indicated that:

“there is preliminary assumption that a core wardens service will be agreed and mainstream funded, but with the ability to increase the service through special funding or additional mainstream funding. The future funding...needs to rely on a wider range of long term funding schemes, including the council, health, housing providers, schools and businesses”.

It was recommended that service specifications should be drawn up to ensure the future service met the needs of the 2005 – 2008 strategy.

- 5.2 This work was undertaken at a time when a new role for Police Community Safety Officers (PCSO's) and a move towards community policing was emerging. Such a fundamental change to policing arrangements is clearly germane to the role of community wardens. It is evident that there needed to be the opportunity for the new policing arrangements to become embedded before a new role for community wardens could be fully appraised and developed.
- 5.3 Revised arrangements for community policing are now being introduced together with the integration of a further complement of PCSO's thus providing a timely backdrop for a review of the Wardens Service.

6. Specific response to the NRA brief

- 6.1 **Assessment of the achievements and procedures of the Community Wardens Service and the ability of the Service to contribute to the delivery of LAA targets**

- 6.1.1 The Walsall Wardens Programme has received several awards at a national level and been cited as best practice. It has also become the Resource Centre for the West Midlands.
- 6.1.2 The context within which the Wardens Programme operates has changed substantially in recent years. This relates to both governance and organisational changes, in particular the introduction of the Local Area Agreement approach (LAA) and the development of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The more recent introduction of a further area based service, the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), further underlines the need to keep the nature of the Wardens Service and its terms of reference and programme of activities and areas of operation under review.
- 6.1.3 There is scope for the Wardens Programme to make a considerable contribution to the work of the SSCP and the LSP in delivering the LAA targets. A **Target Action Plan** Process to assist the delivery of the Safer and Stronger Communities Block of the LAA has been adopted. The SSCP is responsible for commissioning the range of interventions that are aimed at achieving these targets. It is probable that the Wardens Programme could contribute to the achievement of some of these targets, but it would appear that there has been insufficient dialogue between the organisations to enable this to be developed.
- 6.1.4 In addition to the Best Value Review previously mentioned, various evaluations have been undertaken since 2001. These have included internal and external evaluations and community surveys. According to the August 2005 WHRA Business Plan these have all:
“Recognised the value and the significant impact the Wardens Project was having”.
- 6.1.5 It should be recognised, however, that evaluating the Wardens Programme is very difficult. With the information currently available it is not possible to separate out their activity when looking at crime statistics, according to the West Midlands Police Analyst. If the scheme is to be continued it will be important to produce information that provides some evidence that the Wardens Programme is contributing to the achievement of the LAA targets. It might be possible, for example, to develop an approach that established a baseline figure before, during and after a specific warden intervention. This could be considered in Darlaston, for example, where there is a specific LAA target of narrowing the gap between the worst performing Local Neighbourhood Partnership in relation to crime statistics and the rest of the Borough by 2008/09. This could also be applied to a

priority area of the Walsall Housing Group, other RSLs or the Police if they identify a specific target area where a new intervention should be introduced.

6.1.6 Any decision to continue funding support to the Wardens Programme should consider a specific requirement for the SSCP and WHRA to discuss and agree specific proposals relating to the achievement of the LAA targets, including ongoing evaluation.

6.2 The sustainability of the Service after March 2007, in particular options for partners to “mainstream” the Service

6.2.1 The WHRA Business Plan has a stated ambition to expand the Wardens Service across all 9 of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership Areas, while also developing specialist services. The forward strategy identified a range of alternative funding sources and services that could be expanded or developed. At the time of writing, however, there is little evidence that these alternative funding sources have been realised or are close to realisation.

Also in reality, since the production of the Business plan, the Service has reduced in scale and there has been increased uncertainty around its future. There are a range of potential future funding and organisational options which need to be considered as a matter of priority in order to provide certainty and clarity. This is essential for the staff concerned, for the communities they serve and for the SSCP and the LSP. For these reasons an Option Appraisal regarding the sustainability of the service is timely.

The Option Appraisal is provided below:

Table 1 Option Appraisal relating to the NRF funded wardens.

OPTION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p>1 Do Nothing</p> <p>If no action is taken the current funding for the Wardens Scheme will run out in March 2007. The remaining NRF funded wardens will cease to operate and the NRF funded part of the programme will be discontinued.</p>	<p>Financial saving allowing scarce resources to be used in other priority areas and for programmes that contribute to delivery of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets as agreed by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board (SSCP).</p>	<p>Discontinuing a popular and nationally recognised programme could produce adverse community, political and media publicity. (Government has viewed the scheme as a national leader for its work with asylum seekers and refugees and BME groups) Insufficient data and no evaluation currently available to indicate that programme should be stopped. Potential criticism that programme being stopped before previously agreed evaluation carried out. Opportunity for assessing potential contribution of emerging PCSO role with an amended warden role lost.</p>
<p>2 Continue Funding at present level using NRF resources</p> <p>This would mean that the Borough Council, the SSCP and the LSP prioritised the Wardens Programme in its allocation of NRF funding for 2007/08</p>	<p>Provides continuity of service in the areas covered by the current Programme. Provides some encouragement regarding staff retention.</p>	<p>Continues a Programme that does not relate closely to the stated priorities of the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership, the SSCP or delivery of the LSP LAA targets.</p>

		Insufficient data and no evaluation currently available to indicate that Programme should be continued at present level.
<p>3 Fund for a further year using NRF resources linked to a review and evaluation programme</p> <p>This would mean that the Borough Council, the SSCP and the LSP prioritised the continuation funding of the Wardens Programme but only subject to receiving a number of undertakings regarding work programmes and priorities, governance arrangements review and the completion of an evaluation programme to assess past performance and future options.</p>	<p>Allows the opportunity for an evaluation of the current Wardens Programme to take place along with a study into the potential contribution that wardens and the emerging PCSO programmes can make to the delivery of the LAA targets as agreed by the LSP.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to develop specific Service Level (SLA) targets agreements from the SSCP for the Programme.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to carry out the previously agreed organisational and governance review.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to negotiate financial support from a range of potential funding partners once the evaluation is complete.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to initiate accreditation programmes for the wardens and review arrangements within the Borough Council regarding administration of any fixed penalty notices.</p>	<p>Could be open to criticism for not having completed previously agreed review and evaluation.</p>

<p>4 Mainstream the funding of the Wardens Programme</p> <p>This would involve the Borough Council (and potentially partner organisations) agreeing to include the cost of continuing the service within their operational programmes.</p>	<p>Provides certainty for the future and will encourage staff retention and allow staff development. Enables funding organisations to specify target areas and programme priorities. Possible good publicity and positive reaction from those communities benefiting from the service.</p>	<p>Little evidence to justify mainstreaming service in its current form since previously agreed evaluation and review of governance arrangements not undertaken. Possible adverse publicity from those areas not benefiting from the service and pressure to roll out existing Programme across the Borough.</p>
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It should be noted that the above option appraisal relates specifically to the NRF funded aspects of the Programme. Should the decision be taken to withdraw funding it would not mean an end to all warden provision in the Borough since there are elements of the Programme e.g. the NDC project and the youth wardens that are financed separately. Furthermore it is understood that the Wardens Resource Centre has secured funding through until March 2008.

6.3 The need for the service with the advent of community policing, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Street Champions

6.3.1 The Local Government White Paper, published on 26th September 2006, confirmed that Neighbourhood Policing will be introduced to every Community in England by April 2007 and that by 2008 every area will have a dedicated neighbourhood policing team. The intention is for communities to see an increase in patrolling, have access to better policing information, and a say in local policing priorities. These visible policing teams will be supported by PCSOs and Special Constables. The White Paper indicates that dependent upon the needs and priorities of a particular neighbourhood, the teams may also include neighbourhood wardens.

6.3.2 Walsall has already begun the process of introducing PCSOs across the Borough. Currently in OCU H1 there are 14 operational with a further 9 due to start in February 2007. In OCU H2 there

are 4 currently operating, 10 more due to start in November 2006 and a further 7 in 2007 making a total of 44.

6.3.3 It is important therefore to integrate and coordinate the responsibilities and work programmes of the wardens in relation to the emerging community policing and PCSO programmes at national and local level.

6.4 The issues which would result if wardens were to be given limited enforcement powers

6.4.1 In January 2006 a report to the SWBP recommended that the warden duties should change to take on enforcement activity with regard to certain environmental crime and also expand to investigating low level ASB and greater involvement in estate clean up and graffiti removal.

6.4.2 This was followed by a report in March 2006 in which the Council indicated that if the wardens were to continue it would be essential to change the emphasis of their work so that they were seen to work effectively with the new PCSOs that were due to be introduced over the course of 2006/07. These reports followed earlier recommendations in March 2005 recommending that wardens become more "hands on" and giving them limited enforcement powers which it was considered could enhance their work with communities.

6.4.3 Should the decision be taken to continue the Wardens Service it would be beneficial to complete the investigation of potential enforcement powers that would be appropriate.

6.4.4 Historically the duties and responsibilities of the neighbourhood wardens in Walsall have not featured enforcement powers. Their role has been more informal, providing a visible presence that provides reassurance to communities which has helped to reduce the fear of crime as well as reacting to local communities' concerns such as criminal activity, anti social behaviour, environmental problems (such as fly tipping). In some respects the view of the communities towards the wardens may be influenced by the fact that they are informal and without legal powers. Before enforcement or other powers are conferred on the wardens it would be beneficial for the partners to consider what are the most appropriate powers that could be transferred. These could relate to such aspects as fly tipping, dog fouling, litter, illegal advertising and parking infringements. These could potentially represent a possible source of income to offset the costs of the programme, but it will be important to assess the potential negative impact on the reputation of the wardens, as they are perceived to move from friendly helper to enforcer.

6.4.5 It will also be essential to consider future potential enforcement powers for wardens in light of the role and powers that are proposed for the new PCSOs to ensure that there is no overlap and that they are complementary. Appropriate training for the wardens needs to be offered in respect of any new roles and responsibilities.

It would also be beneficial to undertake a joint review and evaluation after the first year of the combined effect of the new PCSO / Community Champions / Community Warden approach in securing a reduction in crime levels, fear of crime and increase in perception of the neighbourhoods in which the approach has been adopted compared to those areas which have not benefited from the programme.

6.5 The need to review the management arrangements.

6.5.1 The Wardens Programme is currently administered by the WHRA, which is serviced by Accord Housing Association. There is a direct relationship with the SSCP, which is responsible for commissioning and delivering the programmes that are designed to achieve the LAA targets.

6.5.2 This approach differs significantly from the autonomous position that WHRA held when the service was directly funded by the government. It is now imperative that there is a close working relationship with the SSCP in order to develop a commissioning agreement that will facilitate effective performance monitoring and management against LAA targets.

7. Summary and Conclusions

7.1 The Wardens Programme nationally and locally has been perceived as making a significant contribution to the neighbourhood renewal agenda.

7.2 National Evaluation has found that the vast majority of programmes represented Value for Money and have secured mainstream funding or expected to do so.

7.3 The Walsall 2004 Best Value Review of Community Safety considered that the Neighbourhood Wardens Service had been one of the “bright spots” and was highly valued by the community, with a preliminary assumption that a core Wardens Service would be agreed and mainstream funded.

7.4 The Walsall Wardens Programme has received several awards at a national level and been cited as best practice. It has also become the Resource Centre for the West Midlands.

- 7.5** The context within which the Wardens Programme operates has changed substantially in terms of governance and operation with the introduction of the Local Area Agreement approach (LAA) and a further area based service, the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), and the development of the Target Action Planning Approach of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). This means that it is important to keep the nature of the Wardens Service and its terms of reference and programme of activities and areas of operation under review.
- 7.6** An Option Appraisal has identified four options, ranging from ending the service at the end of the current funding through to mainstreaming the service. On balance it would appear that Option 3, which supports continuation funding linked to a review and evaluation of the service is the most appropriate. This would also have the benefit of allowing time for a Service Level Agreement to be agreed which provides the scope for the Wardens Service to be expanded (and training provided) to include some enforcement activity and coordination with the PCSO service.
- 7.7** It is essential for closer working relationships to be developed between WHRA and the SSCP so that an agreed approach can be presented to the WBSP indicating how the Wardens Programme can help achieve the Safer and Stronger LAA targets.
- 7.8** In view of the complexity of the Community Safety agenda, the changing nature of the services being provided at local level and the sensitivities surrounding the Wardens Programme it is considered vital to ensure that appropriate priority is given to the review and evaluation programme over the next twelve months. It will be crucial to secure the support of all of the key organisations to the change programme that is likely to emerge. A lead project officer from within the Borough Council (with appropriate internal or external support) charged with the responsibility of coordinating the review is strongly recommended. Consideration should also be given to ongoing external independent support during this period.

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Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor

November 3, 2006.

APPENDIX A DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership Local Area Agreement 2006 – 2009

Walsall Borough Council Best Value Review of Community Safety 2004

Transitional Funding Options for the Community Wardens Post, April 2006 – Special Regeneration, Environment, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Walsall Youth (School) Wardens, February 2006

Walsall Neighbourhood Wardens Business Plan 2005 - 2010

Report of Director of Partnership Board, March 2005

WHRA Annual Reports 2004, 2005

Critical Review of the Walsall Wardens Scheme, Matrix Consultancy 2004

Wardens' Factsheet: Guidance for Warden Schemes Working with Community Support Officers, 2004

Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme Evaluation, ODPM Research, April 2004

Walsall Wardens PR Activities

Neighbourhood Warden Career Guide

Neighbourhood Wardens: Keeping the Beat Alive, New Start, 1 September 2006

Local Government White Paper, October 2006