

**20 APRIL 2010**

**Community Payback in Walsall**

**Ward(s)**                      All

**Portfolios:**    Councillor Garry Perry- Communities and Partnerships

**Summary of report:**

This report is intended to:

- inform the Panel about Community Payback and the work being carried out by the teams in Walsall.
- Inform Members how Community Payback can contribute towards the confidence agenda through the Justice Seen Justice Done initiative being delivered in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Coordinator
- Inform Members of how to nominate Community Payback Projects.

**Background papers:**

Community Payback Portfolio produced by Walsall CP Unit (hard copy to follow at panel meeting).

**Reason for scrutiny:**

This report is being presented as an opportunity for elected member's to gain an understanding and awareness of Community Payback and what the service can offer.

## **Resource and legal considerations:**

The Community Payback scheme is run by West Midlands Probation, who operate a 7 day schedule of projects being delivered benefiting communities. All offenders are supervised by a team of dedicated supervisors. Where projects need investment of resources (for example, materials to complete the project), the beneficiary is asked to support the costs.

As part of the Justice Seen Justice Done programme, funded by the Home Office funding has been provided to pay for a Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Coordinator, whose priorities include promotion of Community Payback and promoting the fact that offenders will face the consequences and be involved in some form of public facing activity as payback to the community.

A number of organisations including British Waterways and Walsall Housing Group have Service Level Agreements with Community Payback, to deliver projects directly impacting on their targets.

## **Citizen impact:**

The work of Community Payback has a significant impact on communities. It has contributed to enhancing neighbourhoods, and delivered results, which may not have happened otherwise.

Citizens of Walsall can have a say on where offenders carry out their community service orders.

As this is a scheme that involves offenders, the needs of both the beneficiary and the offender are taken into account, so that there is no adverse reaction to the offenders. A comprehensive risk assessment is carried out to minimise and reduce harm.

## **Environmental impact:**

Community Payback can and is used to improve the appearance of local environments. It is well understood that this has beneficial effects for communities and those undertaking their punishment.

## **Performance management:**

Community payback is performance managed through the probation service's internal reporting mechanisms to the National Offender Management Service.


## **Consultation:**

This report has been prepared in collaboration with Narinder Singh Chumber, Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Coordinator.

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## **Report**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Community Payback was launched in 2005 as the government's strategy for making work carried out by offenders sentenced to community orders more visible in local communities with an emphasis on enabling local people to have a say on work carried out. This notion has been strengthened since the publication of the Casey Review in 2009. It has been highly influential in driving visibility and championing initiatives for public involvement in project selection through high profile media campaigns. The intention is to increase public confidence in the Criminal Justice System through the Justice Seen Justice Done campaign; as people see offenders being punished their faith in the system is likely to grow.

Community Payback is a demanding punishment handed out by the courts. Those sentenced can receive between 40 and 300 hours, and might find themselves hacking dense undergrowth, clearing rubbish or decorating community centres. While doing this work offenders are required to wear high-visibility jackets to make sure the public are aware of the work they are doing.

### **1.2 Community Payback In Walsall**

The emphasis of the Casey Review is on visibility, public confidence and punishment rather than on rehabilitation of offenders although this last element remains crucial to the probation service's ethos and is linked to the increasing emphasis on the reducing reoffending agenda.

To strengthen the interface between the probation service and public involvement in project selection, 60 Pioneer Areas were designated, not only to support this, but also to deliver a wider Justice Seen Justice Done agenda. Walsall was nominated as one such area. A Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Co-ordinator (NCJC) was appointed by the local authority in March 2009 using funding provided by the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Group in the Home Office. In Walsall the relationship between the probation service's Community Payback unit and the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Coordinator is strong with regular meetings taking place. The NCJC is a conduit for partner organisations in Walsall to nominate Community Payback projects, and attends Borough Tasking and other tasking forums on a regular basis to engage partners.

Community Payback projects range from litter removal, clearing dense under growth, and environmental projects through to repairing and redecorating community centres and helping to maintain cemeteries. Offenders work as part of a team monitored by a supervisor. The scheme is run 7 days a week.

There are some opportunities for individual placements and these are usually carried out in voluntary sector organisations with the supervision carried out by partners.

Discussions have taken place with various council departments and stakeholders to establish Community Payback as a delivery mechanism for improvement projects and a number of projects have been completed.

### **1.3 Performance**

In 2009/10 (figures to February 2010) Walsall CP achieved the following:

- Total hours worked: 48090
- Percentage of hours worked to hours ordered: 87%
- No of projects completed: 65
- No of offenders completing their orders: 328 (103% of annual target)
- Percentage of offenders sent home: 0.0%
- Benefit realisation: £278922 (at national min wage rate of £5.80)

The Portfolio is helpful in bringing these figures to life by showing a sample of the work done in the community and the letters of thanks from the public.

### **1.4 The Confidence Agenda**

Why is Community Payback Important? The criminal justice system relies on the public, whether this is to come forward and report crime, or to give evidence at court. The public's top priority from the system is to punish offenders, followed by payback for harm caused and then rehabilitation. However, the public are not confident that the system delivers these priorities. Nine in ten respondents to the Casey Review said that they are not told enough about what happens to people who commit crime. Publicly nominated projects that are visible to the community, will help contribute towards confidence.

The Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Coordinator and colleagues from Walsall Probation Community Payback unit have worked together to raise the profile of Community Payback in Walsall through publicising work done in the local press. To date 12 articles have appeared in publications such as Express & Star, The Chronicle, The Advertiser and many Partner editorials such as News Beat (West Midlands Police), Round your Way (WHG) and Walsall Council's Website. Other publicity events have included several Safer Walsall Question Times events, Christmas Events and several launches of community payback projects. More recently Community Payback imagery with details of how the public can nominate projects has been added to the rebranded Safer Walsall Partnership camper van, which will be used by partners to create a focal point at events.

The Ministry of Justice and Home Office are very clear about offenders being seen paying back to communities. One such way has been the introduction of the orange high visibility Community Payback vests that people undertaking Community Payback are expected to wear. All Community Payback vehicles are badged with the logo and have contact details attached to them. It is also the expectation that A boards identifying the work being carried out as Community payback are displayed at work sites. On completion of projects, plaques can be put up to show that the work done was carried out by offenders completing their sentences for the benefit of the community and neighbourhood.

This demonstrates that when people are sentenced by the courts, punishments are carried out and that tangible benefit for the community is realised in the form of work that in many cases would not otherwise be done.

## **1.5 Communities having their Say**

In April 2009, a national vote was held whereby Pioneer Area put forward a number of potential projects for Community Payback to complete. In Walsall, five projects were voted on and regionally, Walsall had the second highest number of votes. The winning project in Curtin Drive, Moxley was to makeover an overgrown communal area. The project involved dismantling two outdoor brick sheds, vegetation clearance and general tidy up of the area.

More recently, Walsall Citizens Panel have been asked to identify potential projects. It is envisaged that with the emerging Area Partnerships, particular focus may be given to working with the Partnership's managers to deliver some initial quick wins but also to support more sustainable projects.

## **1.6 Referral Routes**

If Elected members have projects, where Community Payback could assist, then the following criteria must be fulfilled:-

- It must benefit the local community
- It must not take paid work away from others
- No one must make a profit from the work
- It must be challenging and demanding
- It must be worthwhile and constructive
- Offenders must be seen to be putting something back into the community.

The Community Payback team will assess the project for suitability and for health and safety implications before setting up a project to carry out the work.

Nomination of projects can happen via:-

- <http://www.swmprobation.gov.uk/> (click on the Nominate a Project link)
- Telephone SWM Probation central CP admin unit: 0121 248 2688
- Telephone Walsall Community Payback unit: 01922 720 661
- Telephone Narinder Singh Chumber, Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Coordinator: 01922 709 189, email: ChumberN@walsall.gov.uk