

COMMUNITY SAFETY and LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - Examination into Wardens

Background – The DETR established a Neighbourhood Warden Unit in 2000 and over the following years external funding was secured from a range of sources which enabled the provision and gradual increase of Street Wardens in Middlesbrough to its present day level. The establishment of three managerial positions, six senior and sixty six Wardens, supported by various equipment has created a service with the purpose of supporting the development of safer, stronger and sustainable communities in Middlesbrough.

Scrutiny - The aim of the Scrutiny was essentially to assess the Warden Service in relation to its operational arrangements and funding, in particular the financial issues relating to its sustainability. Consequently the Panel determined the following Terms of Reference:-

- (a) Assessing the purpose of providing a Warden service
- (b) Its operational arrangements and links with other agencies.
- (c) How effective the service has been since its introduction
- (d) How the service is funded and the financial options for its sustainability.

The Panel obtained information from the Community Protection Service, which is responsible for the Warden Service. Information was also obtained from the Warden Service itself and from the Executive Member with the Portfolio for Community Safety, in addition to visiting the Wardens operational base and observing a Warden briefing session.

The Panel was already familiar with the direct engagement and contribution the Warden Service has with other agencies through its previous examination of the AIM process and the partnership arrangements.

Findings - The Panel have addressed the Terms of Reference and deliberated their findings. The results of which are that the Panel considers the Warden Service has made a substantial contribution to tackling Crime and Anti Social behaviour in

Middlesbrough. It is evident the Wardens have also built a positive relationship with many parts of the local community and have made advances in tackling the fear of crime. The Panel are clearly of the view that the contribution the Warden Service makes to the AIM process has been invaluable in assisting the Partnership in achieving the 17% reduction in the first year and the continued reduction in crime since its involvement.

CONCLUSION

The Panel concludes that the Street Warden service makes a substantial contribution to tackling crime and anti social behaviour in Middlesbrough. The indirect benefits of having a Street Warden service, is that it also assists in reducing the fear of crime, which in itself can be a traumatic perception for many people.

The Panel considered the issue of public perception to be extremely significant, and the evidence of hundreds of phone calls and letters of appreciation in addition to the complimentary remarks from external organisations including the ODOM provided clear evidence of a complimentary public opinion.

The panel concludes that the service is invaluable and with the potential of a 24-hour economy and changes in licensing laws the Panel endorses the investment and support given to this service as the correct direction for Middlesbrough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Community Safety and leisure Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive, that: -

- A The service identify a suitable location for the Warden control centre which is easily accessible for the Public while allowing the Wardens to access their patrol areas with relative ease.
- B The premises identified have a secure room to create the appropriate Intelligence room required for the effective operation of the Warden Service.
- C The Service explores the funding available when addressing the 2006/07 budget in respect of
 - bringing the Wardens up to the initial projected contingent of 80.
 - Extending operational hours to reflect changes in licensing hours, 24 hour economy, ASB etc

AGENDA ITEM:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

4th OCTOBER 2005

**COMMUNITY SAFETY and LEISURE
SCRUTINY PANEL**

FINAL REPORT

**INVESTIGATION INTO
WARDEN SERVICE**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this Final Report is to present the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel's assessment and proposals on the Warden Service in relation to the Terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Investigation.

OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 2 The overall aim of the Scrutiny Investigation was to assess the Warden Service in relation to its operational arrangements, funding of the service and its financial sustainability.

- 3 To present the findings of the Scrutiny Investigation to the Executive for their consideration.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4 The Scrutiny Panel met on 5th July 2005 and determined that it would be addressing the warden Service as its next subject of enquiry. Consequently the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Investigation were established and are presented as follows: -
 - (e) Assessing the purpose of providing a Warden service
 - (f) Its operational arrangements and links with other agencies.
 - (g) How effective the service has been since its introduction
 - (h) How the service is funded and the financial options for its sustainability.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 5 **Work Programme** The Overview and Scrutiny Board approved the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panels Work Programme which identified the Warden Service as being the subject area to follow the Panels assessment of the AIM process. The Panel considered that there were clear links between the operation of the Wardens and the AIM process and consequently the Panel would build on the knowledge gained through the previous Scrutiny when assessing this service.
- 6 **History of the Service** Although the DETR established a Neighbourhood Warden Unit in 2000, the main funding sources (NRF) were secured for Middlesbrough in 2001. The basis of the scheme was that Wardens would free Police Officers time from dealing with “minor” issues to enable the Police to be less reactive to more pro active in crime reduction. Running parallel with this was the desire to sustain the regeneration of the area, despite the efforts of those individuals intent on destruction. With this funding a manager, two senior Wardens and fourteen Wardens were appointed in 2002. At this time the service was based in Grove Hill, but the service only covered five wards.
- 7 In 2003 further external funding was secured (ESF, ERDF and NRF) which increased the service to forty Wardens and the service was relocated to operate from Greenway.
- 8 In 2004 further external funding was again secured (WMNT) and the operation of the service was again relocated to Cannon Park. The establishment at this time was established as follows:-
 - Manager
 - Asst Manager

- Intelligence Officer
 - 6 senior wardens
 - 66 wardens
- 9 The service now covers all of the town, although some restrictions are applied due to the requirements of the funding streams. The Councils Warden service was awarded Beacon Council status attracting comments such as “the best briefed in the UK” ODPM quality Standard with Distinction. The Warden service was now embedded as an integral part of the AIM process. The AIM process became a key element in determining the deployment of Warden resources throughout Middlesbrough. The operation of Wardens and their engagement with communities has proved to be a valuable contribution in the provision of information to the partnership. This has had a direct effect on the actions, which combat crime and anti social behaviour.
- 10 In 2005 additional equipment such as vehicle mounted CCTV was added to the fleet. The Airwaves communication system was commissioned and the search for new accommodation commenced.
- 11 **Function of the Street Wardens** The function of a Street Warden is to support the development of safer, stronger and sustainable communities. This is achieved by having highly visible patrols, which reassure the public, by dealing with anti social behaviour. The Wardens contribute to community cohesion and collect local information, which assists other services to effectively undertake their function to provide a better environment for the people of Middlesbrough.

PANELS SCRUTINY EXAMINATION

- 12 **Setting the Scene** The Community Protection Service provided the Panel with the detail of how the Warden service had developed and how the Warden service worked very closely with a number of external agencies. These included Police, Fire, Streetscene, Trading Standards, Noise and Environmental Enforcement, Pest Control, Abandoned Vehicles, ASB Enforcement, Neighbourhood Management, Schools, West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust, Erimus Housing and Community Groups, amongst others.
- 13 The Panel received operational information on the Wardens role, how briefing sessions operate, how and why they attend Schools and also their visits to Community Centres. Members were informed that wardens carried radios and could be contacted at all times whilst on duty. With the present working day being 11.30 AM until 10.00 PM. With a four day on four day off shift system. The Wardens Service had recently changed the contact system and now had a Control Desk, similar to the Police and Fire services, manned by two Wardens who handle all calls and direct Wardens to deal with reported incidents. In general, Wardens handle over 1500 incidents per month, which is the highest in the country for this type of service.

- 14 The turnover of Wardens in Middlesbrough has been very low; however, the uncertainty of the Job Evaluation scheme within Middlesbrough has marginally increased the turnover of staff. Recruitment criteria is very strict ensuring applicants have a desire to work in the community and also have a history or live in the estates on which they would work.
- 15 **Funding** A central issue for the Panel was to examine the funding and consider options for the financial sustainability of the service. The Panel wanted to ensure a financial exit strategy was in place and that future funding of the wardens was secure to ensure the service would continue.
- 16 The history of the external funding for the Warden Service is outlined previously in this report. During the course of these enquiries the Panel was informed that as each funding stream ceases it had now been determined that the financial gap created from the cessation of such funding would be supported from the Councils revenue budget. The Panel was pleased that such a commitment had been given and actioned.
- 17 **Community Engagement** The panel wanted to assess how the Public viewed the Warden Service. Whilst it was members belief that the service was received well by the public and added substantially to a feeling of well being to people living and visiting Middlesbrough. The Panel wanted to evidence what in reality the position is.
- 18 The Panel was appraised of the number of calls and contacts from the public who had conveyed very complimentary remarks about the service since its introduction. The Panel also received a copy of the Street Warden file titled, "Making the best even better". This file contained some twenty five examples of letters received by the Council conveying appreciation and extremely complimentary remarks regarding the assistance provided by wardens in helping people and tackling crime and anti social behaviour. To support this further the Panel received dozens of newspaper extractions illustrating the excellent work the wardens have provided and are continuing to do so in Middlesbrough.
- 19 As referenced the Panel received a range of information complimenting the Warden Service. The Panel did not encounter any evidence, which presented the Warden Service as being perceived poorly by the public. However, the Councils consultation exercise with the Public generally focuses on the concerns of crime, anti social behaviour etc and not on the public's view of the Warden Service Directly. Consequently during the course of this examination, the Executive member for Community Safety and Leisure has promptly taken this issue up and asked that in an appropriate section within future surveys reference be made to determining the public's satisfaction with the Warden Service.
- 20 **Engaging with other agencies** The Panel had recently undertaken a scrutiny into the AIM process and had been impressed with the cohesion between partner organisations, which included the Warden Service. During this enquiry the Panel had heard directly from other agencies such as the Police, Fire,

West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust etc of how valuable the Warden service has been in tackling crime. The Partnership was formed to share intelligence and collectively co-ordinate their efforts to tackle crime and anti social behaviour. The target had been to reduce crime, and in the first year crime was reduced by 17% and the partnership has been successful in reducing crime further each year. The Warden Service made a substantial contribution in this achievement by working as local intelligence gathers. Especially when the Wardens concentrate their efforts on tackling anti social behaviour and the prevention of crime.

- 21 **Warden Briefings** The Panel visited the Warden Control centre on 26th July and observed a Warden briefing Session where Wardens were updated with relevant information. This information included identified prisoners due for release, known drivers whilst disqualified and individuals subject to anti social behaviour orders. These updates equip Wardens so they are aware of known offenders in the area which enables the Warden to assist Police in preventing or controlling further offences and acts of anti social behaviour.
- 22 The Panel were appraised that in addition to attending morning briefing sessions, as the Wardens worked blocks of four day shifts they would complete a hand over sheet, to provide necessary information to the on-coming Wardens thereby maintaining and information continuity.
- 23 **Location / Premises** The Panel is aware that the Warden Service has moved its Headquarters location on a number of occasions from Grove Hill, Greenway to Canon Park and are now in pursuit of another location from which to operate.
- 24 The Panel would support a move of premises for the Warden Service, However, the Panel has identified some key issues, which it believes need to be considered before the decision on a specific site is determined. The Panel believes that the proposed site should be easily accessible for members of the public while facilitating the easy access of the Wardens into the Town Centre and avoid options for premises which do not facilitate this.
- 25 The present premises accommodate all the Wardens on a shift for their morning briefing. Once that has taken place the staff retained within the building is very small and accommodation requirements are significantly reduced. One area, which is considered to be very important for the successful operation of the service, is the Intelligence room. As referenced this contains a substantial amount of very sensitive material and while Wardens have access, the security requirements around this room should not be under estimated when considering a new site. In addition to the security requirements, the Intelligence room should be of sufficient size to ensure the relevant information can be displayed adequately to ensure Wardens can access the information.
- 26 **Comparisons with other Local Authorities** Initially the Panel were intending to obtain some comparisons with other Local Authority Warden Services. However, initial enquiries regarding the number of Warden Schemes in

operation in revealed that it was in excess of one thousand. The Panel was also aware that the Police Standards Board had made excellent reference to the engagement and value of Middlesbrough Wardens in obtaining information from the community and assisting the partnership in combating crime. The Panel considers that there are many variables, which include the living environment, communities, cultures, investment powers, engagement with other agencies etc that would make any comparison of little value. While the ODPM references that Middlesbrough Wardens are ahead of the game and could provide training sessions nationally. The Panel concluded that the most important factor was that each Warden Scheme must be reflective of the specific needs of that area and that feedback from the public and external agencies is the main factor to measure success. In this respect Middlesbrough Warden Service can evidence their value and effectiveness by the volume of calls and contact they receive from the public providing valuable information, which on many occasions does bring with it very complimentary feedback.

- 27 **Links with the AIM process** The Street Warden Manager presented that the AIM process had given the Street Wardens some stability for their role. The Street Wardens consider that AIM provides the intelligence to ensure Wardens are deployed effectively and directed towards the trouble 'hot spots' across the town. Every estate had a Warden presence and other agencies operating in that area were provided with more information than previously due to the Wardens local knowledge and engagement with the local community. This intelligence is continually fed into the AIM process where it is mapped to provide a comprehensive picture of Crime and anti social issues across Middlesbrough. The Panel considered that the presence of Wardens in specific areas directed by the AIM process contributes to reducing some members of the public's fear of crime.

CONCLUSION

- 28 The Panel concludes that the Street Warden service makes a substantial contribution to tackling crime and anti social behaviour in Middlesbrough. The indirect benefits of having a Street Warden service, is that it also assists in reducing the fear of crime, which in itself can be a traumatic perception for many people. The Panel considers the Councils Warden Service secures local information, which is unlikely to be obtained by other agencies and consequently is an invaluable source of information for the AIM process. This information contributes to the collective intelligence considered at AIM meetings, which results in providing a clear direction for actions to be undertaken by agencies including the Warden Service, thereby giving operational focus as opposed to simply walking the streets.
- 29 The Panel is aware of the complimentary references on the ODPM web site, comments made by members of the Partnership etc. However, what impressed the Panel regarding community perception, was that many responses were not simply from institutions where it may be viewed that they

are conveyed as a matter of courtesy, but that many are unsolicited letters from the public wanting to convey their appreciation.

- 30 During the course of this Scrutiny, the Panel has considered the operational hours for Wardens and the option of extending, in particular beyond 10.00 PM and possibly a 24-hour service. It is understood a 24-hour service had been considered previously and that limited resources and lack of demand had resulted in the service stopping at 10.00PM. This is an area the Panel would encourage attention is given to in the future, especially as the NightTime economy may begin to grow and the revision of licensing laws.
- 31 Whilst there does not appear to be any plans at present to increase the Warden Service to the initial target of 80. The Panel would recommend that increasing the present establishment to 80 would be beneficial and build on the strengths to date achieved by the service. Consequently, consideration should be given to dedicating funding for 80 wardens when determining the 2006 / 07 budget

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 32 The Panel's key recommendations to the Executive are as outlined below.
- A The service identify a suitable location for the Warden control centre which is easily accessible for the Public while allowing the Wardens to access their patrol areas with relative ease.
- B The premises identified have a secure room to create the appropriate Intelligence room required for the effective operation of the Warden Service.
- C The Service explores the funding available when addressing the 2006/07 budget in respect of
- bringing the Wardens up to the initial projected contingent of 80.
 - Extending operational hours to reflect changes in licensing hours, 24 hour economy, ASB etc

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 33 The Panel is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular the co-operation we have received from the following: -

CLlr Barry Coppinger Executive Member for Community Safety and Leisure
Ed Chicken Head of Community Protection
Bill Thompson Street Warden Manager

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS ROBSON
CHAIR OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL**

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were consulted or referenced to during this Scrutiny and in the compilation of this report:

- (a) Making the Best Even Better – (Raising Hope – Reducing Fear)
- (b) Minutes of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panels of 8th June, 5th July, 26th July, 16th August.

ABBREVIATIONS

Used within the Report, Minutes or Presentations

AIM	Active Intelligence mapping
ASB	Anti Social Behaviour
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
DETR	Department of Environment Transport and Regions
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
WMNT	West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust