

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 27 November 2012

BY: Executive Director (Services for Communities)

SUBJECT: Community Wardens Report

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To provide the Policy and Performance Review Committee with an update on the work of the community wardens and give information on work presently undertaken and future direction.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Policy and Performance Review Committee notes the content of the report and endorses the work of the community wardens.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The community warden service is part of a wider range of measures introduced by the Council to tackle antisocial behaviour issues across East Lothian, including the antisocial behaviour team, and directly funded Police officers.
- 3.2. There are seven community wardens and a senior warden. The community wardens work flexibly on a three week shift pattern which includes night shift working as part of the Council's night time noise team. The wardens have been managed within the Environmental Protection team since their inception on 1 September 2008.
- 3.3. The community wardens aim to provide a high quality, flexible and responsive service in relation to investigation of, dealing with and reporting on antisocial behaviour and related environmental protection matters to help promote a clean, safe and secure environment for the local community in East Lothian. Individual community wardens develop local knowledge and community liaison in relation to one of the Council's electoral ward areas, but operational deployment is across East Lothian as directed by the senior warden/ team manager.

- 3.4. Their duties are wide and varied and include high visibility patrols and community engagement, enforcement of dog fouling and littering legislation including issuing of fixed penalties, dealing with low level ASB complaints and working closely with ASB team. They also undertake joint patrols with police, estate inspections with Housing. They also attend monthly Community Action Police Partnership (CAPP) meetings, Community Council Meetings, Tenants and Residents group etc as appropriate.
- 3.5. It is not possible to record all the activities of the wardens, but in addition to the day to day patrols and community engagement, the list in Appendix 1 is indicative of the diversity of the wardens' work in recent months.
- 3.6. The wardens are tasked daily by the senior warden and have a three weekly work progress meeting when ongoing and proposed work is discussed. They are also tasked by the weekly Task & Co-ordinating Group (TAC) meeting which identifies areas requiring warden patrols based around local community/ police intelligence. The wardens also generate their own work within the individual ward areas. Most of the wardens now have bicycles for patrolling residential areas. As well as working within their own areas they are tasked for joint patrols with other wardens throughout East Lothian.
- 3.7. One week in three the wardens work a night shift Thursday to Sunday nights (18:00 – 03:00 hours) as part of the night time noise team. On night shift they will carry out locally tasked patrols in the early evening up to around 10:00, after this time they are available to deal with domestic noise calls, checks on licensed premises and Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) helpline calls. Most community wardens have taken or are about to undertake a qualification in ASB noise control.
- 3.8. The Community Wardens also support a range of diversionary and awareness raising activities in local communities eg assisting with cool down crew with L&B Fire and Rescue Service; school visits (particularly P6-7) raising awareness of ASB issues; dogwatch campaign etc.
- 3.9. An ongoing initiative is school visits (particularly p6-7 classes) to introduce the local area warden, and to discuss issues around graffiti, vandalism, what constitutes Anti-social behaviour and how these things impact on the local environment and vulnerable members of the community, the sorts of things that the wardens frequently get complaints about, snow ball throwing, banging on doors after dark and running away etc. Feedback from these visits is typically very positive eg:-
 - *“My class really enjoyed this and it made them think. Meeting adults who work in their community was a positive experience. It would be beneficial to have at least one visit per session for each class so that these links are maintained.”*

- *“A mine of information and most interesting to learn of the huge remit the wardens have, what their place is within the community and how we, as pupils and a school, can assist and support the excellent work they do”.*
- 3.10. An interim service assessment including a feedback survey was undertaken in 2010. Questionnaires were sent out to 150 recipients including Councillors, community groups, Police, and other stakeholders. There were 71 responses, the vast majority of which were very positive in support of community warden service. Some operational changes including more joint working with Housing Management and Police were introduced at that time, but by and large the operational deployment of the wardens has followed the original pattern stated in 2008.
- 3.11. There has been some staff turnover since 2008 with four wardens moving on to other jobs over the past 4 years. Although posts were filled this has caused some issues in terms of continuity of service delivery in certain areas.
- 3.12. As a consequence of the Council restructuring (April 2012) and ongoing workforce efficiency considerations, it is proposed to rationalise the staffing establishments and team management arrangements in the Environmental Protection and Antisocial Behaviour teams. Proposals for a new Safer Communities Team are underway to link the current Antisocial Behaviour team and the Community Wardens and promote greater working of the wardens from local area offices.
- 3.13. There are a number of operational benefits to bringing together the Community Wardens and the Antisocial Behaviour Team under the same operational management, including:
- Estate Management and Community Safety is inextricably linked with antisocial behaviour, graffiti, unkempt gardens, littering, vandalism, dog related complaints can all be deemed as being antisocial.
 - Dealing with antisocial noise emanating from residential premises is, by its very nature, linked to the major provisions of the Antisocial Behaviour Policy and Strategy.
 - Community Wardens can investigate lower level antisocial behaviour complaints in accordance with the Antisocial Behaviour Policy. This would expand the knowledge and skill base of Officers.
 - Foot Patrols by Community Wardens form part of the preventative arm of the Antisocial Behaviour Strategy.
 - The ASB Team has strong formal links with the Local Area Teams. We investigate their more serious antisocial behaviour complaints. This established bridge would allow the Community

Wardens to integrate themselves more easily in to Local Area Teams.

- Bringing the Community Warden Team in to the Safer Communities line management structure, would enhance the relationship between Lothian and Borders Police and the Community Warden Team. It would make the tasking of Officers on a daily basis easier. The ASB Team has direct and up to date information obtained via Police systems. Community Wardens could respond quicker to ongoing issues.
 - Having the Community Warden Team under the direct line management of the Safer Communities Team Leader, would make it easier for that Officer to have more control of the deployment of integrated resources.
 - The Community Wardens will continue to support the Council's Night Time Noise Team as part of their substantive duties.
- 3.14. The latest figures produced by Lothian and Borders Police indicate a drop of 19% in antisocial behaviour calls made to the Police during the period April to August 2012, as compared to the same period in 2011. The figures also show a drop of 37 % for youth related antisocial behaviour calls made during this period. It is submitted that the reduction shown in these Figures is, in part, due to the efforts being made by the Community Warden Team, working alongside partner agencies, in addressing antisocial behaviour within East Lothian.
- 3.15. The Community Wardens are now well established and within the available staff resources. The wardens continually aim to strike the right balance between pro-active intervention approaches and re-acting to day to day community concerns. This will be an ongoing challenge as the work of the wardens continues to develop in the coming years.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The work of the Community Wardens supports the implementation of the East Lothian Antisocial Behaviour Policy, and the Single Outcome Agreement Community Safety Outcomes.

5. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. This report is not applicable to the well being of equality groups and an Equality Impact Assessment is not required

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Financial – None

- 6.2. Personnel - Transfer of staff to Safer Communities Team subject of separate report
- 6.3. Other – None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1. None

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