



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Health and Environmental Services Committee
Subject:	Roll Out of City Wide Community Safety Warden Scheme
Date:	3 June 2009
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Relevant Background Information

The Committee will recall that the Council currently provides two types of pilot community safety warden schemes, an area specific service in the Holyland area and a roaming warden service. At its April meeting, the Committee was informed that both of these pilots would come to an end on 30th June 2009 and it was presented with a proposal to begin a new citywide scheme from late summer 2009. At this meeting the Committee agreed:

- To the proposal to operate a 25 person city wide Community Safety Warden Scheme over a three year period, subject to adequate resources being secured and to authorise the Head of Environmental Health to press potential partners for the necessary funding support for such a scheme; and
- To a recruitment programme for 25 wardens taking place from the summer of 2009, in which the posts will initially be advertised as a one year contract, with the possibility of extension for up to three years, to mitigate the risk associated with a funding shortfall.

The proposed new city-wide community safety warden service would involve a total of 25 wardens. This would allow the deployment of a number of teams working in the North, South, East and West of the City. It is envisaged that these teams would work for a period of approximately six months within a set number of hotspots areas within that part of the city. It was agreed that the scheme at this stage should ideally be planned over a three year period and that a review be carried out after two years to assess the future of the scheme in light of the fact that Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) may be considered from 2011.

The current pilot schemes need replaced as the two teams are employed on different terms and conditions and there is very little flexibility to move resources to meet need. The pilots, having small dedicated teams (up to eight in each), suffered from staff shortages due to sickness and staff turnover over the period of the pilot. It is hoped that a 25 person scheme would be able to better accommodate these types of variations in

staff numbers. The Inter-agency Group overseeing the development of this scheme is satisfied that a 25 person team represents the minimum number of staff needed to provide a service which will support local neighbourhoods and help in tackling ASB.

A further reason why the existing pilot schemes have to be replaced is that the current funding package was only put in place until this June and this is currently insufficient to operate a citywide scheme. A citywide scheme of 25 staff, working appropriate shifts will cost in the region of £850,000. This cost is to be made up by contributions from the Council, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Police, BRO and the Higher Education sector (see financial section later). Providing that the Council agrees to allocate £100,000 earmarked for wardens in the corporate plan thematic budget, the full funding package for a three year programme is likely to be secured with a total of £491,000 coming from external sources. Appendix 1 shows the suggested and confirmed contributions for the new city wide service from partners and from the Council.

Key Issues

Implications

Once the pilot schemes come to an end on 30th June, there will be a gap in service delivery until the new wardens can be appointed. It is necessary to terminate the existing fixed term contracts and to begin a recruitment process for the new posts (with different terms and conditions) shortly after that.

The residents in areas serviced by the wardens, particularly those in the Holyland, value highly the services provided by the wardens and would want to see the new service introduced as soon as possible. In addition, the new scheme, being citywide, will no longer provide a dedicated service to the Holyland area. The management of the communication around the new proposal is critical. As the Holyland is still an area with considerable hotspots of ASB, the proposal recognises the need to ensure that the team for South Belfast provides a level of service at peak times of the year when we know ASB is more likely to occur, thus targeting resources to the predicted high incident times and situations. In addition this team can be augmented by staff from the other teams should that be required such as during St Patricks Day. Service level agreements will be required by the partners contributing funding, particularly the Universities, as they will wish to be assured of an adequate level of service.

A communication plan is currently being put in place in respect of the termination of the two pilot schemes and a draft holding statement for the press is included in Appendix 2, which may be useful for Members if they are approached by the press.

The way forward

As the current community safety warden pilots finish at the end of June 2009 there is an urgent need for decisions on the way forward in order to ensure that there is as short a gap in service as possible at the end of the existing scheme. Confirmation of the allocation of the £100,000 in the corporate thematic budget, which is earmarked for wardens, would enable funding agreements to be finalised and the recruitment process to begin.

Resource Implications

Finance

Considerable financial input is required to support a city wide Community Safety Warden Service (total of £850,000). Appendix 1 details the situation in respect of partner and Council contributions at this point. It should be noted that negotiations are still ongoing.

In terms of costs to the Council of introducing the scheme from the Summer of 2009, there will be no increase in that already agreed through the revenue estimates. The total Council contribution per year is £360,000 (including £100,000 in the thematic budget). The Environmental Health Service Revenue estimates include £211,000 for wardens, the thematic estimates include £100,000 and the Community Safety Programme funding can make up the remainder (a total of £147,000 over 3 years or £49,000 a year).

Human Resource

Although the Committee is being asked to support a three year scheme, because the funding is not yet fully secured, the Committee has agreed to appoint the new wardens initially on a one year fixed term contract, with the possibility of extension for up to three years. There is no risk to the Council in doing this, given the level of funding currently committed to the scheme which would allow it to operate for at least one year. If further funding is not forthcoming from others, then the scheme would have to end at the stage that funding runs out.

The current fixed term contracts for the existing wardens will be terminated with effect from 30th June, subject to agreed Human Resource protocols being applied. Again it is hoped that the new positions will be advertised as soon as possible.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Note that both the pilot Holyland and Roaming Community Safety Wardens schemes come to an end on 30th June 2009 resulting in a gap in service until the recruitment process for the citywide scheme is complete;
- Note the communication statement regarding the termination of the service;
- Agree that £100,000 earmarked for wardens within the Corporate Plan thematic budget can be allocated to this project to lever in partner funds, subject to ratification by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 5th June.

Decision Tracking

An update on the progress of the recruitment and selection of the City Wide Warden scheme and the final funding package will be brought back to Committee in September 2009 by the Head of Environmental Health.

A further update on partner funding contributions for 2010-11 will be brought back to Committee in December 2009 by the Head of Environmental Health.

Key to Abbreviations

NIO- Northern Ireland Office
ASB- Anti-social Behaviour
NIHE- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
BCC- Belfast City Council
PSNI – Police Service for Northern Ireland
BRO – Belfast Regeneration Office

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Partner contributions to a city wide community safety warden scheme -
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Appendix 2 – Wardens Scheme – Holding Statement

Draft Evaluation reports by Deloitte MCS Limited of both the Community Safety Holyland and Roaming Wardens scheme dated March 2009, are held in the Members library.