

CABINET

20 APRIL 2004

NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS SCHEME – OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report sets out the proposed operational arrangements for the new neighbourhood warden scheme for consideration by Cabinet. If Cabinet agrees with the approach it is suggested that views be sought from TACT, the Town Forum, Community Safety Partnership and from consultation with community groups in Highcliffe and Stanmore before proceeding with the implementation stage. In order to progress the scheme as quickly as possible it is proposed that unless the consultation process suggests significant differences of view from those set out in the report, the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Services, be delegated authority to proceed with the submission of a report to Personnel Committee and thereafter with the implementation of the scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the views of TACT, the Town Forum, Community Safety Partnership and residents groups are sought on the scheme as described in the report.
2. That, subject to support for the scheme from consultees, the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Services, be authorised to make minor modifications to the proposed arrangements as necessary, to submit the necessary report to Personnel Committee and thereafter to implement the scheme.

CABINET20 April 2004NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS SCHEME – OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTSREPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICESDETAIL:1 Introduction

1.1 Although there are many slight variations, the essence of a neighbourhood warden scheme is the long-term provision of an organised team in a specific geographic location where they become a focus for community management and problem solving activities. These types of scheme are strongly supported by the Government and exist in many local authorities up and down the country. There are schemes in deprived urban areas and in isolated rural settlements. Locally, both Southampton and Test Valley have recognisable warden schemes.

1.2 Government literature identifies four objectives generally cited for introducing warden schemes:

- to reduce crime and the fear of crime
- to improve the local environment through practical measures managed or undertaken by wardens
- to develop better community understanding and activities
- to improve housing management and neighbour relations

The Government also identifies a number of factors necessary to ensure that any warden scheme is successful:

- having clear objectives and being well designed
- full involvement of local residents and local partners
- involving local authorities and the police
- effective communication between all partners
- high quality training and proper lines of accountability
- continuity of service over time – not simply reactive deployment

1.3 The Winchester neighbourhood warden scheme has budget provision of £75,000 in 2004/05, rising to £105,000 in 2005/06 in the base budget. Part of this funding is from the HRA and part from the Town Forum which means that both TACT and the Town Forum must be considered stakeholders and formally consulted on how the funding is used. The Community Safety Partnership will also wish to consider the scheme in relation to other community safety policies and activities. Residents groups are also very interested in wardens and should be involved at an early stage in formulating plans for their neighbourhood.

1.4 The purpose of this report is to seek general approval for the shape of the Winchester scheme so that consultation can take place with interested parties. If there is no fundamental difference of view about key issues then work can commence on detailed implementation. If there is then Members will have to determine which way to proceed.

## 2 Objectives

- 2.1 In very general terms the aim of any wardening scheme is to improve the quality of life for people living in an area. However, given the range of tasks wardens could carry out it is important to be more specific than this in setting objectives.
- 2.2 It is very important that the scheme is tailored to the needs of the area in which it is going to function. Although the precise area of deployment is discussed below, the nature of the funding means that wardens must be deployed first and foremost in the areas of Winchester with the larger concentrations of property rented from the Council. This means Highcliffe, Stanmore and Winnall.
- 2.3 Crime figures and anecdotal reporting suggest that none of these areas has what would be described as 'a crime problem' although the density of housing does mean that there is a higher level of crime related anti-social behaviour than the average across the District. The police have not suggested that these areas require greater levels of policing in order to establish acceptable levels of community safety. Some residents would certainly like to see more visible policing but if this is to happen then the proposed Accredited Community Support Officers to be funded by the County Council would be a more suitable mechanism than neighbourhood wardens.
- 2.4 Other forms of anti-social behaviour, such as littering, fly-tipping, graffiti, abandoned vehicles, problem parking and occasional noise nuisance, which are related more to carelessness and discourtesy than crime, may be more common because of the density of housing and the age of the housing layout. These require swift intervention to prevent a problem escalating and to make residents feel that the Council is concerned about their problems. At present the Council is rather remote and the response to these problems somewhat unpredictable.
- 2.5 The consultation undertaken for the John Thompson and Partners report in Stanmore and Highcliffe showed that residents also had a large number of concerns about environmental issues such as the quality of public open spaces, footpaths, play areas and the landscaping of the area. Wardens could have a major role in generating improvements. The first would be through practical action to deal with problems without the complexity of involving clients, contractors or relying on long chains of communication – which should mean a quicker response. The second is through organising and galvanising community involvement in issues and projects – whether it is through speaking to schoolchildren or running a 'community clear-up'.
- 2.6 Housing management in all areas is carried out to a high standard. Although more 'eyes and ears' would be helpful to the housing management service it is suggested that the wardens service should not play any part in the maintenance of the housing stock or dealing with individual housing matters except at the specific request of the Area Housing Manager. In Test Valley the wardens did initially have a maintenance role and this was found to be a source of tension and confusion resulting in poor service.
- 2.7 Taking all of this into account it is suggested that the Winchester warden scheme should have as its objectives:
- improve the quality and enjoyment of public areas in the neighbourhood by providing a swift response to the need for better management and minor works (including reporting defects, litter collection, rubbish disposal, small repairs to public property etc);

- improve the quality of public services in the neighbourhood by identifying and reporting problems, progress chasing, communication with the community and providing on-site co-ordination;
- organise and motivate public participation in practical community events and activities which lead to social and environmental improvements
- reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour by using local knowledge, providing practical solutions to problems and mediating between different interest groups
- provide a direct link between residents and local agencies to deliver specific services quickly and efficiently

2.8 It is suggested that the emphasis of the wardens scheme should be placed on practical environmental work and problem solving in the public realm rather than on 'policing' or working on behalf of individuals. There will opportunities for wardens to assist individuals and to act on their own initiative within the defined role. As examples, what the wardens would routinely be seen doing might include:

- removing graffiti, litter or fly-tipped rubbish
- ensuring a road is clear of vehicles to enable the road sweeper to be used effectively
- consulting on, planning and helping to install a new bus shelter
- working with a voluntary group to repaint a community building
- organising and promoting public meetings or events about significant issues
- replacing a worn-out sign
- talking to local shop-keepers about ideas for creating easier access to a shopping area
- visiting a school to give a talk as part of a campaign to improve safety around railways
- finding out where local teenagers hang out, what they get up to and what might be done about any problems they cause or are subject to
- being present at meetings with agencies working in the area to give a 'worm's eye view' of issues
- making home visits to check a detail or follow up a problem where this has been specifically requested by another agency e.g. housing, victim support, CAB etc

What they would not normally be doing would include:

- patrolling up and down streets (with or without the police) simply to be seen patrolling
- carrying out repairs in individual homes (public or private)
- seeking to resolve disputes between neighbours concerning private property
- taking a leading role in the investigation of crime or any operations against suspects
- participating in the eviction, detention or the removal of property from individuals
- responding to requests to 'tidy up' or move on groups of young people who are not obviously causing any problems (but they certainly would be trained in how to intervene in a situation to prevent harm or damage being caused)

### 3 Accredited or not accredited?

- 3.1 Under the Police Reform Act 2002 a Chief Constable can establish a scheme to accredit certain persons employed by local authorities, RSL's and other employers of suitable standing. Accreditation is not necessarily intended to create an extension of the police service but to ensure the quality and effectiveness of non-police management schemes, such as neighbourhood wardens, football ground stewards and parking attendants.
- 3.2 Community safety accreditation provides a link between the police and those operating the accredited scheme that provides continuity and access to information. Accreditation can, if the employer asks and the Chief Constable agrees, involve giving the individuals certain minor powers such as the power to issue fixed penalty notices for littering, riding a bike on a footpath and the power to remove alcohol from people under 18.
- 3.3 The biggest benefit of accreditation is to link the accredited scheme into the 'police family', which will promote confidence and a flow of information between the agencies. Having the powers which would be available would give an opportunity for the wardens to control certain types of anti-social behaviour but might, if they set out to use them, cause tension which made other aspects of their job more difficult.
- 3.4 On balance the best starting point may be seek accreditation but not the powers, which can be given. If this is ineffective then an upgrade can easily be sought in time. High quality training for wardens will be essential and this will be organised in conjunction with other service provider, including the police and other local authorities.

### 4 Working Area

- 4.1 The warden scheme is being established with funding from the HRA and the Town Forum. It is therefore a pre-condition that its focus is those parts of Winchester town which have a high proportion of local authority rented housing – effectively Stanmore, Winnall and Highcliffe. Of these areas, Winnall is the smallest and Highcliffe has the

most clearly defined boundaries. Stanmore has by far the largest number of properties.

- 4.2 There is no hard and fast guidance about the area that a team of wardens can cover. In Test Valley four wardens are deployed in central Andover, whilst another four cover the whole of Romsey, North Baddesley and southern Test Valley. In other parts of the country estates or town centres are covered by between 2 and 6 wardens.
- 4.3 Based on the views of local Members and the likely scale of work, it is suggested that the three wardens should commence work in Highcliffe and Stanmore. As this is a pilot scheme it will soon become evident what scope there is to extend the range of the wardens. Whatever their routine "patch" the wardens would also be utilised on occasion to deal with specific events or problems in other parts of Winchester where their skills or training will be useful.

## 5 Management and Operational Arrangements

- 5.1 Neighbourhood wardens represent a major extension of the Community Services team. The issues that will be raised by having wardens in the field will range from the mundane to the complex and serious. The warden service will be highly visible, representative of the Council and must therefore be of very high quality. It will require significant management and some administrative support to ensure that the inevitable paperwork that will be generated is kept efficiently.
- 5.2 The majority of the working week will be occupied by pre-arranged activities, events and visits, around which reactive work will be fitted in. The wardens and their management will allocate tasks between the team subject to availability and expertise. Some tasks will require two wardens working together, others may be undertaken by one on their own. Pre-arranged tasks would include visits to hot spots and unstructured contact time with local residents, businesses and community groups.
- 5.3 Most warden schemes expect staff to cover more than simply standard hours, working a rota that includes evenings and weekends. If, as is proposed, the Winchester scheme emphasises the environmental and community improvement role rather than the 'policing' role it will not necessary or desirable for the wardens to work extensively in the evening – little can be done in the dark. It is therefore proposed that the wardens work on a rota with some late starts/late finishes rather than day/evening shifts, and including Saturday but not Sunday working.
- 5.4 A draft budget has been prepared based on the funding available and the estimated grading of personnel and is shown at Appendix 1.
- 5.5 Comparisons with other schemes suggest that most wardens are paid at a level around our Scale 3. Higher salaries would produce a better calibre of applicant and more continuity, but less time against a fixed budget. They will be managed by a new post to be known as the Neighbourhood Services Co-ordinator, probably graded at Scale 5. (All gradings subject to job evaluation). This post will manage the wardens and ensure that their work is properly directed towards achieving key objectives, as well as liaising with officers in other departments at a management level to ensure a 'joined up' approach. They also will provide a point of contact with the police and other agencies to manage the Council's response to requests for

assistance from the police with anti-social behaviour orders, exclusion areas and other matters. The Council has additional duties and powers under the new Anti-Social Behaviour Act and it is important that it is in a position to react to these. This post is eligible for Home Office funding of £25,000 per year over the next two years at least. A proposed management structure is shown in Appendix 2.

- 5.6 It would not be sensible for the existing Community Safety Officer to manage the wardens as this would involve him in day to day issues which would detract from his strategic role in developing community safety generally.
- 5.7 The wardens will have two vans suitable for carrying tools, light equipment and materials and will maintain contact through mobile phones and two-way radios. They will be provided with a bright and non-military uniform. The service will be titled 'Winchester Neighbourhood Wardens'.

## 6 Location

- 6.1 The Neighbourhood Services Co-ordinator will be located at Athelstan House from where they will support the warden's day to day operation and contribute to other community safety activities. It is proposed that the wardens operate from a hard to let property within the neighbourhood. This would be their office and resource base but not a public access point.

## 7 Targets and Performance Measures

- 7.1 Specific targets and performance measures need to be produced for the warden scheme. If the emphasis of the scheme is, as suggested, to be on environmental and practical intervention then targets ought to be related to primarily to these. It will, of course, also be possible to assess the impact of the wardens work on other measures, such as fear of crime.

## 8 Implementation Issues

- 8.1 The nature and structure of the wardens scheme needs to be considered by the Town Forum, TACT, community representatives in Highcliffe and Stanmore, and the Community Safety Partnership. None of these have been formally consulted yet and it suggested that Cabinet refer this report to them for comment before giving approval to the scheme. Personnel Committee will need to consider the establishment of new posts once Cabinet has agreed the approach. The importance of community involvement in designing visible aspects of the scheme cannot be overstated.
- 8.2 In view of the likely problems with the timing of meetings, it is suggested that the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Community Services, be delegated authority to proceed with the necessary consultation and to make any minor modifications to the proposed scheme which are necessary to ensure that the scheme is in place by October / November 2004. Only if there is a major difference of view from any of the stakeholders will be matter be returned to Cabinet.

## 9 Timescale

- 9.1 Allowing for the hiatus which will be caused by the election and the summer break it is unlikely that the scheme will be functioning before November. A possible programme is as follows:

April/May	discussions with TACT, Town Forum, Community Safety Partners
May/June	prepare job descriptions/job evaluation
Late June	Community consultation, Personnel Committee
July/August	Vehicle/equipment procurement
September/October	Staff recruitment (three wardens)
November	Scheme launch

9.2 Recruitment of the Neighbourhood Services Co-ordinator post which has a wider role could commence more quickly because of the more generic nature of the post and less need to consult on their duties (which will be to manage whatever scheme is finally to be delivered). This would be helpful in getting the scheme up and running more quickly.

## 10 Conclusion

10.1 This report has set out the suggested scope and objectives of the pilot neighbourhood warden's project. Detailed operational arrangements will be developed by officers to meet the objectives set by the Members. Consultation with stakeholders should follow to test the concept and to ensure ownership from all the interested parties.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

### 11 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

The introduction of a pilot neighbourhood warden scheme is a specific objective of the Council set out in the 2004-2007 Corporate Strategy.

### 12 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The resource implications are set out in the report.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

## APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 Budget Analysis

Appendix 2 Management Structure