

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	19th January, 2011
3.	Title:	Service Review – Neighbourhood Wardens
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This report describes the progress made in reviewing the structure and functions of the Neighbourhood Wardens Service and recommends a new operating model.

Following the previous report to Cabinet detailing the In-Year Budget Saving Pressures (Cabinet ref C47, 10.8.10) for Neighbourhoods and Adult Services a service review relating to the Neighbourhood Warden Service has been completed and consultation has taken place in accordance with the prescribed process with staff and unions.

The report describes the outcome of the review and a proposed implementation plan of the reconfigured service.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- **Notes the content of the report, the staffing implications arising from the proposals and the timescale for implementation.**
- **Agrees the structural changes set out in the report.**

7. Proposals and Details

Background

The need to undertake an organisational review relating to the Neighbourhood Warden Service is set against the background of the financial challenges faced by the Council. Cabinet agreed (Ref C47 of 10.8.10) to a series of service reviews, one of which concerns the Neighbourhood Warden's Service.

This review commenced on the 24th September and concluded one month later. The review had two main objectives:

- 1 To develop proposals for a service fit for purpose in the light of current and future anticipated demands, and
- 2 To reduce costs to a more sustainable level.

It is widely recognised that the work of Neighbourhood Wardens is well respected both within the council and by the general public. However whilst it is a frontline customer facing service which contributes to many of the priorities of the Council, the functions undertaken are largely discretionary or could be delivered in a variety of different ways. In view of the significant pressures facing the Authority, the current organisational arrangements are not financially sustainable, and the service needs to reduce its costs. The expected level of savings can only be achieved by reducing the number of posts within the service.

Principles

The service has been reviewed and a new operating model proposed which is capable of:

- Promoting neighbourhood management and enhancing the stewardship of local areas; making the service responsive, effective and action focussed. Making it easier to get things done.
- Reducing handovers; giving staff the authority, training support and tools to tackle problems at the first point of contact, and not passing customers between council departments.
- Promoting a clear approach to those issues the council has a responsibility for, and the thresholds that will be applied to determine services.
- Becoming a critical element of integrated locality based services.

Work is ongoing to develop proposals for a locality based neighbourhood management service. The role of the Neighbourhood Warden will be integral to these changes. However detailed proposals for this new service are not yet complete. Nevertheless there is the potential that such proposals will impact on the service, in particular in relation to the wider team that surrounds and supports the warden service.

Proposals

It is not anticipated that there will be substantial changes to the types of work performed by Neighbourhood Wardens. But the service is likely to increase the emphasis that is placed on enforcement activity, including the issuing of FPN's and focus on work that has a quantifiable outcome. The enforcement role undertaken by the service will become more critical as reductions in staffing numbers take place elsewhere in the public sector.

Principal work activity will include the following areas:

- Fly tipping and graffiti
- Rubbish in gardens/ untidy gardens and estate management support
- Littering and dog fouling
- Community reassurance: patrolling, attending public meetings.

In addition there is an imperative to improve the management of the Town Centre, as part of a wider team.

Critical decisions will need to be taken about what the service can and cannot be expected to deliver. Further careful consideration will need to be given to processes; it is apparent that all organisations are struggling with the 'meetings culture' that has developed over recent years. This has produced many service improvements and helped to integrate the work of different departments and organisations. However, in the future we will need to increase service integration, further reduce barriers between services and develop processes which are more efficient. It is likely that in the future the service will undertake less direct engagement with groups of young people, including such things as the Junior Warden's scheme meetings with schools and other similar requests. Further consideration will also need to be given as to how it is possible to most efficiently undertake such activity as removal of drug litter and environmental clean ups.

The current Neighbourhood Warden Team is composed of 21 Wardens with 3 Supervisors. The Team is aligned to the seven Safer Neighbourhood Team boundaries. It is proposed that in the future neighbourhood wardens will form part of four locality based teams. Three of these will be based upon the existing Safer Neighbourhood Areas; the fourth team will be based on the Town Centre.

It is proposed that the North, Central and South Community Protection Teams will contain 4 wardens each with 2 wardens in the Town Team managed by EDS. The role of Wardens supervisor will disappear, with line management in the future being undertaken from within the Community Protection Team. This is planned to be with the Principal Community Protection Officers. This will result in;

- a net reduction of 7 warden's posts, and
- the loss of the 3 Warden Supervisor posts

In place of the Warden Supervisors a new post will be created of Professional Practice Officer. This post will not undertake direct line management duties but will assist the management of wardens through providing a professional advice and support role. A job profile for the post has been drawn up and assessment of grade will be made at the Pay and Grading Panel where it will be suggested that the role will be at the same grade (Band G) as the current Warden's Supervisor position.

With the reduction in staffing numbers it will be important to prioritise those areas of the Borough with the most significant problems. In part this prioritisation will be directed to council estates, in recognition of the financial arrangements for this. But it is also intended that Area Coordinating Groups will have a role of influence over which areas are prioritised and which forms of work are undertaken.

8. Next Steps

During the review period 5 wardens and 2 supervisors have taken advantage of the voluntary severance scheme. Consequently, if these proposals are acceptable, the service will reduce by a further 2 posts.

If the proposals are acceptable 12 week notices will be issued on 3rd January 2011. Expressions of interest will be invited during the following week with subsequent interviews completed by the middle of January. The new arrangements will be implemented by early February. Compulsory redundancies may need to take place dependant upon the outcome of the restructuring exercise and the ability of remaining staff to either secure other positions within the council or employment elsewhere.

The selection process will focus initially on the recruitment to the Professional Practice Officer post. With this being new post recruitment will be ring fenced firstly to all within the scope of this review and filled via competitive selection.

9. Finance

These proposals reduce the warden's service by 9 posts and the gross cost of the service by 1/3rd. The current cost of the service, after deductions for existing planned savings eg vacancy factor, is £523,000 net of HRA contributions. These proposals amount to a £223,000 saving which provides for a future Neighbourhood Warden Service of £300,000. Whilst savings are almost exclusively from posts, other savings arising from vehicles and other revenue nominals is required (c.£20,000).

Early staff departures via the voluntary severance scheme will accrue £60,000 current year savings against budget which when offset by the vacancy factor will net £52,000.

10. Risks and Uncertainties

The impact of the new service re-alignment will reduce capacity within frontline service that, whilst not affecting the Council's ability to deliver its statutory services, will be noticeable to local communities and partners in the support and action relating to anti social behaviour and enviro crime within localities.

This review presupposes that the NWS will at some future point be assimilated within a wider locality based service. This development will be important in ensuring that we can develop effective streamlined processes. However the NWS is capable of existing without this wider service, but it will be harder and more time consuming to deliver the improvements in services which communities require.

Reductions in the services' ability to support the range of community meetings previously supported, may result in a reputational risk to the Council which will need to be carefully managed.

11. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Neighbourhood Warden Service contributes to the Corporate Plan's objectives of;

- Helping to create safe and healthy communities, and
- Improving the environment

In particularly the service helps maintain the current overall low crime rate in Rotherham, as well as continuing to address people's concerns about anti-social behaviour and their fear of crime.

In addition to contributing to the Community Strategy's **Sustainable Development** cross cutting theme by protecting and enhancing the environment, the work also contributes to **Rotherham Alive** by ensuring a place where people feel good, are healthy and active, **Rotherham Achieving** by helping to improve the quality of life in the most deprived

communities and **Rotherham Proud** by increasing the satisfaction in the local area as a place to live and putting pride in the hearts of our communities.

In addressing the **Rotherham Alive** priorities contaminated land work contributes to delivering the following key Public Health strategic action:

- Tackling Health Inequalities.

Dealing with issues related to contaminated land has clear linkages to the seven outcomes of the Outcomes Framework for Social Care, and importantly includes:

- Improved Health and Emotional Well-being, by promoting and facilitating the health and emotional well-being of people who use the services.

12. Background Papers and Consultation

The proposals have been subject to consultation with affected staff and unions. The formal one month period of consultation commenced with staff on the 24th September. During that period support was provided via a facilitated workshop and a Q&A session with the lead Director exploring team thoughts. Feedback from the team was assessed. Commentary on discussion points being shown in Appendix 1.

Cabinet Report: Tackling in year budget pressures (C47 10.8.10)

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