

## NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS

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**Public Realm Services Group**

### Executive Summary

To give a report on background and the likely impact of the ending of the Neighbourhood Warden Service and the potential impact on Community Safety along with the central point of contact for Neighbourhood Action Groups. The funding for the Warden Service from Milton Keynes Council will end at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 and the service has been offered to Parish and Town Councils to fund if they wish to see it continue in their area after that date.

### Corporate Plan

**Theme:** Cleaner, Greener, Safer, Healthier MK

**Outcomes:** Is safe with a low fear of crime

**Priorities:** Alternative models of service delivery

### Key Issues and Progress

The Neighbourhood Warden Service started in Milton Keynes in 2003 with funding from the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) until 2005, the Council then took the decision to continue to directly fund from the main MKC budget.

The function of the service is to focus on issues of low level crime and anti-social behaviour and to help communities come up with solutions to local problems. The Wardens work closely with local services and agencies, community groups, residents associations and Town and Parish Councils.

Their work has included: -

- Patrolling areas in response to reports from local residents and providing a physical uniformed presence in the community
- Gathering evidence and intelligence in relation to low level crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Work in schools to educate children on issues of recycling, stranger danger, littering, water safety and firework safety.
- Providing advice on crime reduction and security.
- Trained as mobile reporting centres for the Anti Hate Crime Group.
- In the last two years they have had enforcement powers and have been able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for dog fouling and littering.
- The issuing of Section 46 Notices for householders who do not present their household waste correctly.

- Support for residents to improve the safety in sheltered housing giving security advice helping to reduce crime in sheltered housing schemes.
- Represented the Council and provided support to Neighbourhood Action Groups.

### **Impact on Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs)**

The NAGs have come to rely on the Wardens to support a number of their activities including Environmental Visual Audits (EVA) and local environmental clean up activities.

The advent of the new MKC Public Access System will provide an improved method of reporting environmental issues to Milton Keynes Council and will give NAGs a clearer route to the service responsible for local issues and they will be able to get direct feedback on the progress of their enquiry.

The Safer Neighbourhoods Delivery Group has a workshop for NAG members on 1<sup>st</sup> September at which the Public Access system will be explained and promoted.

The Council is currently in the process of contracting out its Highways and Landscape services and Waste is already out to contract with an external provider. All enquiries will be going direct to the service providers to resolve and there will be a new unit within Public Realm Services that will deal with the more complex enquiries that are not able to be resolved in the normal day to day delivery. This service will be able to provide some support to NAGs if they do not feel they are getting the support they need.

Enforcement powers will still be available through the Regulatory Service with officers able to issue FPNs and Section 46 notices although they will not have the time to patrol as the Wardens have and will require good intelligence to help them focus their time.

Some of the larger Parish Councils are exploring the possibility of training staff to issue FPNs.

### **Points to highlight**

- The original proposal to stop the service was for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 but the funding was extended for another year to give the Parish and Town Councils the opportunity to decide to fund the service.
- The Parish and Town Council have until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 to express an interest in funding the service.
- Parish and Town Councils have been given costs, background information, role profiles and the opportunity to ask question over the last 3 months to support their decision as to whether to purchase the service.
- If the service continues beyond 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 it has to be cost neutral to MKC and Parishes are being asked to commit to a full years funding of at least half a day per week.
- The cost to Parishes for the service will be £195.00 per day.
- At its peak there were 10 Wardens, there are currently 6 posts but only 4 people in post.
- The cost of the service is £125K

- Nine Parishes currently employ their own Wardens or officers in similar roles these are all larger parishes and are focused on the urban area of Milton Keynes, none of the rural parishes employ wardens.
- Currently only two parishes have made a commitment to purchase the service amounting to less than one day per week.
- The service is going to be very complex to deliver if a significant number of Parishes do not commit to more than a day per week due to the logistics of ensuring that a Warden is in the right place, at the right time and delivering the service that the Parish Council has requested.

### **Timetable of activities**

30 September 2013 – Deadline for Parish & Town Councils to commit to purchasing Neighbourhood Warden Services.

31 March 2014 – End date for current service if funding is not forthcoming from Parish and Town Councils

### **Background Papers/useful Links**

Parish Wardens Letter the original offer of the service to parishes - 13 May 2013

Presentation to the Parishes Forum – 06 June 2013

Wardens' presentation sent to Parishes 06 July 2013