

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1 Members of the Overview Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of the various Community Wardens operating within communities.

1.2 The terms of reference of the Review were:

**Identify the different types of community warden and their respective powers available to be, or currently, deployed within Kent;**

**Identify all funding sources for community wardens;**

**Identify, through consultation with the police and other representative community bodies, priority areas within Gravesham that could benefit from the deployment of community wardens / increased policing;**

**Examine the effectiveness of the rural warden operating in Higham;**

**Examine any specific advantages offered by the recently announced Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's).**

1.3 The context in which the review was undertaken was to investigate the increasing number of various types of warden that have come into being in response to an increase in anti-social behaviour and to consider how community wardens might be best funded and deployed in Gravesham to assist the Police in dealing with low level crime and anti-social behaviour.

1.4 A number of evidence gathering meetings were held from September to November 2003. A total of 12 witnesses were interviewed representing Gravesham Borough Council, Kent County Council, Dartford Borough Council, Kent County Constabulary and the Perry Street Community Association (notes of these evidence gathering meetings, which have been agreed with the parties concerned, are attached at Appendix 3). Written evidence was taken from Medway Council regarding the Community Safety Street Team scheme.

1.5 The recommendations to the Cabinet are:-

### **General Recommendations**

1.5.1 That in conjunction with the Police and KCC, a standardisation of warden training is developed to include core topics needed by all community wardens serving within our communities.

1.5.2 The Cabinet considers the introduction of a by-law banning the consumption of alcohol in public areas due to the correlation between the consumption of alcohol in the street and the occurrence of anti social behaviour.

1.5.3 Kent Police and the Home Office be advised that there is a strong public desire for uniformed police to patrol rural and urban areas,

particularly at night and Community Wardens should not be seen as a substitute for the police.

- 1.5.4 The Overview Scrutiny Committee would welcome an assurance for the provision of long term funding for community warden schemes that currently have short term financial backing thus giving the schemes greater credibility and raising public confidence.

### **Wallis Park Warden Scheme**

- 1.5.5 The Housing Department at Gravesham Borough Council considers the provision of an office for the Wallis Park Wardens, providing both a local operational base and the ability to conduct confidential resident interviews.
- 1.5.6 That the Police are approached with a view to implementing regular meetings between the Supervisor Warden and senior police officers to discuss issues which have arisen from the wardens' duties that may benefit from police assistance/intervention, and to share information. Consideration should also be given to whether the regular meetings should be attended by representatives of other community wardens within Gravesham so as to share common experiences and good practice.
- 1.5.7 Further discussions be held between the Police and the Housing Department management so that more effective/efficient communication equipment can be provided to the wardens to facilitate the summoning of urgent assistance through telephone or radio contact.
- 1.5.8 The Overview Scrutiny Committee supports the extension of what appears (at this early stage) to be a successful concept to other blocks of Council flats subject to a formal review of the pilot scheme at its six month stage. A business plan should be drawn together which identifies the cost of such extension and funding sources.
- 1.5.9 The Overview Scrutiny Committee supports Superintendent Martin Hewitt's (Area Commander North Kent Police) view that there should be co-ordination between the police and all types of Community warden within Gravesham, potentially through the creation of activity co-ordination groups which could be linked into the community safety agenda.

### **Police**

- 1.6.0 The Overview Scrutiny Committee supports the view of the Area Commander that the introduction of PCSO's in selected urban areas within Gravesham would be of assistance in combating anti social behaviour and provide a visible reassurance and act as the eyes and ears of the local communities that they would serve. The Committee is pleased to learn that during the course of its review both the Community Safety Panel and the Cabinet are minded to pursue the introduction of PCSO's.
- 1.6.1 Discussions should be held between members, officers and the Police to identify the most appropriate areas for the deployment of PCSO's. The Committee supports the general view which emerged from the review that the deployment of PCSO's in areas surrounding Perry Street, Kings Farm/Sun Lane, and Northcourt should be a priority.

However, it became clear during the course of the review that each ward has its own particular problems and a review will need to be undertaken in order to place the PCSO's effectively.

### **Rural Wardens**

- 1.6.2 Kent County Council is asked to review /clarify the instructions it gives to Rural Wardens as to whether they should operate in the evenings where there is a clear indication from the local communities they serve that this would be beneficial.
- 1.6.3 Kent County Council considers extending their Rural Warden scheme to the semi-rural communities of Chalk & Istead Rise.
- 1.6.4 Kent County Council be requested to consider whether their programme of Rural Wardens could be extended to include deployment of such within urban areas such as those in Gravesham suffering from anti social behaviour.

### **Town Centre Wardens**

- 1.6.5 Consideration be given to changing the job title of the Town Centre Wardens to a title which more appropriately reflects their role as town centre ambassadors/information points, thus avoiding confusion with the enforcement role of the police town centre beat officers.
- 1.6.6 Discussions should be held between the Police, G Safe and Gravesham Borough Council to clarify the respective roles of Town Centre Wardens, police personnel employed within the town centre and determine whether the possible introduction of PCSO's would be helpful or have the potential for creating a confusing overlap of responsibilities.

### **Community Safety Accreditation Schemes (CSAS)**

- 1.6.7 An appraisal of the CSAS should be the subject of a follow-up review once the substantive report has received approval by Cabinet/Council.

### **Community Safety Street Team – Medway**

- 1.6.8 When considering further the introduction of PCSO's, the police officers responsible and the responsible Cabinet member examine the Community Safety Street Team at Medway to see if any aspects would confer advantages to Gravesham.