

Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL B	Date:	23 JULY 2020
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW: COMMUNITY PROTECTION SERVICE		
Portfolio Holder:	NOT APPLICABLE		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

The Council's Community Protection Service was added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 in July 2019 by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members wished to consider the objectives and remit of this discretionary service, how it works with partners to achieve these objectives, and to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and provides value for money.

The purpose of this report is to allow Scrutiny Panel B Members to refamiliarize themselves with the ongoing scrutiny review of the Council's Community Protection Service. This report presents the main information previously considered by the Panel, as well as the key areas of interest identified by Members.

Recommendation(s)

Scrutiny Panel B Members are recommended to:

- a. Refamiliarize themselves with the information and evidence considered at the two previous meetings of Scrutiny Panel B on this topic.
- b. Review the previously set terms of reference to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- c. Review the previously identified areas of interest for the review, set out within this report.
- d. Agree next steps for the review.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Council's Community Protection Service was added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2019.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered at this stage of the review.

Detailed Information

Origins of the Community Protection Service in Ashfield

The Council's current Community Protection Service originated as the Ashfield Neighbourhood Warden Service. The Ashfield Neighbourhood Warden Service began operation in December 2002, established with a mission statement to: "assist to improve the quality of life for residents, reduce crime, the fear of crime, and help businesses thrive in Ashfield".

Up until March 2009, the Neighbourhood Warden Service was coordinated by Ashfield Homes (the Council's former Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO)). When funding from Nottinghamshire County Council and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund reduced, Ashfield Homes chose to cease operation of the service.

In anticipation of the contracted service coordinated by Ashfield Homes ceasing, in December 2008 Ashfield District Council unveiled a new scheme introducing £1.7 million of investment in community safety. The scheme, titled "Eyes for Ashfield", involved establishing a new team of 16 full-time Community Safety Wardens set to tackle anti-social behaviour in Ashfield.

What is a Community Protection Officer?

Community Safety Accreditation Scheme

Community Safety Accreditation Schemes enable the Chief Constable of a police force in the United Kingdom to grant a limited range of police powers to employees of non-police organisations, with the aim of strengthening community safety. Community Safety Accreditation Schemes were introduced through the Police Reform Act 2002.

Some of the powers that can be granted include the power to:¹

- Require the name and address of a person who has committed a criminal offence
- Require the name and address of a person acting in an anti-social manner
- Confiscate alcohol from young people
- Confiscate cigarettes and tobacco from young people
- Require the removal of abandoned vehicles
- Require a person to stop drinking in a designated public place
- Issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, littering, graffiti and fly posting
- Issue a penalty notice for disorder for:
 - The sale of alcohol to a person under 18
 - Buying or attempting to buy alcohol by a person under 18
 - Consumption of alcohol by a person under 18
 - Wasting police time or giving a false report
 - Behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress

To be accredited through a Community Safety Accreditation Scheme, a person must be assessed as suitable to exercise any powers granted. Accredited persons are trained and vetted to a national

¹ Home Office, *Community Safety Accreditation Scheme Powers*, February 2015.

standard. The Police Reform Act 2002 also requires that any organisations employing accredited persons must be fit for purpose and have a satisfactory complaints procedure in place.

Examples of accredited persons through Community Safety Accreditation Schemes include:

- Security guards
- Police Community Support Officers
- Community Protection Officers (CPOs)/Wardens
- Parking Attendants
- Environmental Health Officers

One of the main advantages of CPOs is their democratic accountability. Unlike the Police, whose priorities are set by Central Government, CPOs respond to and address priorities set by local communities and residents including anti-social behaviour, environmental crime, and fear of crime. These issues are important to local communities, but often cannot be the focus of police resources. An effective CPO service can prioritise these issues and provide engagement within communities.

Ashfield District Council's CPO Service

Approach and Responsibilities

Ashfield District Council's CPOs undertake a problem-solving approach to address on-street anti-social behaviour, environmental and nuisance related issues, which affect the quality of life for residents in Ashfield.

Community Protection Officers provide a uniformed patrol presence within Ashfield's town centres and communities, spending time in communities conducting high visibility patrols, engaging with residents, visitors, and businesses, and proactively challenging perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

Using both a proactive and reactive approach, CPOs follow patrol plans that include schools, parks, town centres and estates, focusing patrol time on areas that evidence the greatest levels of need at that time.

Key tasks and responsibilities of Community Protection Officers include:

- High visibility foot, bicycle or vehicle patrols across the District
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints
- Supporting victims of anti-social behaviour
- Gathering evidence and preparing statements to proceed with legal action
- Problem solving approach to persistent anti-social behaviour
- Targeted approach to geographical areas and locations
- Recognising issues relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Collaborative Working

The Community Protection Service operates within the Council's Integrated Services Hub based at the Council Offices in Kirkby – in – Ashfield. Representatives from the following agencies are able to work within the Integrated Services Hub:

- Nottinghamshire Police
- Ashfield District Council Community Safety
- Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue

- Women's Aid Integrated Service
- The Reducing Re-offending Partnership
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Nottinghamshire Victim Care
- Framework
- Change Grow Live

The Integrated Services Hub facilitates a collaborative approach to community safety. Agencies within the Hub work together towards:

- Delivery of priorities – reducing and deterring crime and anti-social behaviour
- Delivery of transformation
- Engagement
- Achieving value for money
- Improving services
- Project delivery
- Understanding communities and customers

Patrol Plans

Community Protection Officers undertake high visibility foot patrols in hotspot areas focusing on anti-social behaviour, and issues that present risk, threat, and harm. Patrols also focus on themes including town centres, parks and open spaces, and housing estates.

The team are also expected to connect with the community and key individuals within it. This includes retailers, elected members, community voices, individuals requesting services, and vulnerable people. Officers should also provide immediate feedback on any high-risk issues identified; ensuring safeguarding referrals are made appropriately.

Community Protection Officers should maximise the impact that their high visibility can have within the District.

Hotspots

The Council's Community Protection Officers have a thorough understanding of the geography and communities within Ashfield, including problematic locations in the district. Hotspots are identified based on this knowledge and experience.

The hotspots could relate to anti-social behaviour or environmental issues in town centres, estates, roads, parks, footpaths, and trails. Historically, CPOs have been assigned specific locations to manage. At present, CPOs are borderless within Ashfield and take on a District-wide role.

The Community Protection Service has maintained flexibility, ensuring a high level of responsiveness to any new or emerging issues generating a short-term hotspot are supported and addressed. Until COVID-19 CPOs attended the Partnership Operational Tasking meeting every three weeks, which incorporate victim, location and, offender briefings, as well as weekly team and geographical problem-solving meetings. The Team Manager provided the police with updates and collaborates regarding the weekly briefings and patrol plans.

Operational Tasking and CCTV

Community Protection Officers carry airwave radios which links to the Police operational channel

and the CCTV control room. This ensures that, in addition to planned activity in hotspot areas, they can also be reactively tasked following either visual reports of an incident through the control room or through the police for low-level reported incidents.

Furthermore, all Community Protection Officers are also equipped with body worn cameras, allowing visual recordings to be used as evidence if required.

Case Referrals

Community Protection Officers attend many kinds of issues and when appropriate, some of these issues will be referred to the Anti-Social Behaviour Caseworkers or Complex Case Team. Such cases can often include dealing with vulnerable people with needs that will need a multi-agency approach. **CPOs also undertake safe and well checks, deliver food parcels and gather evidence for case workers.**

Terms of Reference

At the January 2020 meeting, Scrutiny Panel B discussed and approved a terms of reference as a guide for the review process.

Review Objectives

The objectives of this review will be to:

- Gain an understanding of the current Community Protection Service, and how it operates within the wider Community Safety section
- Establish the objectives and requirements of the service
- Examine outcomes and achievements
- Review procedures in place to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the service
- Understand public and stakeholder expectations of the service

Indicators of Success

- Establishing clear service objectives that are fit for purpose
- Identifying effective mechanisms to monitor performance and outcomes
- Clear evidence of effective collaborative working within the Integrated Services Hub
- Understanding public expectations and current perspectives of the service
- Ensuring the service provides value for money
- Ensuring adequate resources are in place for the service to operate efficiently

Methodology

This review will be carried out through consideration of both qualitative and quantitative research.

- Interviewing Community Protection Officers, Police representatives and Council Officers
- Public consultation
- Statistical information regarding the service
- Consultation with partner agencies
- Best practice from other authorities, systems used, powers given etc.

Review Involvement

It is important for a scrutiny review to be a collaborative process, inviting involvement from experts both within the Council and externally. Members could seek involvement from the following over the course of this review:

- Director – Place and Communities
- Service Manager – Community Safety
- Community Protection Team Leader
- Community Protection Officers
- Representatives from partner agencies and stakeholders

Following the break in the review due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Members should review the terms of reference previously agreed to ensure they are still fit for purpose.

Areas of Interest Identified

At the first two meetings of Scrutiny Panel B reviewing this topic, Members, in collaboration with Officers, identified the following areas of interest, to be explored as part of the scrutiny review process.

Understanding Public Expectations and Perceptions

At the first meeting of the Panel, Members discussed the need to ensure that the public and partners had clarity on the aims of the service and the role of a Community Protection Officer within the community.

Monitoring Performance

Managing and monitoring performance is a key aspect of understanding how the service is meeting its objectives. Members were informed that the Council were currently using E-cins to record case information but there were identified gaps in the extraction of data within the system and far too much information was currently being recorded and shared via email.

As part of the initial discussion, Members were informed that a system called 'Whitespace' was currently being explored to assess its suitability to record CPO activity. As part of the review, the Panel agreed that the current method (E-cins & email) was not an effective method to manage demands and monitor performance. Members discussed the possibility of gaining a demonstration of the system to ascertain its value for the section.

Priorities of the Service

As an introduction to the review, Members received a presentation from the Service Manager, setting out the aims of the service, which were identified as undertaking a problem solving approach to address on-street anti-social behaviour, environmental and nuisance related issues, which affect the quality of life for residents in Ashfield.

Community Protection Officers provide a uniformed patrol presence within Ashfield's town centres and communities, spending time in communities conducting high visibility patrols, engaging with residents, visitors, and businesses, and proactively challenging perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, they also carry out "safe and well" checks to vulnerable members of the community.

Work Planning (Proactive/Reactive)

Members agreed that ensuring there was a consistent approach to understanding the main priorities of the service and ensuring that work planning was proactive in addition to being reactive to issues of need was essential including identifying hotspots, in collaboration with our partners, and planning work around this information.

Members also recognised that a service specific system to manage demands would assist both the Community Protection Officers and the service.

Partnership Working

Partnership working is intrinsic to the Community Protection Service with the integrated services hub and the Ashfield Community Partnership. Members previously discussed the importance of ensuring all within the partnership are working collaboratively with adequate effort and input from all agencies.

Public Consultation

Members identified the importance of ascertaining and managing public perception of the Community Protection Service, as a key discretionary service. This could be achieved through exploring an appropriate public consultation exercise involving residents and businesses in Ashfield.

Members should consider the form any public consultation should take, and any specific demographics within Ashfield that should be consulted.

Scrutiny Panel B: 30 January 2020

The Council's Service Manager – Community Safety and Community Protection Team Leader attended this meeting to assist Panel Members with the review. They also delivered a presentation to the Panel, providing a background to the service. Members discussed:

- Origins of the Community Protection Service
- The Council's vision for Community Safety set out within the Corporate Plan
- The role of a Community Protection Officer
- The structure and resourcing of the Council's Community Protection Service
- Patrol plans, hotspots, collaborative working, and operational tasking

Members were asked to consider what positive activity and success might look like for the Community Protection Service.

Scrutiny Panel B: 10 March 2020

For the second meeting of Scrutiny Panel B on this topic, the Chairman invited three of the Council's Community Protection Officers to attend the meeting and assist Members with their considerations.

Members took the opportunity to ask various questions of the three Community Protection Officers, discussing:

- The challenges facing the Community Protection Service
- Airwave radios/body-worn cameras
- Should the focus be on case work or on more reactive issues

- The value of a visible presence in Ashfield’s Town Centres
- The safety of CPOs when carrying out their roles
- The value of the Integrated Services Hub
- The need for improved utilisation of the Council’s Triage system

Next Steps

- An update on the progress of software improvements within Community Safety
- Information on any funding opportunities
- Exploration of potential public consultation exercises, and what form that could take
- How the successes of the Community Protection Service could be better communicated through the Council’s website and publications such as Ashfield Matters

At the 10 March 2020 meeting of Scrutiny Panel B, Members resolved that an invitation should be extended for a representative from the Police to attend the next meeting and discuss partnership working with the Community Protection Service.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Ashfield District Council’s vision for a safer and stronger Ashfield by 2023 is set out within the new Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023. This includes ensuring the foundations for a good quality of life are in place and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

This will be achieved through prioritising both an effective response to issues but also working on prevention and behavioural change. To achieve this, the Council will continue working with our partners to ensure people feel safe and are safe by reducing levels of crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour.

Legal:

There are no direct legal implications resulting from this report. Any legal implications identified over the course of this review will be explored and addressed appropriately.

Finance:

There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. Any financial implications identified over the course of this review will be explored and addressed appropriately.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None at this stage of the review.
General Fund – Capital Programme	None at this stage of the review.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None at this stage of the review.
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None at this stage of the review.

Risk:

Any risk implications identified by Scrutiny Panel B through the course of this review will be presented to Cabinet within the final report.

Risk	Mitigation
None at this stage of the review.	None at this stage of the review.

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications resulting from this report. Any HR implications identified over the course of this review will be explored and addressed appropriately.

Environmental/Sustainability:

There are no direct environmental or sustainability implications resulting from this report. Any environmental or sustainability implications identified over the course of this review will be explored and addressed appropriately.

Equalities:

There are no direct equality implications resulting from this report. Any equality implications identified over the course of this review will be explored and addressed appropriately.

Other Implications:

There are no other implications resulting from this report. Any other implications identified over the course of the review will be explored and addressed appropriately.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

- Home Office, *Community Safety Accreditation Scheme Powers*, February 2015.

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