

Chichester District Council

CABINET

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Future Funding for the Community Warden Service

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That Cabinet agrees to continue to fund 50% of the Community Warden Service for 3 years (as set out in para 7 below) subject to external match funding being secured by partners.**
- 2.2. That Cabinet agrees to continue to fund 100% of the Senior Community Warden post for 3 years (as set out in para 7 below), subject to a review should more than one warden patrol fail to be funded.**

3. Background

- 3.1. The Chichester District Community Warden Service has been in operation since 2005 and currently consists of seven Community Wardens and one Senior Community Warden. They are based and operate in the wards of Chichester East, West, South (part); Selsey North and South; Tangmere and Oving; plus East and West Wittering. The service operates on a partnership basis funded by various local partners. Chichester District Council (CDC) hosts the Service and contributes 50% of the service costs and 100% of the supervisor costs. A Steering Group of all partners provides strategic direction and oversight.
- 3.2. During 2012/13 it was identified that the service had become underfunded and a fundamental review into the sustainability of the service was conducted. This review concluded that the service would become reliant on its reserves unless changes were made. Cabinet at their meeting 2 October 2012 resolved to fund each existing warden patrol to a maximum of 50% for 3 years subject to external match funding being secured in each area; where sufficient partner funding and commitment was not secured the local service was to be withdrawn; partners were responsible for generating the match funding and CDC agreed to fund 100% of the Senior Community Warden post for 3 years subject to review should more than one warden patrol fail to be funded.
- 3.3. During 2013/14 negotiations were held with funding partners and agreement was secured to uplift their contributions to ensure 50% of each community warden post was met for 2014-16.

4. Outcomes to be achieved

- 4.1 The Community Warden Service contributes to the corporate priority to “Support our communities”. They provide support to communities and individuals who are vulnerable and are integral to the Think Family project. They help people in their areas feel safe by supporting Sussex Police to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in their areas. They regularly pass on community intelligence to Sussex Police in relation to a variety of issues which the public are unwilling to report directly. This comment from the public survey supports this outcome “the wardens have created a feeling of safety throughout the community”. They also deliver and support activities that help our communities to be healthy and active linking in with Wellbeing and Sport and Leisure Services.

5. Proposal

- 5.1. The Community Warden Service has been in operation ten years and is very much embedded into the communities in which it operates. The survey highlighted concerns about higher levels of crime and disorder and gaps in community cohesion if the Service didn't exist.
- 5.2. Cabinet is recommended to approve the CDC commitment to the Community Warden service, approve its 50% of the service funding at £123,641 per annum together with 100% of the Senior Warden funding at £40,622 per annum for 3 years. All expenditure is contained within the base revenue budget.

6. Alternatives that have been considered

- 6.1. There is an option to have no Community Service however, the fundamental funding review conducted in 2012/13 explored a range of options, identified savings which were achieved and staff redeployments have been implemented.

7. Resource and legal implications

- 7.1. The projected total annual cost for 2016/17 (excluding the Senior Warden salary paid by CDC) is £247,282. This is based on a cost per warden of £35,326 which, on a 50/50 basis, requires a partner contribution per community warden of £17,663. Therefore a total partner contribution of £123,641 is required. From the discussions held to date it is expected that this sum will be achieved with the majority of partners incorporating Community Warden funding into their precept or annual budgets. CDC's proportion of the community warden expenditure and the senior warden's salary is already included within the base revenue budget.
- 7.2. In addition there are some management overheads of the Service which are absorbed in existing management roles but this ensures that CDC benefits from the outcomes of the scheme.
- 7.3. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by partners to confirm their commitment and set out mutual expectations.

8. Consultation

- 8.1. On line Surveys were undertaken via Chichester District Councils website in September 2015 for both partners and the public to seek their views on the Community Warden Service and to find out how the Service is valued, if it's operating in the right places and gives value for money (see Appendices 1 and 2). There were 96 responses in total, 33 from partners and 63 from the public.
- 8.2 Partners felt the Community Warden Service was valuable (84%), in the right places (71%), demonstrated value for money (78%) and over 50% of partners rated it 9 out of 10. Over 70% of the public felt the Community Warden had been very effective in the way they had dealt with their issue and over 56% rated the Community Wardens 10 out of 10.
- 8.3 Over 65% of partners and 74% of the public felt the Community Wardens should be given enforcement powers. It is proposed that the Steering Group explore this more thoroughly and determine the cost, benefits and implications. A paper would be brought to Cabinet at a later date with all the options laid out.

9. Community impact and corporate risks

- 9.1. The corporate risk remains the partial or total withdrawal of funding by one or more partner(s) where no replacement funding can be found which makes one or more warden posts financially unviable. This risk is mitigated by partner agreements to fund for a specified period and to provide a significant notice of withdrawal of funding. The service also holds a reserve to cover salaries for the period of notice and redundancy costs.
- 9.2. Since their inception Community Wardens have dealt with over 36,000 incidents, 23% have related to crime and anti-social behaviour, 29% to environmental issues and 23% to public safety. This reflects the steady reduction in crime in the Community Warden areas and the community and environmental demands which are placed on the Community Warden Service currently. In 2014 Sussex Police saw a reduction in reports of environmental crime across Chichester District whereas the Community Wardens saw an increase of 6% for environmental incidents which suggests the public are reporting these issues to the Community Wardens rather than the Police.
- 9.3. Community Wardens provide a very visible presence in their areas which offers reassurance to those communities and access to support and advice when needed. Sussex Police are currently consulting on the role of the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) and it is highly likely they will no longer provide a patrolling presence which could leave communities feeling exposed
- 9.4. If funding for the Community Warden Service is not secured the areas in which they currently operate could be further exposed to crime and anti-social behaviour, vulnerable individuals may not be identified and opportunities to refer for support missed. Demand on other CDC services could increase resulting in additional financial cost to CDC.

10. Other Implications

Crime & Disorder: The Community Warden Service has a positive reduction influence of crime and disorder through patrol and prevention education.
Climate Change: Positive impact through recycling schemes and monitoring fly tipping for dangerous waste.
Human Rights and Equality Impact: Positive impact in supporting vulnerable people.
Safeguarding: Positive impact in identification and referral of issues.

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Community Warden Public Survey Report 2015
- 11.2 Community Warden Partner Survey Report 2015

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 None