

Community Safety – Final Panel Review

Report of the Community Safety Review Lead Scrutiny Member

Recommended:

- 1. The Neighbourhood Wardens' functions should be integrated fully into the Community Engagement Team.**
- 2. The role, person specification, job description and working hours of the Neighbourhood Wardens should be reviewed and modified as necessary, to complement other Community Safety functions of the Community Engagement Team and to reflect the priorities of the Test Valley Partnership.**
- 3. The work programme of the Community Engagement Team should support the development of Community Resilience on a Borough-wide level.**
- 4. The skills and training required by the Neighbourhood Wardens should be assessed by management.**
- 5. Changes to the working practices of Neighbourhood Wardens and other members of the Community Engagement Team addressing Community Safety should be monitored and reviewed by management and reported to OSCOM.**

SUMMARY

- With regard to Community Safety, the Test Valley Partnership has placed an emphasis on collaboration between partner organisations (including TVBC) and the cooperation of local communities in order to:
 - a. Prevent crime and antisocial behaviour
 - b. Support the work of the police
- Test Valley Borough Council recognised a need to restructure its workforce in order to take forward ambition to support community-led actions and the work of the Test Valley Partnership generally. This process began in 2012 with the development of the Community Engagement Team.
- Developing strong communities is a strategic priority for TVBC and in pursuit of this, the Community Engagement Team seeks to address the development of Community Resilience in local neighbourhoods as part of
 - a. Community Safety Management
 - b. Neighbourhood Planning
 - c. Achievement of the objectives of the TVBC Corporate Plan

The role of the Neighbourhood Wardens should reflect the priorities of the Test Valley Partnership and complement the functions of other members of the TVBC Community Engagement Team.

1 Context

- 1.1 OSCOM requested a review of Test Valley Borough Council's Community Safety responsibilities and, in particular, the role of Neighbourhood Wardens, in response to
- Changes in front line policing personnel
 - The withdrawal by Hampshire County Council of Accredited Community Support Officers (ACSOs)
 - Concerns about perceived resource reductions and their impact upon Community Safety in Test Valley
 - The restructuring of the Test Valley Partnership
 - The development of a new TVBC Corporate Plan
- 1.2 An OSCOM Panel was established to review both the role of the Neighbourhood Wardens and the TVBC contribution to Community Safety in general. The Panel met several times during 2014-2016 and an Interim Report was presented to OSCOM in January 2016.
- 1.3 The Interim Report recommended a further review of the deployment and the effectiveness of Neighbourhood Wardens and an assessment of their training and skills development needs.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood Wardens were instituted in 2002 as a pilot scheme and fully adopted by TVBC in 2005.
- 2.2 At this time, the primary premise for the Wardens' role was to address
- Crime prevention
 - Environmental improvement
 - Community development
- 2.3 In 2006/7, when antisocial behaviour was on the increase, Neighbourhood Wardens received accreditation from Hampshire Constabulary in order to assume a surveillance and enforcement role as an adjunct to community policing.

- 2.4 Since 2012, evidence of decreasing levels of antisocial behaviour and the introduction of Police Community Support Officers for community policing and surveillance work have called into question the core activities of the TVBC Neighbourhood Wardens.
- 2.5 The introduction of the TVBC Community Engagement Team in 2012 has shifted the emphasis from surveillance, reactivity and enforcement to collaboration, proactivity and the support of local communities in addressing Community Safety issues, in line with the priorities of the Test Valley Partnership (TVP) and matters of community interest generally.

3 The Police View of the Warden's role

- 3.1 As part of this OSCOM Review, the opinions of senior police officers in Test Valley were sought regarding the current and future role of the Neighbourhood Wardens.
- 3.2 The unanimous view of the police was that the existing functions of the Wardens (patrolling, surveillance and the reporting of incidents) was duplicating police activity and that preventative and proactive activities, as part of a wider Community Engagement process, would be more effective in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour.

4 The Test Valley Partnership View of Community Safety Management

- 4.1 The introduction of the TVP has encouraged and increased collaboration between statutory and voluntary agencies, local authorities (including TVBC), community representatives and local councillors.
- 4.2 The TVP enables organisations at local level to come together to respond to needs within communities in a coordinated and organised way.
- 4.3 In relation to Community Safety, the TVP is working towards
 - Reducing crime and disorder, including antisocial behaviour (ASB), in Test Valley
 - Combatting the misuse of drugs and alcohol
 - Reducing the fear of crime
- 4.4 Each year, the TVP identifies priorities for its work programme and assigns lead agencies to each priority. The draft work programme for 2016/17 has identified a number of key Community Safety activities including
 - Education on Community Safety issues
 - Support for victims of crime and ASB
 - Early identification and referral of likely perpetrators of crime and ASB

- Provision of diversionary activities to deter youth nuisance behaviour and ASB
- The development of Community Resilience: a set of locality-based activities designed to assist communities to identify and address their particular safety risks. This is a new and substantial work stream for TVP partners

5 The role of TVBC within the TVP

5.1 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on the police and local authorities to work together with key partners and agencies to formulate and implement local crime reduction strategies.

5.2 TVBC, as a partner in the TVP, is required to

- Identify key local crime and disorder priorities
- Formulate strategies to assist in tackling these key priorities and reduce crime at a local level
- Monitor and evaluate those strategies

5.3 On behalf of the TVP, TVBC – through the activities of the Community Engagement Team - is already taking a lead on the following aspects of Community Safety:

- Public education on community safety and crime reduction
- Encouraging positive relationships within communities
- Identifying and safeguarding vulnerable people in communities
- Working with troubled families
- Early identification and referral of perpetrators of crime and ASB
- Coordination and delivery of diversionary activities (eg the ICE programme) to address youth nuisance behaviour and avoid ASB
- Working with local communities and organisations eg Neighbourhood Watch, to share information and develop joint initiatives

The majority of these activities are carried out by members of the Community Engagement Team other than Neighbourhood Wardens.

5.4 This year, the TVP has extended its focus beyond education, collaboration, identification, referral and targeted support, to include the development of Community Resilience. Since TVBC will be a lead agency for this new work stream, additional demands will be placed on the Community Engagement Team.

5.5 Activities to support the development of Community Resilience could include:

- Using local data (eg. ward profiles, census statistics, crime figures, local information on health and environmental risks) to establish a list of community safety priorities for each neighbourhood
- Liaising with local residents about their safety concerns (eg. unsafe local areas, fire or flooding risks, environmental dangers, fly-tipping of hazardous substances)
- Establishing strategies and mechanisms within neighbourhoods to address and reduce safety risks (eg. monitoring the street scene and reporting problems such as broken pavements and defective lights, introducing Neighbourhood Watch schemes where they are absent, establishing Community Safety leadership/coordinating roles within local organisations such as Parish Councils, community associations and voluntary groups)
- Communicating specific Community Safety needs (eg. for patrolling, surveillance, community policing, CCTV) to the TVP for appropriate action
- Promoting Community Resilience as a vital component of Community and Neighbourhood Planning
- Supporting community-led initiatives to address specific safety risks, thus increasing local resilience and enabling communities to reach their full potential (one of the objectives of the TVBC Corporate Plan)

5.6 To be effective, the development of Community Resilience will require a comprehensive whole-system approach, with facilitation potentially taking place in every ward in the Borough.

6 Conclusions

6.1 With regard to Community Safety specifically, the TVBC Community Engagement Team plays a key role in

- Promoting community safety in Test Valley
- Supporting both the victims and perpetrators of crime and disorder
- Delivering the objectives of the TVP work programme.

6.2 The introduction of Community Resilience as a new priority objective of the TVP work programme will impose a significant resource commitment on the Community Engagement Team, when they are already committed to supporting Council members, community-led planning and the work of other partners in the TVP.

- 6.3 The Neighbourhood Wardens are an important resource within the Community Engagement Team. A job evaluation would assess to what extent their current activities address TVP priorities.
- 6.4 Community Safety roles within the Community Engagement Team should be clarified through updated job descriptions.
- 6.5 New Community Safety roles and responsibilities, especially in connection with the development of Community Resilience, will produce training needs for members of the Community Engagement Team.

7 Next steps

- 7.1 The recommendations of this review to be reported to OSCOM for endorsement, prior to submission to Cabinet.