

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE ON 17 MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: Community Wardens

REPORT AUTHOR: Dax O'Connor, Community Safety Officer

DATE: 28 February 2022

EXTN: 37834

AREA: Community Wellbeing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report examines the progress and performance of the Community Warden project since its inception in April 2021. Consideration is given to the performance of the team and the impact that the project has on the local community. Details are set out for the continuation of the project with the proposal for extending the scheme to Bognor Regis.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Housing and Wellbeing Committee:

1. Approve the continuation of the Littlehampton Community Warden project within the allocated budget.
2. Authorise the Group Head of Community Wellbeing to scope and agree the implementation of a Bognor Regis Community Warden project.

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1. On 24 January 2022 the Housing & Wellbeing Committee agreed its recommended Budget for 2022/23. Provision was made for continued funding of the Community Warden project in Littlehampton beyond September 2022. Additional funds were also identified to extend the scheme to Bognor Regis.

1.2. Full Council approved the budget on 23 February 2022. This contained the following financial provision for Community Warden schemes:

2022/23	£100,000
2023/24 onwards	£270,000 per annum subject to satisfactory performance and budgetary approval.

- 1.3. Funding for both schemes is provided by the Council on a match-funding basis. It is intended that stakeholders will provide at least an equal funding contribution to enable the schemes to be successful.
- 1.4. Littlehampton Town Council has committed to continue to match fund the existing scheme in Littlehampton and budgeted appropriately for this purpose.
- 1.5. Littlehampton Town Council's Town Clerk has provided the following information:-

Littlehampton Town Council is pleased to be able to confirm that it has agreed funding for the continuation of the Community Warden scheme. It has already proven to be a very significant asset for the town and our expectation is that this will continue to grow. It is another excellent example of how partnership working can truly deliver tangible benefits to local people where any one Council might balk at the risk. Continuation of the scheme also gives the project the opportunity to look at other partners, such as parishes, that could greatly reduce the longer term financial impact and also fully demonstrate its importance and relevance.

- 1.6. Formal discussions have not taken place with stakeholders in Bognor Regis, but it is proposed that a scoping exercise is carried out to ascertain the potential and viability of introducing a Community Warden scheme in the town.

Service delivery

- 1.7. The purpose of Community Wardens is to provide resilience, reassurance, and confidence to communities across the whole of Littlehampton. Community Wardens are not a replacement for Police resources or responsibilities - they do provide a valuable role in sharing intelligence and witness statements to help Police in tackling crime. They do not have powers of arrest.
- 1.8. The service delivery model in Littlehampton provides three full-time officers who are currently employed on 18-month temporary contracts. Oversight of the team is provided by Arun's Community Safety Officer.
- 1.9. Three full time Wardens gives the team capacity to patrol a wide range of locations across the town on a regular basis. Use of three team members also ensures service continues when annual leave and sickness occur.
- 1.10. Community Wardens work 37 hours per week, operating flexible shifts between 7.30am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday. Work outside of these hours is carried out where a need is identified. For example, where reports of regular anti-social behaviour are identified at a weekend or evenings, the team will respond as needed. The team also attend town events which often fall beyond standard operational times and days.
- 1.11. Management of the Community Wardens sits with the Council's Community Safety team. This allows officers to liaise closely with anti-social behaviour caseworkers, and to build on the established relationships with our partners.
- 1.12. Community Wardens deliver their service by way of highly visible engagement with the communities they serve. From the outset, the team have ensured that they undertake extensive foot patrols across all wards of Littlehampton, and that they are accessible.
- 1.13. Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) status has been awarded to

the Council by Sussex Police. This was a direct result of the Community Warden scheme being set up. Low level enforcement powers have been given and relevant training completed by officers.

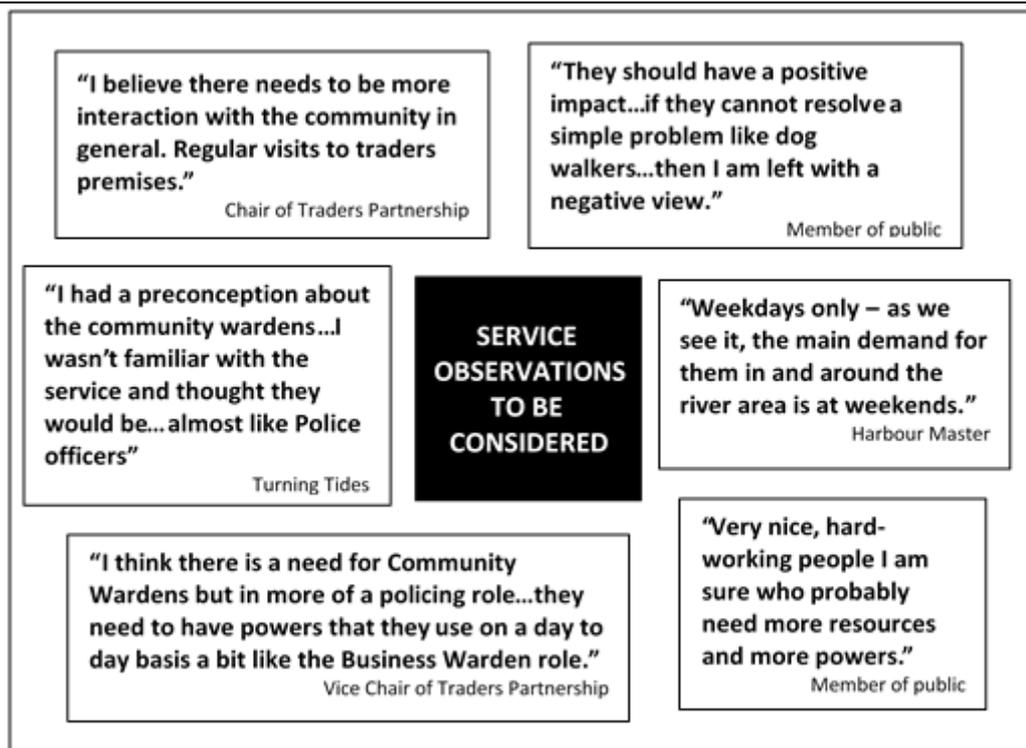
- 1.14. It is important to note that Community Wardens are not a replacement for Police resources in addressing crime.
- 1.15. Performance data, examples of public engagement activities, and principles of the service are provided at **Appendix A**.

Service user feedback

- 1.16. Feedback has been sought from a range of service users, including statutory partners, community groups, and members of the public. Below are examples of some of the comments received:



- 1.17. It is important to consider and learn from all feedback, including comments that may be less favourable, when shaping the future of the scheme.



Continuation of Community Wardens in Littlehampton

- 1.18. It is proposed that the Littlehampton Community Warden scheme continues and will:
- remain part of the Community Safety team within the District Council.
 - principally be based at the Civic Centre but will utilise other facilities such as Chilgrove House in Wick to maintain the work they have done in that area.
 - continue to provide a highly visible presence in all areas of Littlehampton.
 - undertake all key elements of the role set out in Appendix A.
- 1.19. The team will also build on the initial foundations laid by delivering a range of community engagement and safety awareness initiatives. These will include advice workshops such as crime prevention, fire safety, personal safety, and bike/property marking events.
- 1.20. Detailed consideration will be given to service user feedback received, particularly enhancing relationships with businesses, reviewing working hours to facilitate officer presence at key times of the day/week, and assessing the enforcement element of the service. Where appropriate, improvements to the operation of the service will be identified and implemented.
- 1.21. Work will also be undertaken to better communicate the role of the Community Wardens particularly through social media where there may be a misconception of their role. Previous promotion of the scheme and responsibilities in local press, the Town Council's 'Progress' newsletter, and various social media posts will be revisited. Other forms of communication with the public will also be reviewed. Monthly drop-in sessions will continue, and we encourage anyone to come along and speak with the team and to voice their community concerns.

Expansion of Community Warden scheme to Bognor Regis

- 1.22. It is recognised that the current Community Warden service provides a designated scheme for Littlehampton only. The Housing and Wellbeing Committee has expressed a wish for a similar service in Bognor Regis.
- 1.23. The budget approved as set out in section 1.2 of this report provides funding for the scheme to be extended to Bognor Regis. This is on the provision that match funding is available from other stakeholders, as is the case with the Littlehampton scheme.
- 1.24. It is proposed that a similar scheme is scoped with appropriate third parties and include issues that may be specific to the location. This will include both Bognor Regis Town Council and Bognor Regis Business Improvement District. It is also proposed that authority is given to the Group Head of Community Wellbeing to implement a Community Warden project in Bognor Regis with agreed third party funding.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

It is proposed that the Housing and Wellbeing Committee:

1. Approve the continuation of the Littlehampton Community Warden project within the allocated budget
2. Authorise the Group Head of Community Wellbeing to scope and agree the implementation of a Bognor Regis Community Warden project.

3. OPTIONS:

The following options were considered when assessing the Littlehampton Community Warden scheme:

3.1. Reducing or increasing staffing levels

This was dismissed in consultation with the Littlehampton Town Clerk. It is felt that reducing the number of Community Wardens will adversely impact the service provided. In addition, cover will be significantly reduced when annual leave and sickness occurs.

Costs currently restrict an increase in officers.

3.2. Increasing enforcement activity

Community Wardens do enforce the Public Spaces Protection Order in line with the Council's directions, as well as carrying out anti-social behaviour interventions. They do not have extensive enforcement responsibilities and do not replace Police resources in directly tackling crime.

Without power of arrest or the resources to issue a large number of fixed penalty notices, it would not be appropriate to raise public expectation of enforcement when this cannot reasonably be carried out.

The following options have been considered in assessing the extension of a Community Warden scheme to Bognor Regis:

3.3. Funding

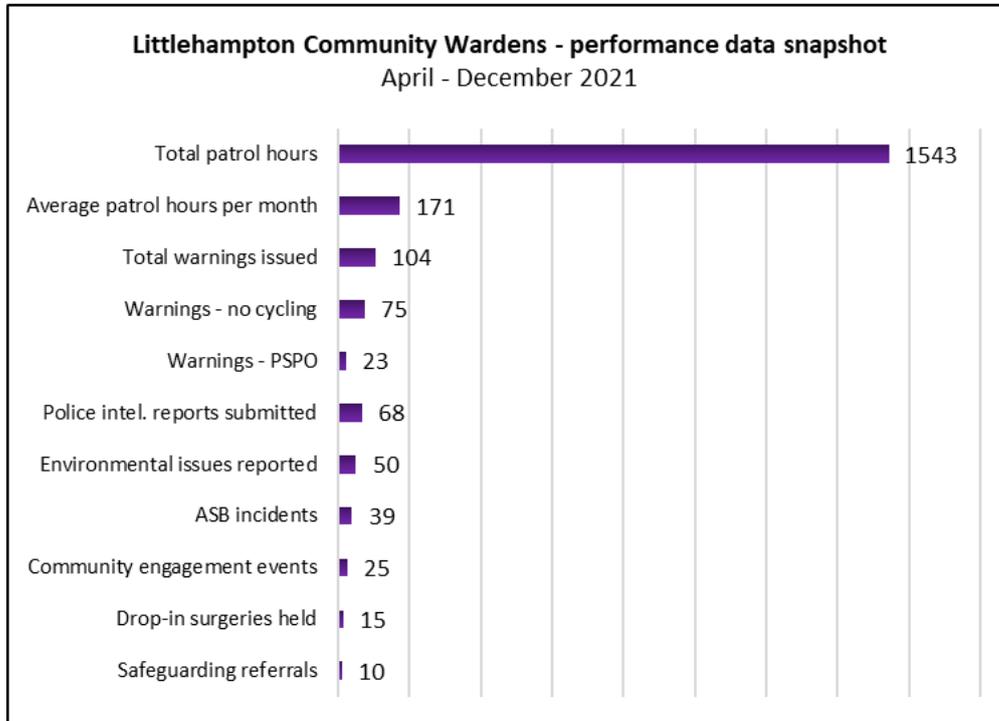
The Housing and Wellbeing Committee has identified funding for a Bognor scheme. It should be noted that currently there is no confirmation of match

<p>funding available from other sources. Officers must undertake consultation with relevant stakeholders before a decision can be taken on whether the scheme can be introduced.</p> <p>If match funding is not available, the matter will need to be referred back to this Committee.</p>		
4. CONSULTATION:		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council	✓	
Relevant District Ward Councillors		x
Other groups/persons (please specify)		x
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)		
Financial	✓	
Legal	✓	
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		x
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		x
Sustainability		x
Asset Management/Property/Land		x
Technology		x
Other (please explain)		x
6. IMPLICATIONS:		
<p>Financial: funding of £100,000 for the scheme is included in the 2022/23 budget, agreed by Full Council on 23 February 2022. The funding for future years will be considered by Members as part of the budget setting for those years.</p> <p>Legal: a service level agreement between Arun DC and funding partners will be required regarding partnership funding and service provision.</p>		
7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:		
<p>To deliver a Community Warden scheme in both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis, providing a resource to build and support resilient communities and reduce anti-social behaviour.</p>		
8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:		
<p>H&W Committee 24.01.2022</p>		

Appendix A - Littlehampton Community Wardens

Performance data

Below is a snapshot of recorded activity carried out by the Community Wardens to end of December 2021.



Examples of public engagement activities

- Organised litter pick in Wick, in partnership with the Council's Housing team and Morrisons Community Champion.
- Fire safety and community engagement events with the local fire station.
- Fly-tipping 'amnesty' in Wick after Christmas - provision of a waste collection truck allowing residents to get rid of various bulky items.
- Attendance at primary school assemblies (YRs 5 and 6) to engage with pupils about emerging anti-social behaviour trends.
- Regular public drop-in sessions.
- Family Halloween event in Wick including children's fancy dress and pumpkin carving competitions.
- Engagement with young people, including close working with Arun Youth Projects and participation in their organised youth activities. Additional one-to-one early interventions with young people.
- Digital inclusion workshops at Age UK.
- Attendance at public events including the Town Show, Screen on the Green, Sandcastle competition, Skate Jam (opening of the new skate park), and the town centre Christmas light switch-on.

Purpose of the Community Warden scheme

Key principles of the scheme are to:

- provide a highly visible presence and regular foot patrols across all wards of the town.
- form close working relationships with the neighbourhood policing team and community groups to identify and reduce anti-social and nuisance behaviour.
- work to address the fear of crime.
- share intelligence with relevant partner agencies, including the Police, and provide witness statements where necessary.
- offer support to young people and establish suitable activities and signposting to youth groups/services.
- identify at risk people, communities and groups and work closely with agencies to address concerns.
- offer crime prevention and fire safety advice.
- actively enforce the Public Spaces Protection Order.
- develop and deliver community development activities and participate at local events.

By engaging with the public and community groups Community Wardens are able to answer queries about a range of local issues at first point of contact. They also signpost people to relevant local services, receive and action reports of community concerns, and respond to real-time incidents.

Opportunities to engage with the community also include the hosting of drop-in sessions, allowing the team to speak directly with members of the public. These have been held at Morrisons, The Wave, and the library.

Due to their presence across Littlehampton, they often become aware of community tensions, hotspot locations, and individuals engaging in nuisance behaviour at an early stage. They then share intelligence with appropriate agencies, helping to shape local responses, preventing situations escalating into more serious and widespread problems.

These steps have embedded the principles of the scheme into the community and the consciousness of partner agencies. There is an expectation that the scheme further progresses to deliver activities and initiatives that provide reassurance to the wider community. This is a function that the team are developing at pace with a range of ideas and subject matter being considered. The priority being that initiatives must deliver for the good of Littlehampton.