

Committee	Dated:
Safer City Partnership	6 June 2016
Subject: Housing Neighbourhood Patrol Service	Public
Report of: Jacquie Campbell - Assistant Director, Housing & Neighbourhoods	For Decision

Summary

At its meeting in March 2016, the Safer City Partnership received a report on the first six months of the Neighbourhood Patrol Service. This is a one-year pilot project, initiated by Community & Children's Services, to provide reassurance and crime/ASB deterrence on social housing estates within the Square Mile.

The partnership expressed general support for the project and requested a full evaluation. This has now been completed. The feedback from stakeholders and residents has been extremely positive, and proposals are being made to continue the service beyond the pilot year.

The cost of the existing service per annum is £70k. To date, a sum of £40k pa has been identified, from Community & Children's Services and from Open Spaces, for the continuation of the service. There remains a shortfall of £30k pa.

Recommendations

Partnership members are requested to:

- Endorse the proposal to continue the Neighbourhood Patrol Service for a period of two years, starting 1 August 2016;
- Advise officers on potential sources of funding to make up the current shortfall of £30k pa.

Main Report

Background

1. The Neighbourhood Patrol Service, delivered by Parkguard and managed by the City of London's Housing Service, has been operating in the City of London since 1 August 2015.
2. Initially, the service was provided only to Golden Lane, Mansell Street and Middlesex Street estates. More recently, it has been possible, at no further cost, to extend the patrols to two small estates on the edge of the City, Dron House and Windsor House, and to Bunhill Fields.

3. The service is being provided on a one year pilot basis, at a cost of £70k for the year. The funding has been found by the City Police, from POCA funds, and the City's Community & Children's Services Dept, with a small contribution from Open Spaces for the Bunhill Fields patrols.
4. A paper to the Safer City Partnership in March outlined the service and reported that informal feedback from stakeholders and residents had been positive, and the service was proving extremely effective in three areas:
 - Prevention of ASB and nuisance behaviour – by providing a visual deterrent;
 - Identifying issues and engaging with perpetrators to find long-lasting solutions;
 - Reassurance for residents;
 - Providing detailed intelligence for the use of all agencies involved.
5. The Partnership noted the success to date of the pilot and the fact that a decision would be needed in respect of the continuation and funding of the service at the end of the pilot. Officers were asked to carry out a full evaluation of the service and to report findings back to the Partnership.

Evaluation Exercise

6. The evaluation was planned and managed by the Assistant Director, Housing & Neighbourhoods, in liaison with the Community Safety Manager, David Mackintosh, and Chief Inspector Hector McCoy.
7. Stakeholders were contacted by email and asked to either give feedback via a questionnaire, or via a phone interview.
8. Residents on Golden Lane and Middlesex Street were consulted through a questionnaire, sent to all households, along with an information sheet and a letter. Residents at Dron House and Windsor House were asked through a letter to give their feedback. In total, 48 formal responses were received. Resident views were also gathered at drop-in events and through informal discussions with residents.
9. The views of Mansell Street residents were requested through their landlord, the Guinness Partnership. To date, we have not received either stakeholder or resident feedback (other than informal, positive resident feedback via a Ward Member). We hope to be able to give a verbal update to the Partnership at the meeting.
10. In addition to the City's evaluation, Parkguard produced a report on the first six months of the service, which contains statistical data regarding the patrols. This is attached at Appendix 1.

Stakeholder Feedback

11. The agencies asked to provide feedback were the City Police, Community Safety Team, Housing Estates, Homelessness Team, Open Spaces and Environmental Health. A total of 13 individuals from these agencies provided feedback, which was overwhelmingly positive on all aspects of the service.

Intelligence Reports

12. All respondents feel that the intelligence provided by the patrol reports is valuable. Although two respondents felt that the reports were sometimes too detailed, most saw this as a positive, and commented on how clear they are.
13. Police officers commented that the information provided is fed into their own intelligence system and has been used to identify issues and perpetrators. In some instances, this has identified issues which are more serious than had been realised – examples given included evidence to suggest that drug dealing in some places is a bigger issue than had been thought, and the finding of nitrous-oxide canisters in a specific location leading to a strategy being developed to tackle this issue.
14. Similarly, there were comments that information about locations frequented by rough sleepers and the individuals themselves is helping the Homelessness Team make appropriate referrals. Estate Managers commented that the reports are valuable in bringing to their attention security or health and safety risks which may not have been spotted, and to give early alerts to fly-tipping and littering. Open Spaces said that they had not previously been aware that there were problems with people urinating in flower beds or using drugs in Bunhill Fields.
15. The Community Safety Team also highlighted the value of the information provided and how it is helping to shape strategic plans:

“The reports have been extremely valuable in helping inform our understanding of the issues experienced by City residents. They have also identified issues and incidents we may have otherwise remained unsighted on. It has provided us with an intelligence led context which is helping to inform our strategic plan and supports tactical responses.”

16. It was also pointed out that, whilst the information can confirm a problem raised by residents, it can often be used to demonstrate that the frequency and seriousness of a particular issue may not be as great as complainants perceive.

Impact

17. All stakeholders felt that the service is having a positive impact. In particular, stakeholders felt that it provides reassurance to residents, and there were comments from both the Estate Managers and the City Police that the service has gone down well with residents that they have spoken to.

“There has been a very positive impact. It has given residents’ reassurance and a perception that crime and anti-social behaviour is being tackled. It has made residents feel more secure as they walk around the estate.”

“Their presence has been reassuring. They are identifiable and approachable. Residents feel that if there are problems, Parkguard will intervene rather than the individual having to do so.”

“The service has been very responsive to resident complaints and we have been able to target this resource towards certain individuals or behaviours of concern.”

18. Many respondents expressed the view that the presence of a patrol officer is a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour. Examples were given of the patrols engaging with groups of youths and deterring them from causing problems on two specific estates, also that issues like people filming without permission, walking dogs, rough sleeping and cycling through estates and Bunhill Fields have been discouraged and are less of a problem .

“You can’t measure the prevention of crime, but just the fact that they’re there is preventing criminal activity. I think they’ve definitely prevented anti-social behaviour on the estate.”

“We had some problems with groups of boys hanging around. The Estate Officer wasn’t listened to but Parkguard came along and the problems are now gone. I’m really, really pleased with the result and the way they interact and engage with the residents.”

“The service has assisted in the improvement of physical security within the City estates and provides a valuable visual deterrent.”

19. Police officers, in particular, feel that the patrols provide a service which adds value to what they are able to do.

“We can’t be on the estates all the time – we’ve got too much other work to do. So just to have a security presence on the estates is really good.”

20. Numerous specific examples were given of where the service has made a difference. These included:

- An incident with a BB gun;
- Problems with water bombs and bottles being thrown;
- Identification of drug dealing and vehicles involved;
- Preventing filming and the use of smoke bombs;
- Stopping gangs from Islington snatching phones on one estate (because Parkguard work extensively in Islington they know, and are known to the gangs and their presences therefore acts as a deterrent);
- Tackling noise nuisance;
- Reporting rough sleeping to the Homeless Team;

- Assisting police with various incidents, including a fatality;
- Investigating allegations of public nuisance, noise and anti-social behaviour from a public house and a community centre;
- Enforcing byelaws and raising awareness of them.

21. In summary, there was strong support for the service from all stakeholders, with the most valued aspects being that it provides reassurance for residents, intelligence which gives a more detailed and rounded picture of behaviour on the estates that we have had before, and a visible presence which is a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Resident Feedback

22. There were 48 responses to the residents' survey on Golden Lane, Middlesex Street, Dron House & Windsor House. Of these, 33 said that their estate is safer and more secure as a result of having the patrols, whilst 8 said they didn't know and 7 disagreed.

23. Comments were largely very positive and, with the exception of one resident, everyone who has given verbal feedback at drop-in events or to estate staff is in favour of the service. Young people on the estates have also given very good feedback about the patrols, via the Director of Community & Children's Services.

“They have been great and I feel safer. They have been massively helpful when the estate has been rowdy.”

“It is a good idea to have a patrol service on the estate. I feel more secure to walk round the estate and area in the evening of winter when it gets dark by 4 o'clock and basement where there is not enough light.”

“When I have seen them they have always been polite, doing a good job looking in secluded areas.”

“We had a response to a noise one Sunday. The gentlemen who called in was marvellous.”

“Fly tipping has decreased. Estate is regaining its quietness and sense of security.”

“I have noticed it's a lot quieter in the evenings. We don't get so many teenagers gathering around the pond area and if the team work with the police that's more help for the young people.”

24. The residents who expressed negative views consider that the estate is already safe and that the service is unnecessary.

“Waste of money that could be better spent elsewhere.”

“Seldom ever felt unsafe on Golden Lane.”

“I don't understand why it is needed. An occasional police presence should be sufficient.”

“Never felt the estate was unsafe.”

Continuation of service

25. Stakeholders were unanimous in wishing the service to continue at the end of the pilot project.

26. The majority of residents were also in favour of continuing. Out of 48 formal responses, 38 said they wished the service to continue, 3 had no preference and 7 said they did not wish it to continue.

“In an ideal world there would be a police officer on every street corner but this service assists the police and also promotes the City of London as being a caring authority.”

“I cannot foresee Parkguard not being on site, I think that the residents would revolt.”

“A positive force, that needs to continue.”

Improvements to current service

27. Both residents and stakeholders were asked whether the current service could be improved in any way.

28. Most of the suggestions from residents were to have more patrols, which would not be possible without additional funding, but which can be reviewed later. However, there were some suggestions from stakeholders and residents which will now be discussed with Parkguard. These included:

- increased visibility;
- having a number for residents to ring to reach Parkguard (this is currently being discussed with the Noise Nuisance Team);
- tackling skateboarding on Golden Lane;
- covering the outer limits of estates, which there are more issues, eg from drinking nuisance;
- adding photographs to reports where appropriate;
- attending more resident meetings to give regular updates.

Potential for expanding service

29. However, there were a large number of suggestions from stakeholders regarding how the service could be extended across the City. These included:

- Carrying out door to door checks on vulnerable adults, especially during the winter, and attending case meetings with Adult Social Care, Housing and the Homeless Team, where appropriate;
- Extending hours on estates during the summer months, when late night drinking can be an issue;
- Expanding to cover the Barbican Estate;
- Supporting estate staff when they carry out home visits for tenancy checks during the evenings;
- Providing out of hours cover for emergencies on estates and locking up playgrounds – this would reduce the need for residential staff;
- Carrying out patrols of night-time economy ‘hot spots’, providing a highly visible presence at areas where people are drinking and socialising to deter and prevent crime;
- Collecting evidence of illegal street-trading;
- Observing and issuing fixed penalty notices for smoking, public urination, dog fouling, littering, idling engines etc.

30. All these would require additional funding. They will be discussed with the appropriate agencies, and provision for additional services will be included in the procurement exercise.

Future funding and proposals for continuation of service

31. It is clear from the feedback that the service is of value, and the stakeholders and residents wish it to continue beyond 31 July 2016, when the pilot ends. It is, therefore, proposed to continue the service at the existing level for the next two years, starting on 1 August 2016. This will require funding of £140k (£70k pa). This equates to a cost per household of £56 pa.

32. A sum of £20k pa has been identified from the Housing Revenue Account. This is non-rental income which is currently used by the managers of the estates concerned for estate-improvement projects identified by residents. In reality, residents have struggled to agree proposals for this funding, so it seems appropriate to divert it to the Neighbourhood Patrol Service – this means that residents will not pay an additional service charge for the service, which is a commitment that has been made to them.

33. The Director of Community & Children’s Services has agreed to contribute £15k pa, to reflect the role the service plays in addressing homelessness and increasing resident wellbeing. Open Spaces will contribute £5k pa for the patrols of Bunhill Fields. Therefore, to maintain the current service, we need a further £30k pa – or £60k over a two year period.

34. It is hoped that the Guinness Partnership will make a contribution to the service provided on Mansell Street, in the same way that the Housing Revenue Account is contributing for the City estates. A sum of £5k per year has been requested but no response received to date.

35. It would be helpful if members of the Safer City Partnership could consider the shortfall in funding, and advise officers if they might be in a position to contribute to allow the service to continue. Alternatively, advice on possible alternative sources of funding would be welcome.

Procurement

36. The Commissioning Manager for Community & Children's Services is currently planning a procurement exercise for a Resident Reassurance, Engagement and Support Service, which will provide the service on the same basis as for the pilot.

37. In the light of the suggestions for extending the service, we propose to tender a contract both for the current level of service, and for additional services to be spot-purchased, to the value of £100k pa or a total of £200k over two years. This will allow both City departments and the City Police to purchase additional support that contributes to resident reassurance, engagement and support as needed, and for some of the proposed expansions to the service to be introduced.

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