

Committee: Safer City Partnership	Dated: 02 March 2016
Subject: Housing Neighbourhood Patrol Service	
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services Report Author: Jacquie Campbell - Assistant Director, Housing & Neighbourhoods	Public For Information

Background

1. There are three social housing estates located within the Square Mile. Two of these, Golden Lane, in the west and Middlesex Street, in the east, are owned and managed by the City. The third, Mansell Street, also in the east, is owned and managed by the Guinness Trust. The estates comprise around 1000 homes.
2. The three estates are served by the City Police. Crime rates are low. However, the residents have historically complained of a range of low level but persistent nuisance which affects their quality of life. This includes:
 - The presence of rough sleepers, with some street begging and also drug and alcohol-related behaviour. This tends to be at Middlesex Street, which is close to Liverpool Street Station;
 - Noise from the use of communal facilities such as playgrounds and ball courts on the estates at inappropriate times;
 - Gatherings of young people and associated noise and nuisance;
 - Sex workers in the area, especially in Middlesex Street car parks.
3. Whilst there are a number of agencies dealing with these issues - City Police, Environmental Health, Housing Service, Homelessness Service - these services are subject to a number of pressures and cannot always provide the consistent presence and speedy response needed to address them effectively.
4. Local residents have expressed concern for their safety and security as a result of this situation. Whilst, undoubtedly, some of this concern is a matter of perception rather than actual risk, it is clear that there are strong feelings about it.
5. In order to address these issues and change perceptions, the Community & Children's Services Dept have initiated a one-year pilot Neighbourhood Patrol Service project. The project was planned and initiated in partnership with the City Police, the Guinness Trust, the Community Safety Team, and the Homelessness Team. The patrols commenced on 1 August 2015.

6. There is no intention to duplicate or replace police or other services, but to complement them, dealing largely with behaviours that other agencies are unlikely to have the time to tackle in any consistent way and putting resources into engaging with perpetrators to achieve long-term change rather than immediate enforcement.

Neighbourhood Patrol Service

7. The project provides high-visibility evening patrols of the three estates for a total of 50 hours per week. The patrols are targeted and intelligence-led, increasing presence at certain times and in response to reports of issues. Patrols are increased at times of the year where nuisance may be greater (egg end of October - early November, New Year's Eve).
8. Staff are uniformed, and work as single person units or, at times of greater risk, two-person crews. They particularly focus on hot spot localities identified by the public and the police.
9. However, the project provides more than a security presence. The patrols also:
 - respond to requests for assistance from other agencies; managing incidents, alerting and assisting the City Police and minimising risks to resident safety;
 - identify and refer homeless people to the City's Homelessness Team and to Broadway, monitoring the well-being of the individual until assistance has been given;
 - advise residents and estate staff on crime prevention and personal safety matters, identifying environmental and design solutions where these are appropriate;
 - actively identify people in the area who re drug, substance or alcohol dependent, suffering from severe mental health concerns or working in the sex trade and liaise with appropriate agencies to arrange for support, whilst treating all individuals with respect and dignity;
 - carry out education and awareness work with nuisance perpetrators;
 - engage with young people to work towards long term behavioural change.

Service Provider - Parkguard

10. The Neighbourhood Patrol Service pilot is provided by Parkguard. . Parkguard is a private company which provides services exclusively to local authorities and the police. The company was introduced to City officers by colleagues in Islington where they have worked for many years.
11. Parkguard state clearly that they are "not a security company, we are a community safety service provider". They aim to provide community safety and reassurance by tackling community concerns and anti-social behaviour. Their approach is to combine a patrol and response service with engagement, education and advice, and to achieve a long-term, sustainable improvement for the community.

12. They do not aim to duplicate or replace services provided by any other agency, but to complement the work of the police, local authority and other services.
13. Patrol staff are trained Enforcement Officers, but focus on community engagement and liaison, attending meetings and events to build presence and trust in a neighbourhood. The Parkguard Operations Director has attended resident meetings on all three estates, has met with all partner agencies and has presented to the Community & Children's Services Committee.

First six months of Pilot

14. The feedback from residents, Ward Members and partners during the first six months of the project has been extremely positive.
15. Residents have told us that they are reassured by having a presence on the estates and there is a perception that a number of issues have reduced as a result of the patrols. An example is that reports of cannabis use at Mansell Street have reduced since the patrols started.
16. The patrols provide positive intervention in a wide range of incidents and matters. Within the space of just a few days in January, such interventions included:
 - Stopping dog walking on Golden Lane
 - Preventing youths riding bikes around Golden Lane
 - Intervened to break up a gathering of youths smoking and drinking on a communal landing in Mansell Street
 - Reporting evidence of drug dealing outside Middlesex Street
 - Reporting and following up finding of drug paraphernalia at Mansell Street
 - Moving rough sleepers on from Middlesex Street
 - Follow up work with a rough sleeper from Middlesex Street now in accommodation
 - Moving on cars parked and blocking a road at Mansell Street
 - Dispersing group drinking and smoking in a stairwell at Mansell Street
17. Our partners have also given positive feedback about working with Parkguard and the way in which they operate. Joint patrols have been carried out by Parkguard and different teams, and this has allowed them to work more closely together to tackle issues. A number of rough sleeping cases have been reported and/or monitored by Parkguard patrols and there have also been various incidents where patrols have assisted the City Police. In one case, which resulted in a successful prosecution, the Parkguard officer intervened in a fight to protect the victim and then assisted police to apprehend the assailants.
18. One of the most valuable aspects of the Parkguard service is the intelligence it provides to partner agencies. Detailed reports are produced for each shift and circulated to the police, the Housing Service, the Community Safety Team, the Homelessness Team and Environmental Health. This has provided all parties with a granular level intelligence which would not have otherwise been available. It is extremely valuable in identifying issues at the earliest stage – alerting officers to the first signs of drug use or rough sleeping on the estate, to fly tipping, trespass or security and maintenance issues which we can then take immediate

action on. It also gives us a very clear picture of the level of activity on our estates and allows any patterns to be identified.

19. As an example, issues identified on just one estate during the first three months of the pilot included:

- Two fire doors with faulty locks;
- Skaters causing nuisance outside Tower entrance;
- Presence of Class A drug paraphernalia;
- Noise nuisance from two local bars;
- Evidence of rough sleeping;
- Youths throwing eggs;
- Cannabis smoking;
- Fly tipping;
- Secluded area on estate being used by non-resident couple for sex.

20. The intelligence is, however, also immensely valuable as a reassurance tool. Despite perceptions from residents and some Members that there is considerable anti-social behaviour and nuisance on the estates, the Parkguard reports provide evidence that, for the most part, they are quiet, clean and nuisance-free. This backs up everything that the police and other services are saying to residents and we hope that, in time, this evidence will help us to shift perceptions.

Funding

21. The cost of the one-year pilot is £70k. Half of this was funded by the Community & Children's Services Dept. A contribution has been made by Open Spaces to allow patrols to be extended to Bunhill Fields, and the remaining £32,500 has been the subject of a successful bid for POCA funding.

22. Sources of possible long-term funding are now being explored. These could include contributions from partner agencies that are benefiting from the patrol service. There is also an option to consult with residents to see if they would be prepared to contribute to the cost of the service. However, we would seek ways of reducing the contribution per household to as low a level as possible.

Next Steps

23. Residents currently contact Parkguard via their estate office. The Neighbourhood Patrol Service is not intended to be a rapid response service or a substitute for emergency services and is not available 24/7. No direct number, therefore, is provided. However, residents have asked for a number that they can use to report on-going or regular nuisance so that the patrols can be targeted accordingly. In the absence of a single reporting line for ASB in the City, we are discussing with colleagues in Environmental Health the possibility of sharing the number currently used for reporting noise nuisance.

24. Over the next few months we need to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of the patrols, and consult with residents to see if there is a desire to see them continue. At the same time, we will be looking to establish long-term funding.

25. A further option will be to extend the coverage of the patrols so that the cost is spread between a wider area and larger number of households. We have already extended to include Bunhill Fields and Dron House, a small City estate just over the border with Tower Hamlets. We will explore whether there would be support for extending coverage to the Barbican and other parts of the City.

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