



Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 9 November 2016

REPORT TITLE:	Community Patrol Service
REPORT OF:	Strategic Director: Transformation and Resources

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to Members enquiry into why the Councils Community Patrol Service undertook security checks at private premises.

The report will also bring Members 'up to date' on the role and duties of the Community Patrol Service.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That members note the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To ensure that Members fully understand the role of the Community Patrol Service.
- 1.2 To explain why Community Patrol undertakes high visibility drive-by's of a range of premises including private businesses.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not applicable.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Wirral Community Patrol is a non-statutory service which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The current team consists of two Senior Patrol Officers and 14 Patrol Officers who operate on a 3 shift pattern, providing an out of hour's emergency (Council Services) telephone service, a security and alarm monitoring service whilst also delivering high visibility patrols across the Borough.
- 3.2 Wirral Community Patrol is a team within the Corporate and Community Safety service and is often tasked with responding to public areas where reports of ASB and crowds gathering have been received.
- 3.3 In 2015, Wirral Council made a promise to deliver on 20 key service pledges that our residents told us were a priority. These included action on anti-social behaviour and developing safe neighbourhoods where people want to live. The 2015 Wirral Survey responses support a clear lead priority for residents is the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour (60% believed this should be the Council's highest priority).
- 3.4 The Council along with all the key partner agencies signed up to delivering 20 key pledges by the year 2020. One of these pledges was *Ensuring our Neighbourhoods are Safe*. This pledge laid out an ambitious set of outcomes

which all partner agencies agreed to strive to deliver. One of these outcomes was:

We will combine our efforts with the Police and other agencies, creating one integrated service providing more joined up support.

3.5 For many years Wirral has approached community safety issues, including the tackling of anti-social behaviour and low level crime, through multi-agency working. This is to minimise the risk to our communities and individual victims, through a coordinated approach to ensure we can maximise the public service resource and to ensure there is no duplication. This approach also supports any necessary further formal enforcement action.

3.6 A good example of this multi-agency approach would be in the participation of Operation Banger. This is an operation led by the police and Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service which aims to respond to general 'mischief making' and the construction of illegal and dangerous bonfires across the Wirral. Community Patrol are an active partner in these operations, not only assisting in the handling of public telephone calls but also in gathering and managing intelligence around these risks and responding to and assisting in the tackling of ASB by confronting individuals and gangs who are causing a nuisance.

This type of operation has proved to be extremely productive in not only reducing the levels of ASB and crime but also in re-assuring members of those affected communities and increasing the perception of high visibility patrols in 'hot spot' neighbourhoods.

3.7 In addition to this multi-agency working the Community Patrol Service also delivers an important income generating role for the Council. The Community Patrol Service offers a security patrol and alarm monitoring service to a wide customer base, both public sector and private via some 138 Service Level Agreements (contracts). This customer base includes over 50% of all Wirral schools, 60 public buildings and 15 Private Buildings including the Chamber of Commerce, generating a significant income.

4.0 SECURITY CHECKS OF PRIVATE PREMISES

- 4.1 As previously described Wirral Community Patrol deliver a paid for service undertaking security checks across a range of premises and locations. Some of these premises are private and the typical Service Level Agreement (Contract) requires a physical patrol to proactively visit a location at least 5 times per week.
- 4.2 In undertaking these paid for visits the Patrol Officers will invariably cover a large amount of the Borough. The Patrol service drive modern, liveried and highly visible vehicles which when undertaking their visits have an added benefit of reassuring the public and businesses that there is a uniformed service out on the streets. The vehicles are also all fitted with state of the art radios and GPS tracking systems, so we are in a position to support any enforcement action and relay information immediately to the police and other agencies.
- 4.3 As a result of undertaking these security visits to the customer locations, the patrol service are often in a position to be able to 'drive-by' identified 'hot spot' locations without varying to dramatically from their security patrol routes. These drive-by's deliver a number of potential benefits – they increase the number of 'official vehicles' seen at a particular location, the drivers are highly trained and experienced in intelligence gathering and on their drive-by's if they spot any suspicious behaviour they are able to report it in immediately.
- 4.4 In response to the allegation from an anonymous employee made to a Councillor via email stating that Councils Community Patrol Service were providing 'free security services' to Sherlock House, Manor Road, Wallasey I will explain the reasons why this was viewed as no different to many other requests for Community patrols assistance.
- 4.5 Sherlock House, 6 Manor Rd, Wallasey CH45 4JB is an office accommodation block, situated in a residential estate in Liscard. In July 2016, following a multi-agency coordination meeting with Merseyside Police the

Head of Corporate & Community Safety was requested to add Sherlock House to the list of current 'hot spot' locations, as there had been a window smashed and it was also seen as a potential site for future Anti-Social Behaviour. Given that Sherlock House accommodates up to 7 separately listed businesses and also that the building itself is attached to a residential dwelling and is located in a residential area, the Head of Corporate & Community Safety had no hesitation in agreeing to this request.

- 4.6 Generally the request for any 'drive-by's' is agreed, unless there is a compelling reason why not – this would usually be if the risks to the Community Patrol Officers own health & safety are too high. 'Drive-by' locations stay active for a maximum period of 6 weeks from the initial request or until the requesting agency has stood them down. It is very rare that these locations stay active for a period over 6 weeks in duration but a number of parks and public memorials have 'drive-by' patrols for periods exceeding 6 weeks.
- 4.7 Sherlock House received directed daily 'drive-by's' for an initial two week period. In the remaining four weeks drive-by's of Sherlock House only took place when a patrol had been called to attend an incident in the close proximity. It is important to note that areas within Liscard/Secombe were at the time and continue to date to be an anti-social behaviour hotspot, therefore 'drive-by's' occurred daily throughout the six week period.
- 4.8 Whilst Merseyside Police did request that Community Patrol 'drive-by' Sherlock House whilst in the Liscard area. There was never a request for Community Patrol to stop at the property or for any officers to get out of their vehicles and no Community Patrol Officer recorded getting out of their vehicle at this location.
- 4.9 To enable Members to understand the amount of time Community Patrol spent on the 'Drive-bys' of Sherlock House and also to seek to explain that this was very much a case of business as usual, the Head of Corporate & Community Safety undertook an integration of the patrol officers GPS data.

The outcome of this interrogation highlighted the following:

- During the 21 day period between the 13th July and the 9th August Community Patrol undertook 29 'drive-by's' of Sherlock House (Some days received multiple visits – weekends, etc)
- Each 'drive-by' did not exceed 3 minutes in time at the location.
- In comparing the number of drive-by's undertaken at Sherlock House against a randomly selected 21 different days measured between March and August 2016, I can confirm that 229 drive-by's to hotspots were recorded on these days.

4.10 Whilst the data is unable to provide an accurate picture of the impact, which can be confirmed is that Sherlock House did not receive any preferential treatment, in either prioritisation as a 'hot spot' location or in terms of numbers of drive-by's.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Whilst there are no specific financial implications to this report, the Community Patrol Service does generate an income to the Council.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications and Members should note that Wirral Community patrol Service is not a statutory service.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

Nil

10.0 RELEVANT RISKS

10.1 If Wirral Community Patrol Service did not continue with high visibility patrols (Drive-By's) there will undoubtedly be an increase in public perception that they do not see any uniformed presence in their communities.

11.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

NIL

12.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Nil

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APPENDICES

Nil

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Nil

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

