

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 19 MARCH 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

GRAFFITI PREVENTION AND REMOVAL – SERVICE UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This update notes the outcomes achieved through the re-launch of the Graffiti Prevention and Removal Services. Members chose graffiti as a Policy Option for 2008/9, in order to expand the scope of graffiti removal across Wirral. This report details how the additional £30K has been used in order to reduce occurrence of graffiti in the provision of an efficient and sustainable service. Members are requested to approve the procurement of a 3 year Graffiti Prevention and Removal Contract to commence April 1st 2010, in order to secure a longer-term sustainable arrangement for this service.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members will recall the previous report to Cabinet on 25 September 2008 by the Director of Regeneration setting out a proposed policy and strategy for graffiti (minute 203 refers). This report detailed the plans for a new graffiti prevention and removal service that began in April 2008. The successful contractor for the graffiti removal service was “Together Neighbourhood Management”, who works in partnership with the Green Apprentices. Initially, the team only carried out graffiti “blitzes”. Biffa, the incumbent contractor, were still sent offensive graffiti removal requests until reliable communication systems could be set up between the Council and “Together”.

2.2 Over the past 10 months, the service has focussed primarily on the removal of historic instances of graffiti, tackling areas that had suffered from a build of graffiti over an extended period of time. Following this successful initial strategy it has now been possible for more proactive work to be carried out.

3.0 PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

3.1 Graffiti Removal

3.1.1 Between April and December 2008, Streetscene have received 446 graffiti removal requests. 109 of these have been urgent referrals (24%). All urgent referrals received by Streetscene and referred to “Together” have been cleared within the 24hr target period. The response time for clearance of non-urgent referrals is an average of 9 days including weekends, against a service level agreement of 28

days.

- 3.1.2 There have been an additional 370 removals from graffiti audits carried out by Neighbourhood Wardens, Technical Services Officers and voluntary groups.
- 3.1.3 The surface area of graffiti removed has been measured since July 2008. From July to December 2008, 3559 square metres of graffiti have been removed or painted out.
- 3.1.4 Targeted and programmed graffiti removal “blitzes” have appeared to contribute positively to the National Indicator scores for NI 195 (Environmental Quality). Table 1 compares the 08/09 survey results against NI targets.

Table 1: NI195 (Graffiti) Percentage of streets below an acceptable standard for graffiti

Year	Tranche 1	Tranche 2	Tranche 3	Average
08/09	4%	6%	in process	5%*
Target 08/09	6%	6%	6%	Exceeding target

* Incomplete survey data

3.2 Education and Awareness

- 3.2.1 The Criminal Damage Reduction Officer seconded to Wirral Anti-Social Behaviour Team from Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has developed a bespoke programme for preventative work in secondary schools focusing upon criminal damage, graffiti, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Since July 2008 interventions have been delivered to eleven of the twenty-two mainstream secondary schools reaching approximately 12,000 pupils. This work has also led to the identification of a number of young people involved in low-level anti-social behaviour and criminal damage. Several prolific taggers have also been identified through this activity and a number of prolific borough-wide tags have not been sighted since removal in mid-November 2008.
- 3.2.2 The officer is also a key part of Wirral Anti-Social Behaviour Team’s Respect Programme for primary schools (Years 5-6), which culminates in a mock courtroom trial involving the children and representatives from HM Courts Service. This Programme was short listed for a Local Government Chronicle award in 2007 and featured as good practice on the national Teachers’ TV the same year.
- 3.2.3 Responsive work has regularly been undertaken following the identification of location specific issues related to graffiti and criminal damage. The Criminal Damage Reduction Officer has also developed

a suite of bespoke presentations on topics including graffiti and criminal damage, which have been delivered on request by schools as part of the PHSE curriculum.

- 3.2.4 Key messages are delivered regularly to young people around graffiti and criminal damage through the work of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team's Youth Respect Team, which is working in hot-spot locations of anti-social behaviour across the borough at peak times.

3.3 Community Engagement

- 3.3.1 An on-going pilot scheme has been developed with residents in the Egremont area. This involved an initial audit of the local area, carried out by residents, followed by the removal of all identified graffiti. This gives the neighbourhood in question graffiti free start point. From this point on residents are trained on safe graffiti removal techniques and are given low COSHH (control of substances hazardous to health) graffiti removal kits. This allows them to have a direct impact on their surroundings. Residents are consulted regularly to steer enforcement action, should any be needed. They are also encouraged to report any graffiti incidents needing a more industrial removal approach. This pilot scheme will be assessed and improved with an aim of reproducing the initiative throughout other Wirral neighbourhoods

3.4 National Recognition

- 3.4.1 The partnership to tackle graffiti has recently been short listed in this year's ENCAMS Cleaner, Safer, Greener network awards. This annual event recognises outstanding work undertaken by Councils and other organisations to improve local environmental quality and reduce related anti-social behaviour. The winners will be announced 16th March at The National EnCams Conference in Brighton. Winners from the awards will become Network Ambassadors and showcase their projects as best practice for other organisations.

3.5 Income Generation

- 3.5.1 The Graffiti Steering Group that oversees the implementation of the graffiti removal services and policy have secured a 12-month deal with Scottish Power Manweb for the removal and coating of Wirral Substations. This has meant that the group have achieved 66% of its 2009/10 income generation target. The group is also in talks with several major Registered Social Landlords to set up similar arrangements, and is confident of securing SLA's with other utility companies in partnership with other Merseyside Districts. Securing additional income means that the new graffiti removal service can continue to the same service level in 2009/10, despite no longer having the 30K policy option. The "Together" graffiti removal team will work 80% of its time removing graffiti on behalf of the Council and 20% of its time removing graffiti for Manweb. In 2009/10, any other private work

secured by the Steering group will be done outside normal working hours. Any visible graffiti on private property, including that of other Statutory Undertakers must be counted during the NI195 surveys, hence it is in the Council's best interest to encourage partnerships with other property and landowners to manage graffiti incidents.

4.0 FUTURE CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Publicising the Service

4.1.1 Following Cabinet approval, the launch of the new pilot scheme in September 2008, was relatively low key. Whilst the 'It's Your Call' number was advertised, there was a deliberate attempt not to oversell the service whilst the new process for graffiti removal was being embedded and areas of longstanding graffiti were targeted for removal blitzes. Following the successful operation of the pilot scheme to-date, a public launch is anticipated to take place in May 2009. The service is now ready for its full public launch. From April 2009, a fully branded vehicle will be on call to tackle all incidents of graffiti across Wirral on both public and private property. The launch will engage the residents of Wirral and heighten their awareness of graffiti as anti-social behaviour. It is anticipated that this extra exposure will generate an increased number of referrals and thus increase the service's impact on graffiti across Wirral.

4.2 Customer Relation Management

4.2.1 Difficulties with the Council's CRM system mean that graffiti service requests are still being logged in general enquiries, as opposed to specific service requests. This limits the accuracy of information and the quality of reports we are able to generate from the system. Further delays are anticipated due to conflicting priorities, such as the new HESPE contract mobilisation. The Waste and Environment Team are now managing this issue internally, but this initially led to a handful of service requests going "astray". Additional clerical resource is also needed to carry out what would normally be automated tasks. Further work has been undertaken on the proposed multi-agency web base for the recording of data and intelligence related to graffiti. This project is delayed until final amendments to be scheduled by Wirral IT Services.

4.3 Procurement for Graffiti Services

4.3.1 The Council have enjoyed a successful working relationship with "Together". The organisation is innovative, enthusiastic and has provided high quality value for money services to the Council and residents of Wirral throughout 2008/9. Members are asked to agree the extension of the pilot with "Together" on the same terms for a further 12 months until March 31st 2010. This will enable the Council to tender for a longer-term contract, in order to secure a good quality contractor who can provide value for money. The new contract will

commence from 1 April 2010 for a period of 3 years. This has previously been agreed with colleagues within Corporate Procurement.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Members approved a one year £30K Policy Option for 2008/9, in order to pump prime the first year of the new graffiti removal service. Many of the items were one-off costs incurred through setting up the new service though the cost for the graffiti removal crew and jet wash machine are covered through the Council's mainstream 08/09 graffiti removal budget of £40K.

5.2 In 2009/10, all costs for the graffiti prevention and removal service will be covered through a combination of income generation (>£20K) and mainstream budget provision (£41K).

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct implications under this heading.

7.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct implications under this heading.

8.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct implications under this heading.

9.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct implications under this heading.

10.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Optimising the number of vehicles and length of collection rounds operated by the contractor can help to reduce the overall carbon footprint and environmental impact of the Environmental Streetscene Services contract. The services included in this report will result in increased landfill diversion and greater recycling performance.

11.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct implications under this heading.

12.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no direct implications under this heading.

13.0 ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

13.1 There are no direct implications under this heading.

14.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The Environmental Streetscene Services contract has implications for all Wards across the Borough.

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) the progress made by the Graffiti Steering Group and the success of the new graffiti removal service be noted;
- (2) the extension of the “Together” pilot for a further 12 months to the end of March 2010 be approved;
- (3) the procurement exercise for a 3-year graffiti removal and prevention contract be approved.

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