

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SERVICES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY 10 JUNE 2003 at 10.00 AM

Agenda Item No.

6

THE PROVISION OF A RURAL WARDENS SCHEME FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Report of the County Secretary

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Executive Member: Iris Tarry

1. Purpose of report

This item was requested by the Resources Committee at their meeting on 23 January 2003 – min 6.3, for scrutiny by this Committee.

This report updates the Committee on developments of the Scheme so far.

2. Summary

£475,000 is allocated in the 2003/04 budget year to support the implementation of a rural warden's scheme for Hertfordshire. From now onwards the term 'wardens' will be referred to as Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's). The scheme will be implemented in phases with the first phase going live on 22 September 2003.

3. Conclusion

Having considered the information contained in the report, the Committee will need to decide how further scrutiny of this issue should be undertaken.

Possible scrutiny methods include:

- questioning officers and Executive Members
- requesting a further report

If the Committee so wishes a progress report, post implementation, can be provided on 13 January 2004, three months into the life of the scheme. In addition the Crime Reduction Member Panel is due to receive an update report at its meeting on 26 June 2003. This report could be made available to members of this Committee.

The County Secretary will provide an oral update on the day.

4. Background

4.1 What Has Been Agreed and Actioned

1. Hertfordshire Constabulary will manage the service on behalf of the County Council.
2. A draft service level agreement between the County Council and the Police (see Appendix 1) has been considered and agreed by the Crime Reduction Member Panel. It sets out how the rural warden service will operate.
3. PCSO's equivalent to 12 full time officers will be deployed in rural areas. We may wish to employ part-time staff and therefore increase the number of officers available.
4. The first phase of implementation will be week commencing 22 September 2003.
5. Adverts for the PCSO positions were placed in the local press during week commencing 19 May 2003.
6. Training of officers will take place over a three-week period, commencing 1 September 2003.
7. A press and PR strategy is currently being formulated with emphasis on a leafleting campaign one month ahead of launch.
8. Deployment in phase 1 will focus on the more isolated rural areas of North Herts, East Herts and Dacorum.
9. Performance Management - it is intended that the PCSO's will utilise handheld technology in order to record their movements. Further details under discussion with a local supplier.

4.2 What Has Not Been Agreed And Requires Action

1. The current draft service level agreement needs to be finalised. The Crime Reduction Member Panel will be requested to approve the final version which will run from 22 September 2003 – 31 December 2003, and then be further reviewed.
2. Precise deployment arrangements have yet to be agreed. Currently we are discussing with local agencies, districts, parishes/town councils and the police where the perceived areas of need are located within the three district areas previously mentioned.

3. Funding exists from various sources to provide a total of 51 PCSO's (including the 12 in the County Council's scheme) by March 2004. A financial plan is awaited from the Police showing the details of this funding; it will be reported to the Member Panel and can be copied to members of this committee. There will then be further discussion with the Police about the way in which the additional PCSO's will link with the County Council's scheme.

The Police's ability to recruit and train such a large number of additional staff will obviously have an impact on the service number of PCSO's who will be operational by March 2004

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Funding of £475,000 has been set aside in this year's budget to support the introduction of the scheme. As the scheme will clearly not incur full year operating costs there may well be an underspend at year-end which will be the subject of a formal report.

6. Rural Implications

- 6.1 It is envisaged that this project will deliver real and sustainable improvements to the quality of life for residents and businesses in rural areas. Previous experience with the Kent County Council and Kent Constabulary rural warden's initiative has delivered reductions in crime levels and we would wish to replicate their levels of success.

Background material referred to by the author while compiling this report:

None