

REPORT OF VISIT TO HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM WARDEN SERVICE ON 27 MARCH 2013

Introduction

1. Tony Willis kindly arranged for members of the Police and Safety Sub-Group to visit the Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F) street warden team on 27th March. Three members of the group went on the visit: Sheila Griffin (chairman), Chris Coke and Elaine Kennedy. The purpose of the visit was to find out how the warden service operates with a view to setting up a similar service in Norbiton. Sub-group members had a wide ranging discussion with 4 experienced members of the warden team (Chris, Samassa, Maria and Shaheed), together with their manager, (Chris Marsh) and were also fortunate to accompany 2 warden teams out on patrol of the estates.

2. In our multi-racial society it is good to have a team of wardens which reflects the diversity of the society in which they work.

Outline of Warden Service in H&F

3. H&F has 186,000 residents housed in 47 estates comprising a mix of social housing, owner occupier and private rented. The warden service is funded from the Housing Revenue Account. The warden team, which covers all 47 estates, is made up of 13 wardens (three of these are supervisors) who report to the warden manager. Members of the team are employees of H&F Council. All wardens are vetted at the recruitment stage. Wardens work 36 hours over a 7 day week in 10 hour shifts with the majority being employed during the latter part of the shift and a skeleton team in the quieter early part of the day.

4. Chris Marsh described the warden service as “the eyes and ears of the police”. The wardens are trained to observe situations, intervene when safe to do so, and act as professional witnesses.

Enforcement powers

5. Although the H&F wardens do not have enforcement powers, they do have authority to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FTN) for certain offences such as dog fouling, litter, urinating in the street. (Chris Marsh made the point that H&F is the only team in London to issue FPNs for urinating in the street under the Environmental Protection Act). Penalties are £60 if paid in 10 days increasing to £80 after 14 days. Failure to pay FTNs may lead to court proceedings. Dog control orders can be issued by wardens.

Main Responsibilities of the Job

6. The wardens carry out intelligence-led patrols (giving priority to social housing) as well as providing a limited reactive response service. Patrols are undertaken on foot, by bicycle, and in CCTV enabled vehicles (2). CCTV footage can be shown to parents or courts if necessary. Records are strictly confidential.

7. For communication purposes, wardens use both mobile phones and radios (radios operate on same frequency as police and emergency services). The estates have good CCTV coverage and wardens make regular use of this to collect evidence.

8. Observations and intelligence gathered during the course of patrols is recorded in personal notebooks and entered on a database at the end of shift. Incident reports are sent off daily to the appropriate partners. The latter will include criminal intelligence which is sent to the police, rough sleeper issues sent on to street outreach team, and cleansing and repair issues referred to environmental services. There are forms for on-going incidents.

9. A substantial amount of work is done on foot so that wardens can maximise personal contact with residents and businesses which has been proven to reduce the fear of crime. Personal contact also ensures the wardens become a trusted part of the community, which generates a flow of intelligence, which in turn enables the team to target its activities. Any information given by residents is treated in strict confidence.

10. A duty telephone number is publicised within the community for the reactive response service. Calls are answered by a warden during office hours and by the Council out of hours service outside shift times. All calls are responded to and the caller updated on action taken. Where it is not possible or appropriate for the wardens to respond, the caller is advised on alternative services to contact.

11. Wardens keep an eye on elderly and vulnerable members of the community as they patrol the estates.

Project work

12. Wardens also undertake project work within the community. Two examples of projects given were: a) a Tea Dance was being arranged by one of the wardens for members of the community, and b) one warden undertaking football coaching for young boys to keep them off the streets. Wardens encourage young people to use local gym facilities and swimming pool.

Main Issues Dealt With Day-to-Day

13. The vast bulk of the wardens' work is taken up dealing with incidents of anti-social behaviour such as:

- a. groups of youths congregating in and misusing communal areas - often associated with drugs and alcohol. A total of 832 incidents of this nature have been dealt with in last 12 months with wardens dispersing groups.
- b. Rough sleepers – wardens adopt compassionate approach seeking to refer people to community partners who can provide care for homeless people. H&F has contract with organisation to provide place where homeless people can sleep, eat, shower, access medical care, advice on substance abuse.
- c. Alcohol related incidents - 88 reported in last 12 months.
- d. Dog fouling of public areas (note - H&F has programme where dogs can be chipped free of charge). It is understood that free chipping is now available for all.

- e. Urination in public areas.
- f. Fly tipping - 167 reports in last 12 months. (H&F has designated areas for unwanted furniture and rubbish. FTNs may be issued if caught fly tipping.)
- g. Littering - a total of 172 FPNs were issued by wardens for littering offences in the last 12 months.

14. A range of ad-hoc situations can arise for wardens as they go about the daily business of patrolling the estates and we were given an example of a warden who spent 40 minutes assisting a disabled resident up the stairs to her flat because the lift had broken down.

15. During last years civil unrest the wardens were required to reprioritise their work so they could transport emergency supplies of water to housing blocks temporarily cut off and emergency lighting to blocks left without power.

16. Following serious incidents in the Borough, the wardens provide reassurance patrols, calling door to door to correct misinformation.

Recording, Reporting and Follow-up

17. All calls and information gathered is logged on a database on a daily basis. Issues are referred to partners as appropriate. Calls to the duty line are followed up to check that residents are satisfied with action taken or advice given. The Council is given monthly reports of activity.

Working in Partnership

18. All of the wardens emphasised the importance of working closely with community partners such as police, Housing Management, schools, residents, youth workers, church groups, neighbourhood watch etc making the point that strong relationships are key to their success in reducing ASB.

19. Wardens have adopted an information sharing protocol with the police and have been responsible for identifying and reporting persons breaching ASBO conditions, and monitoring the activity of known recidivists. Such evidence can be used in court.

20. The vehicle mounted CCTV is frequently used to provide the police and Housing Management with evidence of ASB and crime.

21. To maintain relationships wardens regularly give presentations, provide training (eg. personal safety, crime prevention), visit schools, community centres and places of worship. They also attend residents meetings whenever they are invited.

Training

22. The H&F team is highly trained. Team members had attended a one-week Core Skills training programme at the London Training Resource Centre (Southwark). All wardens are trained in evidence recording and statement writing and have given evidence in court leading to prosecutions.

23. Continuing professional development was available through a wide range of further training including: health and safety, conflict management, risk assessment, body language, first aid and fire, dog training etc. If wished, RBK can buy services from H&F.

Employer Duty of Care

24. As employees of the Council, wardens have access to the Employee Assistance Programme for counselling support and advice. Critical incident assessments are also undertaken where individuals witness road accidents or violent crime.

Selling Services

25. H&F wardens also sell a range of services to other areas. For example, they have provided short-term warden patrols for a problem estate in the borough of Westminster. Due to the success of this assignment in terms of reduced ASB, the wardens were invited to provide cover during a school holiday and this has now become a regular commitment.

26. They could provide a full warden service for Norbiton if we wished to go down that route. Alternatively, they could provide a short-term warden service as a “trial run” in Norbiton before taking the plunge. They could also train and mentor our wardens if we wished. (Sheila, Chris and I believe this is an area worthy of consideration.)

Other Points

27. All of the H&F wardens that spoken to lived outside H&F and believed that this preferable to living in the area. The main reasons given for this was that it could be difficult to deal with neighbours on certain issues and that there were occasional threats made against them and their families so it was better to be able to maintain a distance.

28. Wardens gave the impression that they were very happy in their jobs. They worked with confidence and were satisfied with their work. They gave the impression of being eager to get out on to the streets. The wardens were recognised by residents: during our tour of the estates with them, our vehicle was approached by a teenage girl who looked at the wardens and then at us sitting in the back and called us “snitches” in an aggressive manner. This demonstrated to us that the wardens were well known and their job understood!

29. H&F operates a zero tolerance policy with regard to alcohol consumption on the street and notices are displayed prominently throughout the area.

Continuity

30. The wardens that we met had been in their jobs for between 3 and 11 years and, therefore, had built up a great deal of local knowledge of the area and its community. This level of continuity was regarded as a major advantage by the wardens.

Presentation to CWG

31. One warden (Maria) said that she would be happy to attend a CWG meeting to tell people about the benefits that the warden service has brought to Hammersmith and Fulham.

Police and Security Group

2 April 2013

ANNEX 1

COMMENTS ON H&F VISIT 27 MARCH BY CHRIS COKE

Dear All

Whilst I have it in my mind I thought it might be helpful for me to record my thoughts concerning yesterday's visit to Hammersmith & Fulham re Wardens. I greatly appreciated Elaine and Sheila's company and I thought Jill and Mike might find my initial comments illuminating and hopefully helpful for the possible way forward.

Firstly I think we were all impressed by how caring and professional the staff were in their knowledge and experience as wardens under the leadership of Chris Marsh. I found the visit in the car with two members of the staff very interesting visiting the large White City Estate and a couple of smaller ones nearby. Their knowledge of the area and their contact with people was very thorough as was their contact with other agencies such as Housing, The Police and The Homeless Persons Unit.

Secondly they obviously work as a team(I think 8 members on a shift system) sharing with each other and in shifts. The team consists of different nationalities(Nigerian, Burmese, English) and both male and female. They try and pair people of different groups together so that there are a variety of members of staff when they engage with people. There are therefore different skills matched together which I think is very helpful.

Thirdly there is accountability re line management responsibility. There is also a duty of care within the line management for the staff and many training opportunities.

In conclusion I do feel that if we are going to go ahead we need more than one warden, there should

be real accountability to a line manager who knows the issues involved and if possible it would be very helpful to buy in the Hammersmith and Fulham service to train the staff or they start on secondment there. Chris Marsh would appear to be receptive to this possibility. I know there is cost implications so I feel that we should try and get the Councillors in thye Norbiton Ward on board in the first instance.

I hope this is helpful. I think this reflects our combined thoughts