

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 8<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

### **Update on the Review of Enforcement Functions**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

- 1.1 In 2003 the Board of Directors requested the Assistant Director Public Protection to undertake a management review of the Councils Enforcement Functions. This review was undertaken and reported to Committee in February 2005. The committee considered the report and asked to be kept informed of progress. This report gives a current update and informs the Committee of the recent Divisional review of resources.

#### **2. Summary of the Issue**

- 2.1 The Council currently has several discrete pockets of enforcement functions allocated within the various operational divisions of the authority. Informal links operate to enable action across departmental boundaries but the overall effect is limited due to the fragmented nature of the enforcement teams.
- 2.2 Meetings have been taking place between the Acting Assistant Director Public Protection and Assistant Director, Environmental Maintenance to move forward with the review. A report has also been taken to Environment Overview and Scrutiny on the new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 which contains a range of powers designed to improve the quality of the local environment. Focusing on the work of the Public Protection Division the main provisions of this act currently enforced by that division are:
- \* Crime and disorder – the act will require local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to take anti social behaviour affecting the local environment into account when developing crime and disorder strategies
  - \* Dog bylaws will be replaced by a new, simplified system of dog control orders which will enable local authorities and parish councils to deal with fouling, ban dogs from designated areas, require dogs to be kept on a lead and restrict the number of dogs walked by one person
  - \* Stronger powers to deal with noise from burglar alarms and licensed premises
- Extended powers and enforcement will also be required following the implementation of the Gambling Act 2005 which extends responsibilities for licensed premises for gambling

- 2.3 The Public Protection Division comprises of four teams each of which cover

enforcement issues to varying degrees and at varying levels of authority and competence. The operational efficiency and effectiveness of those teams has been considered in particular how they impact on quality of life and environmental enhancement.

**2.4** The Community Safety team forms part of that Division and enhancement of this team was considered necessary in order to:

- \* offer a central point of contact for enforcement within the division
- \* ensure that effective enforcement action against environmental crime is given adequate resources and commitment

The structure has therefore been changed and two enforcement officers from within the Division are to join the Community Safety team. Their job titles will be changed to Community Enforcement Officers. The reduction of crime remains a key priority for the Council and the community and these changes present an opportunity to effectively respond to environmental crime, licensing, antisocial behaviour and areas which pose the greatest risk through its enforcement functions.

The core areas of work undertaken by the Community Enforcement Officers are likely to include:

- Crime prevention – through education, advice and enforcement
- Dealing with complaints and undertaking enforcement under the Licensing Act 2005.
- Community development – undertaking joint initiatives and engaging with the local community.

### **3. Summary of evidence/information**

One of the outcomes of the original review, was the need for effective Environmental Enforcement across the District. In order for this to happen effectively it is imperative that all in-house Divisions work in harmony, undertake their statutory responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act and mainstream crime prevention and the promotion of community safety into their core activities. The Crime and Disorder Act also sets out the need for responsible authorities to work with other local agencies and organisations to develop and implement strategies to tackle crime and disorder in their area in order to help to create safer communities.

The Community Safety Section already works closely with the police and the formation of an enforcement unit within that section has cemented that partnership. As a result a commitment has been given to provide the section with the full time support of a Senior Police Officer and his team. This will provide the service with the tools and community links needed to meet the diverse crime challenges that we face within the Borough.

The overall aim is to provide a citizen-focused service that responds to the needs of communities and individuals, and contributes to greater public confidence.

It is very important that tackling environmental crime is not just seen as enforcing the laws available to the council. Educating and raising awareness amongst all sections of the community must be seen as the precursor to delivering a robust environmental enforcement strategy.

#### **4. Next Steps.**

- 4.1** To introduce a strong publicity campaign on environmental crime including publicising successful prosecutions.
- 4.2** To ensure that enforcement officers within the different service areas work more closely. This will be achieved by the formation of an enforcement liaison group, enhanced training and written procedures of work.
- 4.3** That the resources available to implement and enforce new legislation and existing and new powers be closely monitored in order to ensure the Council is using this range of powers to their full potential.
- 4.4** The formalisation of the good working relationships which are already in place with partner agencies including the production of a memorandum of understanding.
- 4.5** Encourage community engagement to try and improve environmental education
- 4.6** That this area be revisited in 12 months in order to measure the effects of the new powers available and the work being undertaken.

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<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny 21<sup>st</sup> February 2005</b>
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