

Communities Scrutiny Committee

Friday 03 September 2021

MINUTE EXTRACT

CSC/ Scrutiny Review

24/2

1-22

The Committee welcomed the Environmental Enforcement Team Manager to the meeting to give an overview of the out of hours enforcement provided by the Council's Environmental Health Service.

Members heard that in the Environmental Health Team officers did carry out out of hours enforcement on a number of issues such as envirocrime, environmental protection, housing and public health, licensing, and commercial but it was generally reactive, dependant of staff availability and based on demand. The officer informed the Committee that the service had received over 5000 requests in 2021 but it was not clear how many of those would have benefited from an out of hours arrangement and further analysis of the data may be required.

The officer explained that there were a number of benefits to having an out of hours service which included a deterrent so residents were less likely to commit offences; it was easier to gather evidence for a range of offences; it resulted in better customer service and reduced demand and workload on staff during their working day. Members also noted that working with the Rangers at Bolsover District Council had proved useful.

The Environmental Enforcement Team Manager clarified that the Housing Public Health Team would investigate noise and lighting complaints from residential properties. If this regularly occurred out of hours then customers would be asked to fill in a diary, and if officers deemed the behaviour to be unreasonable they would take the appropriate action. The Committee discussed fixed penalty notices (FPN's) and prosecutions.

The Community Safety and Enforcement Manager (BDC) was also present at the meeting to discuss the out of hours service provided by Bolsover District Council.

Members heard that the Community Enforcement Rangers (previously known as CAN Rangers) provided a service to the public of Bolsover between the hours of 8am until midnight – 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The Rangers assisted with a wide ranging number of issues including anti-social behaviour, environmental crime, crime prevention, out of hours repairs and emergencies (housing), and PSPO enforcement. It was stated that for the financial year (April 20 – April 21) the Rangers had dealt with 6,740 jobs. They had also assisted and supported other Council services to provide vital functions during the Pandemic.

The Committee heard about a number of enforcement actions where the Rangers had worked well with external partners such as the police. There had been, for example, issues with street drinking in Shirebrook which had resulted in a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) being issued.

Members noted that the Rangers were able to gather evidence which could be used for enforcement action. It was stated that in doing this, evidence could be gathered 'out of hours', whilst at NED the service relied on diaries which were completed by residents.

The Committee discussed the vehicles used by the Rangers. The Community Safety and Enforcement Manager (BDC) clarified that they had access to 6 vehicles including a mobile CCTV unit for night time patrols.

Members heard that a range of training was offered to the Rangers, including first aid and legal training. This was reviewed on an annual basis. The Rangers had also established a strong rapport with external partners such as the police. Members were informed that the police were highly supportive of the service. There was also a multi-agency ASB Tasking meeting that took place to enhance the various partnerships. The Rangers assisted with a variety of housing tenancy management issues, taking pressure off the workload of the housing team at BDC.

The Committee discussed the budget for the Rangers and whether a similar service could be considered at NEDDC. The officer informed Members that there was a £271,000 annual budget. The cost, however, was mitigated when considering the savings the Rangers made to other services. In this context, Members discussed a potential partnership with BDC.

The Environmental Enforcement Team Manager clarified the investigative process in regards to fly tipping. It was stated that there was a three day turnaround time for reports of fly tipping in the District.

Members scoped the Committee's Scrutiny Review. The Committee agreed to interview officers from Rykneld Homes in regards to their housing wardens and out of hours service to tenants. The Committee also requested further information on shared staff within the Streetscene service and to speak to the Head of Streetscene.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted