

Meeting of the Full Council

Monday 16th September 2019

Agenda item 15.0

TO CONSIDER IN DETAIL THE ROLE OF A COMMUNITY WARDEN

1.0 Looking back

- 1.1 Members have discussed the role of community wardens on two occasions in the last four-year term of the previous council.
- 1.2 A detailed report was presented to members at their meeting of Full Council on 4th July 2016, which provided details of the Police & Crime Commissioner pilot initiative, the capabilities of community wardens, models in Kent and Sussex and potential costs.
<http://www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk/Minutes-and-Agendas-2016.aspx>
- 1.3 The role was responsible for providing a visible presence, to work in partnership with Sussex Police to take action, as able, under the accreditation scheme and under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, promote social inclusion, offer support to vulnerable households and to monitor fly-tipping, graffiti, defects in the highway and play spaces etc.
- 1.4 At the time, members felt that environmental issues were typically picked up and addressed by Uckfield Town Council's Grounds staff and issues that did arise in the town, may not be able to be dealt with, if the role had limited powers of enforcement with regards to parking etc.
- 1.5 Forest Row Parish Council did however appoint a Community Warden in 2016 through the Police & Crime Commissioner pilot initiative. Feedback received since then has indicated that the introduction of the Community Warden had been fairly successful. The individual had provided a helpful and reactive presence in the community, reacting to fly-tipping, graffiti, neighbour complaints etc. The Community Warden also provided a valuable security presence at their Festival and had become well known in the community. The Warden still had limited enforcement powers and this had been noted by a couple of residents but the warden had built good relationships with the relevant authorities which had made a difference.
- 1.6 On 9th October 2017, members of the General Purposes Committee raised their concerns about matters relating to community safety. At that time, Sussex Police had recently announced proposals to change their way of working and to make changes to Neighbourhood Policing. A report was presented to Full Council in January 2018 which updated members on the model of Neighbourhood Policing and how things were working with the community warden initiative more locally.
<http://www.uckfieldtc.gov.uk/Minutes-and-Agendas-2018.aspx>
- 1.7 At the time of that report, the Community Warden for Forest Row worked on a flexible rota - working a range of early and late shifts, and Crowborough had employed a full-time Community Warden who worked a rolling four days on, four days off pattern starting around lunchtime and working until 8pm during the week and Sundays. The model in Crowborough has since changed and the Community

Warden working for Forest Row, is now shared across a number of parishes including Crowborough, Rotherfield and Withyham. I believe the layout of Crowborough (being spread out) has presented some difficulties so the Town Council are going to consider whether it would be beneficial to recruit a second community warden to assist with the duties required.

2.0 SSALC's report on the Community Warden Model

2.1 A report was prepared in August 2018, on behalf of SSALC to establish the wants and needs for Community Wardens in Parish and Town Council areas in the North of Wealden, Sussex. They recognised that some parish/town councils had *'taken it on board to employ Community Wardens, to complement any local police resources, to offer visible public reassurance, and try and address the needs of the community.'*

2.2 The report looked at public feedback in response to the Community Warden shared between Forest Row and Withyham and the role employed directly by Crowborough at the time. 50 people were interviewed in Crowborough, 25 were interviewed in Forest Row, and 10 interviewed in Withyham. 50% of respondents to the survey in all three areas were local residents, 50% were local retailers.

2.3 The following bullet points highlight results from the survey:

Crowborough

60% of respondents were aware of the Community Warden
96% felt that they should have a Community Warden

Forest Row

96% of respondents were aware of the Community Warden
84% felt that they should have a Community Warden

Withyham

80% of respondents were aware of the Community Warden
70% felt that they should have a Community Warden

2.4 Comments received from some of the respondents included:

"Reassuring to see a uniformed patrol in the area"

"Nice to see Wardens, but know they have few powers if any"

"Why should we pay when the Police should patrol"

"Warden gives a community safety feeling"

"Uniforms need to be more visible"

"He attends the parks and stops bad behaviour"

"I have seen them move motorists on who are parked irresponsibly"

2.5 The samples interviewed were very small, in relation to the population of these areas, but the feedback should still be considered as part of the bigger picture.

2.6 Crowborough did record a reduction in minor repairs in recreation grounds in the first six months of the Community Warden's employment. Although no direct correlation could be guaranteed, there was a reduction in costs for the Council.

2.7 Retired Chief Inspector of Surrey Police, Mr Gil, was seen to advise that *"whatever the uniform...it establishes a feeling of safety within the community and is the first line of communication between the public and the organisations that serve to*

protect them.”
“It is a visible safeguard for the community”

- 2.8 The report recognised how difficult it was to measure the impact of the community presence and public reassurance the warden model achieved. But, also highlighted that although areas like Wealden District were relatively low level crime areas, often these more rural communities had a greater fear of crime than those who lived in a high crime area.
- 2.9 At the time of their report, out of the 14 more rural parish/town councils contacted, only two were interested in having a full-time warden (Crowborough and Forest Row), five parishes were interested in sharing a role, and three were a maybe. With parking being one of the concerns in those areas.
- 2.10 Their report indicated that the core functions of a Community Warden’s role was as follows:
- Reassuring visible patrols of an area;
 - General engagement with the communities, offering information and advice;
 - Youth and school engagement;
 - Can tackle low-level crime and ASB;
 - Community problem solving;
 - Knowledge of vulnerable persons;
 - Encouraging communities to work together;
 - Attend community/council meetings;
 - Monitor condition of road/lighting/play areas and report to authorities;
 - Co-ordinate emergency/resilience plans;
 - Create supportive network with other wardens;
 - If suitably qualified become involved with first responders;
 - Work closely with Sussex Police and other key organisations;
- 2.11 The outcome of their report indicated that there was some value in the Community Warden and there were three models potentially available:
- (i) Hub model – staff employed and deployed by a central base;
 - (ii) Single operating model – where a single council employs a warden, solely for us in their area;
 - (iii) Joint operating model – where a small number of councils employ a warden and equally divide the costs and use depending on need.

3.0 Interest in Wealden District

- 3.1 Contact has been made with all parishes within the Wealden District to see whether there would be any interest in sharing a role with other areas. Although some feedback has been received, the Town Clerk will provide a verbal and written update on this at the meeting, as some responses are still coming in.
- 3.2 In liaising with Sussex Police, having a Community Warden can assist with the sharing of information. The role would help to provide key intelligence to the police but also provide a community presence which links in closely with local businesses and the community. They would essentially be the eyes and ears of the local area.

3.3 But on speaking to a range of partner agencies, there are three important issues to consider:

(i) what would their role be in the community – would it meet the needs of our community, and what amount of time, would we require someone to commit to the role;

(ii) being clear right from the outset and understanding what powers the Community Warden would have – their abilities and their limitations (*the accreditation scheme was first referred to in the report to members in July 2016*)

(iii) making sure if recruiting a Community Warden, that the person is the right person – in terms of personality, level of engagement, and suitability for an enforcement but also a frontline community role.

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 Members are asked to note the information provided above and advise the Town Clerk of their preferred next steps.

Contact Officer: Holly Goring

Background paper:

Full Council Agenda Paper:

Agenda item 13.0, Monday 4th July 2016
“To consider Police and Crime Commissioner
Community Warden Pilot”

Agenda item 9.0, Monday 15th January 2018
“Reviewing community safety”