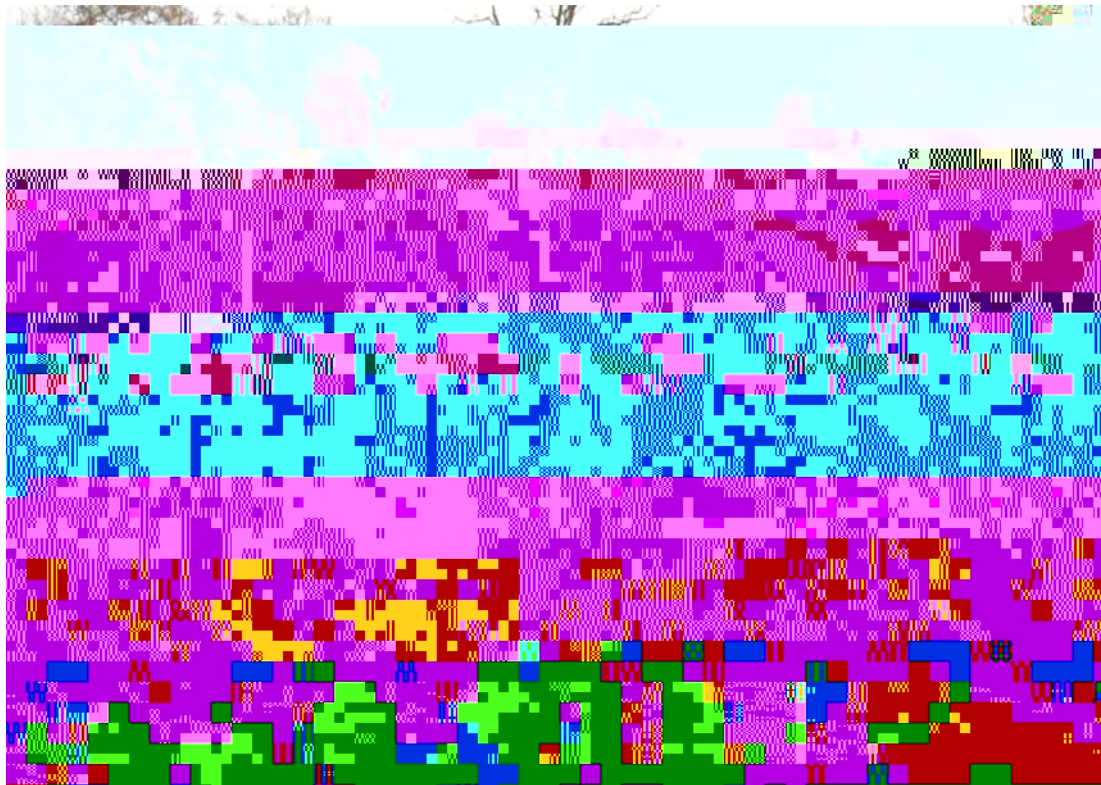




Environmental Wardens

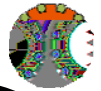
March 2006

Environmental Wardens



Environmental Wardens



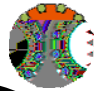


Environmental Wardens

Preface

By Councillor Timothy Huxtable
Chairman, Local Services

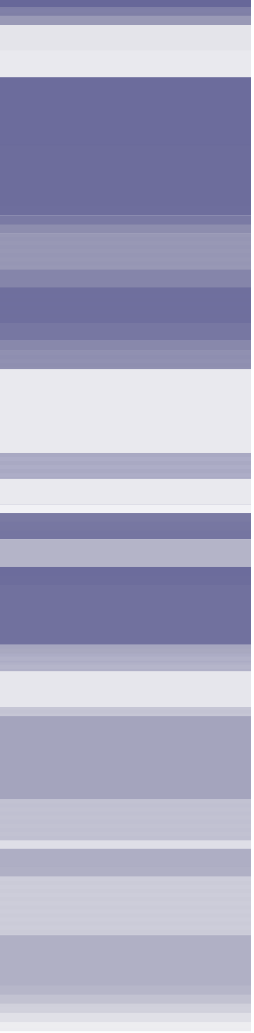


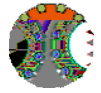


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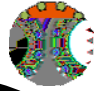
Glossary

BCSP	Birmingham Community Safety Partnership
BSP	Birmingham Strategic Partnership
DSP	District Strategic Partnership
FPN	Fixed Penalty Notice
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
NDC	New Deal Communities
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PSA	Public Service Agreement
SOA	Super Output Area
SR02 / SR04	Spending Review 02/04





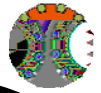
Environmental Wardens



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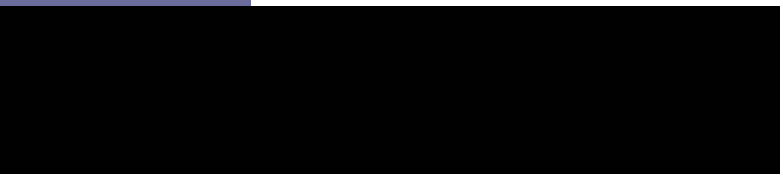
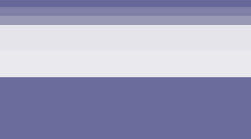
- The current status of the projects under discussion;
- Their impact on service delivery;
- The shape of any potential mainstream service;
- The likely consequences were NRF allocations to cease.

2.2.3 The evidence gathering has been supplemented by a number of other case studies, a 'walkabout' with District and Ward Environmental Wardens in Bournville Ward, evidence from other Scrutiny reviews and external reports.



Environmental Wardens

3 Context





Environmental Wardens

4 Warden Schemes

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 There are a number of warden schemes employed across the city tackling issues relating to the clean, green and safe agenda. These include:

Environmental Wardens: These have regulatory powers to enforce statutory powers delegated by the local authority to wardens relating to fly-tipping, litter, refuse collection, dog fouling etc. They use both enforcement and education to improve the environment.

Neighbourhood, Community and Street Wardens: Although non-regulatory, these report incidents to the appropriate authority. They work with residents to improve the local environment, reduce crime/fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and give assistance to vulnerable groups.



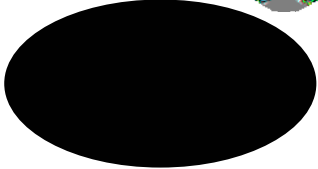
Environmental Wardens

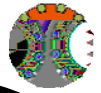
4.2 Warden Schemes in Birmingham

- 4.2.1 Birmingham's Environmental Wardens evolved as a result of both developments in national neighbourhood renewal policy and local issues. Locally, the problem was two-fold:
- 1) Birmingham's residents were noticing an increasingly poor quality street scene; and
 - 2) The City Council's Environmental Services needed to operate within the continued emergence of legislative requirements – limited by codes of practice – which meant enforcement officers were not typically focused on street scene issues.
- 4.2.2 Following examination of practice in other authorities, including a visit to view Edinburgh's popular Street



Environmental Wardens





Environmental Wardens



Environmental Wardens

4.4 Benefits

4.4.1 Highly visible (and from evidence received from Members popular), Environmental Wardens are one of the services that are pro-active – both in terms of tackling environmental problems and in engaging local people.

4.4.2 Beat patrols have proved a very important feature. With Wardens patrolling neighbourhoods up to 80% of the working day, this encourages face-to-face contact and interaction with local members of the community.

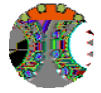


4.4.3 A further impact of beat patrols is that they contribute to the Council's Duty of Care Inspections, many of which could not feasibly be carried out without the Environmental Warden resource. Encouraging businesses to dispose of their waste lawfully both reduces the cost for the Council of dealing with illegal disposal and may bring additional revenue to the Council.

4.4.4 The effect of this level of interaction is that Environmental Wardens have been found to be successful, in some cases (e.g. in Bournville Ward – see 3.2.3) in:

- Engaging local businesses in initiatives;
- Understanding local issues and problem areas;
- Demonstrating very visibly to the public that something is being done;
- Pro-actively seeking problems and tackling them on the spot, e.g. fly-tipped waste which in turn can lead to rat infestations.







Environmental Wardens

- 4.5.7 A further point is that at the time of the Review, no single strategic map of warden schemes/functions across the City existed to assist with the co-ordination of warden services. The lack of performance data is therefore not surprising.

4.6 Management

- 4.6.1 All Environmental Wardens are managed by Regulatory Services. However, daily supervision and day-to-day tasking is very much related to the nature of the funding body. Those wardens funded by NRF allocations most generally operate at a ward level, with guidance from District Wardens.
- 4.6.2 Whilst Regulatory Services make every attempt to respond positively to District needs, such a management arrangement has been found to create a number of issues:

<p>A complex management structure – for example, the Selly Oak District Warden, whilst reporting back to District management, is required to take responsibility for a number of Wardens at ward-level, who report back to Regulatory Services.</p>	<p>A lack of co-ordination between Districts and Regulatory Services, potentially resulting in reduced effectiveness amongst staff.</p>
<p>A degree of isolation – particularly at ward level where employees are managed centrally.</p>	<p>District Managers may not be aware of what centrally-managed ward wardens are doing on a daily basis, and there is a perception that many wardens are 'self-tasking' with little support.</p>
<p>Different priorities reflecting central line management vs. local needs</p>	<p>Lack of alignment with other services.</p>
<p>Resource support for Environmental Wardens has been seen to be problematic at times. This extends to the delayed provision of computers and digital cameras for example, both of which are necessary items of equipment for the role.</p>	<p>The effect on the relationship between Wardens and Elected Members as jobs are dependent upon decisions made about NRF spending at ward level.</p>

4.7 Staffing

- 4.7.1 The consequence of the short-term nature of NRF is that funding for posts are all on short-term contracts. This creates problems for both the Council and the employee on many levels, all of which impact on consistent service delivery:



Environmental Wardens

If the post is not renewed at end of contract, the Council will lose its investment in the training and experience of the employee.

As these are fixed-term contracts, due to employment legislation and the timetable of NRF allocations, the Council's redundancy/redeployment policy is such that Environmental Wardens can be given redundancy notices up to 3 months before their contracts expire while decisions are taken.

The redeployment policy has often led to employees being employed in different departments whilst the Environmental Warden salary is still being paid – i.e. money being spent, but effectively job not being done.

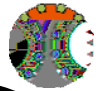
Warden schemes traditionally do not fit into a regulatory role. Through the NRF however, there are now more Environmental Wardens than Council Enforcement Officers. This has created a need for more technical training and support.

Difficulties in recruitment and retention as a result of the uncertainty.

Short-term contracts may likely affect the quality of new recruits, as well as the morale and performance of existing staff.

4.8 BSP Wardens Report

4.8.1 The Birmingham Strategic Partnership (BSP) agreed in March 2005 to



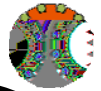
Environmental Wardens

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Should Environmental Wardens Schemes be Mainstreamed?

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Environmental Wardens

- The location of the management of the scheme – at the centre or District level?

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Environmental Wardens

At the Centre or District Level?

- 5.1.15 Arguments have been put forward to support both central control of Warden schemes and District level management.
- 5.1.16 In favour of the centre, regulatory functions and economies of scale were the main arguments, along with the ability to cross-cover Districts where necessary. The use of Regulatory powers in particular demands that Environmental Wardens are able to keep in touch with fellow holders of regulatory powers to ensure they are kept up to date and able to share experiences.
- 5.1.17 At a District level, however, the deployment of Environmental Wardens would be in response to local needs. District leaders would be able to take decisions as to what priorities lay within their boundaries and organise the appropriate structure and number of wardens.
- 5.1.18 District Directors in particular advised that Environmental Wardens would not necessarily be their first choice in meeting the aims of the clean, green and safe agenda. Mainstreaming could therefore see the number of Environmental Wardens go down or remain stable, though the coverage of those tasks increased and better co-ordinated.
- 5.1.19 However, what is apparent is that under current circumstances, not all Districts would be suitably equipped to directly manage Environmental Warden schemes. Neither do all Districts have a Warden Plan which outlines the key issues, targets and outcomes for the coming year.

Summary

1. *Environmental Wardens have proved to be an enormous, visible success in terms of public popularity, both locally and at a national scale.*
2. *From a strategic viewpoint, the success of Environmental Wardens is less tangible – primarily a result of the lack of performance data. There is therefore not sufficient evidence to recommend mainstreaming or otherwise with regard to Environmental Wardens.*
3. *The current situation with regard to short term contracts and uncertain funding is detrimental to both Environmental Wardens and the service they provide.*
4. *Should NRF be withdrawn in the future, the potential loss of Environmental Wardens would be noticed across the city. However, simply replacing NRF funding with City Council funding would not tackle the main issues with regards to Environmental Wardens.*
5. *There is a need to co-ordinate Environmental Warden schemes with other warden schemes and other players in the clean and green agenda. This would ensure overall coverage of all tasks without unnecessary duplication.*
6. *Part of this is determining where the management of Environmental Wardens would best lie.*



Environmental Wardens

7. *Environmental Wardens are clearly a part of meeting City Council priorities and the importance of their visibility should not be underestimated. However, we would not expect the Executive to take on such a scheme without evidence as to its effectiveness. It is therefore a matter of urgency that evaluation takes place.*

5.2

Recommendations

- 5.2.1 The Review Group's primary conclusion is that it is not possible to formulate a recommendation on mainstreaming at this stage. More work is required in terms of performance monitoring and evaluation.
- 5.2.2 However, there are a number of pertinent conclusions and recommendations which can be made. Indeed, it is arguable that the issues raised within them need to be addressed prior to any mainstreaming decisions being made.
- 5.2.3 A foremost conclusion is that any mainstreaming decision should consider all forms of Warden schemes, and not simply Environmental Wardens on their own. This introduces greater flexibility to meet local needs.
- 5.2.4 The Review Group views the natural 'unit' for Environmental Wardens to be at District level to maintain flexibility to meet needs, but this unit should be a team which operatpl6n

