

REPORT OF SAFER AND STRONGER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE

LEAD MEMBER: Cllr W Metherell, Chair, Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee

LEAD OFFICER: Tim Capper, Head of Democratic Services

REPORT AUTHOR: Neil White, Scrutiny Officer

RECOMMENDATION: that the Executive be requested to agree that:

- a) the performance of the Enforcement Unit in meeting its financial targets during this financial year be welcomed;
- b) the confidence in the ability of the unit to perform satisfactorily be restored and in the light of this, the in house team should be considered alongside the market testing exercise for the Council's off street parking and markets service;
- c) careful consideration be given to keeping the enforcement unit in house bearing in mind the control it gives the Council in running this important service and the comprehensive nature of the services that are covered by the unit; and
- d) the two hour limit for off-street disabled parking be increased to three hours and a request be made to Cumbria County Council for a similar limit regarding on-street parking.

1. BACKGROUND

The Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its last meeting on 11 February 2008 considered the notes from a meeting of the Enforcement Performance Sub Group. The notes of this meeting are at Appendix "A".

The Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were reminded that it had agreed that an enforcement performance sub group should be established to monitor on a month by month basis the performance of the enforcement unit against its targets.

2. CONCLUSION

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the recommendations of the Sub Group including that the Sub Group should be wound up.

The Committee further considered that the two hour limit for disabled parking in the council's off street car parks and for on street parking was not a long enough length of time to allow disable people to shop. An increase in the time limit to three hours would make a significant improvement and agreed that the Executive should be asked to consider this.

The Executive is therefore asked to consider the recommendations at the head of this report from the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

List of Appendices

Appendix "A" – Notes From the Enforcement Performance Sub Group of 18TH July 2007

List of Background Documents

None

NOTES FROM THE ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE SUB GROUP OF 30TH JANUARY 2008

Present: Cllr E Eastwood (in the Chair); G Garrity; J Jackson; J Kane.

Officers: T Magean; N White.

Enforcement Services Performance

The Sub Group considered the performance of the Environmental Services Unit across all its services up to the end of the third quarter in 2007/08.

The Sub Group noted that the performance for the on street parking penalty notices was not at the projected target due to the high levels of sickness within the unit. However the payment recovery rate from the penalty notices was higher than anticipated.

This was due to the introduction of new software which had increased and would continue to increase the efficiency of payment recovery. It meant that the budgetary target for income from on street parking was being met.

There was however more income being raised than expected in the council's off street car parks.

Overall the performance and income received was meeting the projected targets and the sub group expressed its appreciation of the work that had been done to achieve this performance. It was felt that the enforcement unit was now working at a viable level.

The Sub Group was informed that the unit was now back to full strength and this meant that those areas of enforcement which were not being addressed during the staff shortages could now be looked at. The expected income from these areas was below target and the first stage of this had been to undertake more enforcement work on dog fouling in January.

It was hoped that through a proactive management of the sickness that the unit would be at or near full strength and this would allow an increased emphasis to be put on the other enforcement areas. It would also allow the unit to restart the education visits to schools.

The Sub Group noted that the requirements of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act regarding stray dogs were due to come into effect and these would require somewhere that a member of public could take a stray dog out of office hours.

It was noted that the Police Community Support Officers had yet to issue any notices under this Act and two members of the group would raise this with the Inspector of the local Community Support Team as they were due to meet him in the near future.

The Sub Group was informed that the tendering exercise for markets and the on street car parking was still ongoing but it was anticipated that there would be some competition for these contracts.

The Executive had agreed at its meeting on 15 January 2008 that the principle of continuing with Decriminalised Parking Enforcement under local management until April 2009 should be pursued. There were a number of detailed points to be agreed with the County Council that included the possibility of increasing employee levels so that there would be greater capacity to take enforcement action in towns and villages outside of Whitehaven and that the County Council would be expected to cover any financial loss incurred by the Council.

It was noted that there was a market inspector who was now working with the market holders and looking at ways to improve the markets in Copeland. This could include finding a solution to allow the traders to park at specific times near their stalls.

It was felt that the markets themselves were not a standalone issue but interconnected with the other enforcement services.

The Sub Group was informed that the changes in the Traffic Management Act would have an effect on street parking enforcement. There would be from April two forms of contravention – major ones with a fine of £70 reduced to £35 for early payment and minor ones with a fine of £50 reduced to £25.

Most of the offences under Decriminalised Parking Enforcement would fall under the major contraventions and there would be new contraventions such as parking on a footpath and on zig zags outside schools. There could also be an effect on the relationship between on street and off street parking usage.

Next Meeting

The Sub Group felt that as it had now fulfilled its terms of reference and the Sub Group should be wound up.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the performance of the Enforcement Unit in meeting its financial targets during this financial year be welcomed,

- (B) the confidence in the ability of the unit to perform satisfactorily be restored and in light of this the in house team should be considered alongside the market testing exercise for the Council's off street car parking and markets service,
- (C) careful consideration should be given to keeping the enforcement unit in house bearing in mind the control it gives the council in running this important service and the comprehensive nature of the services that are covered by the unit, and
- (D) the Enforcement Performance Sub Group considers that its work is completed and the Sub Group should now be wound up.