

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee

Review of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service



September 2007

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

- Mike Batty, Head of Community Protection, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Mick McLone, Security Services Manager, SBC
- Graeme Small, Enforcement Co-ordinator, SBC
- Enforcement Officers from the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service
- Andy Bryson, Finance Manager, SBC
- Chief Inspector Gary Gamesby, Stockton District, Cleveland Police
- Bethan Beasley, Head of Wheelclamping, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
- Members of SBC's Viewpoint consultation panel
- All members of the public who took the time to contact the Committee with their views

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Foreword

On behalf of the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee I am pleased to introduce the final report of our review of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service.

The Committee examined the first year's performance of the Service with a view to informing decisions to be made regarding its future. During the review, Members of the Committee undertook a variety of activities to inform the review including going out on patrol with the Service, and we have gained a thorough insight into its work. It became clear that the Service was doing an excellent job and that the Committee believed that it should continue beyond March 2008.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the report and the Service for their co-operation during the review.

I commend our recommendations to you and ask that this report is given every consideration during forthcoming debate on the future of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service.



Councillor Alison Trainer
Chair



Councillor Julia Roberts
Vice-Chair

Original Brief

1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Council Plan - Community Safety:
Respond to residents' concerns and fears of crime and anti-social behaviour, as part of the Safer Stockton Partnership.

2. What are the main issues?

The Neighbourhood Enforcement Service was newly established in April 2006. The Service is aimed at tackling 'environmental' crime and anti-social behaviour. The Service is currently funded until the end of March 2008.

A decision is due to be made by Cabinet in late 2007 as to the future of the service.

The Head of Community Protection has produced a report reviewing the first year's operation of the Service.

Public awareness of the different agencies involved.

Is income from fees and charges being maximised?

How well are associated agencies working together?

3. The Thematic Select Committee's overall aim/ objectives in doing this work is:

To assess the first year of operation of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service (NES) and form a view as to whether the Service should be extended beyond the end of the current funding arrangements, and make such recommendations to Cabinet.

4. The possible outputs/outcomes are:

Increased understanding and awareness of the role and remit of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service.

Recommendations regarding the future of the NES, and whether mainstream funding should be committed.

5. What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?

Consideration of the issues by Select Committee will give an additional perspective to inform the Cabinet decision on the future of the Service.

6. Who will the panel be trying to influence as part of their work?

Cabinet, Council, general public.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Neighbourhood Enforcement Service (NES) is a Council-run service which was established in April 2006 in order to concentrate on tackling 'environmental' crime (fly tipping, littering etc) and anti-social behaviour. In order to do this the Service makes use of a number of devolved powers including police powers through the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme and local authority powers derived from the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. These include the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices.
- 1.2 This represented a significant shift away from the previous warden approach of reporting incidents and providing public reassurance, towards a response-based approach and the taking of direct action by the Enforcement Officers themselves. This decision was taken within the context of a projected increase in Police Community Support Officers and the implementation of Neighbourhood Policing.
- 1.3 The NES is funded until the end of March 2008. The majority of this funding is derived from elements of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Stockton Council's Cabinet are due to make a decision in late 2007 with regard to the continuation of the Service beyond this date. The review was undertaken in order to inform the Cabinet decision by assessing the first year performance of the Service.
- 1.4 The Committee found that there is widespread public, Member and stakeholder support for the continuation of the Service. The NES had undertaken 16,793 taskings during the first year of its operation and these ranged from the seizure of alcohol from young people and dealing with illegal Traveller occupations to the removal of untaxed vehicles and the issuing of fixed penalty notices for flytipping. This represented a significant increase from the number of taskings completed by the Wardens in the last year of their operation (1700).
- 1.5 To enable the service to continue this good work, the Committee feel strongly that when the future of the Service is included in the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan mainstream funding should be found to maintain the Service as the Council cannot rely on an allocation of funds from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. In addition, the Committee would like to see all options explored regarding funding and that these should include discussions with Parish and Town Councils in order to assess the potential for extra contributions in order to provide for additional cover for such areas, using the arrangement with Ingleby Barwick Parish Council as a model. Discussions should also take place with the DVLA in order to explore the potential for support for future funding arrangements.
- 1.6 The Committee recognise the implications of increasing the amount of publicity regarding the Service and the potential for extra demands on the Service that could result. However, it is clear that there are residents who remain unclear about the role of the service and its place within the partnership arrangements in place to improve community safety within the Borough. Enhanced publicity may have a beneficial effect on the type of calls and referrals that come through to the service, thereby improving efficiency alongside allowing the NES to receive due recognition for the role it provides.
- 1.7 The Committee are pleased to note the immediate improvements which are due to take place as a result of activities associated with the review. In particular, the

increased provision of IT support within the Security Centre and the intention to improve the equipment available within the enforcement vehicles.

1.8 The Committee recommend:

1. that Cabinet note the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee supports the continued provision of a neighbourhood enforcement service to deliver no less a service than that currently delivered and that this aspiration be considered by Council as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
2. that consideration should be given to incorporating the neighbourhood enforcement service with an out of hours noise control service and increased linkages with the environmental health service;
3. that as the funding arrangements for the Service are reviewed, consideration is given to increasing the provision of administration support to the frontline Enforcement Officers;
4. that Parish and Town Councils within the Borough are approached to explore the potential for contributions towards the funding of the Service, using the arrangement with Ingleby Barwick Parish Council as an example;
5. that the Head of Community Protection continue negotiations with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency with regard to future funding of the NES and potential support in that regard, including the consideration of performance related options;
6. that there should be enhanced publicity of the role and achievements of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service, with the emphasis on the services that can be provided;
7. that information is distributed to all Members to further increase understanding of the role of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 This report presents Cabinet with the findings of the review of Stockton Council's Neighbourhood Enforcement Service undertaken by the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee between June and September 2007. The topic was identified during a meeting of the Scrutiny Liaison Forum in January 2007 and was confirmed by the Executive Scrutiny Committee in May.
- 2.2 The Neighbourhood Enforcement Service (NES) was established in April 2006 and is currently funded until March 2008. Cabinet are due to make a decision in late 2007 to determine the future of the NES; the review was undertaken in order to assess the first year's operation of the Service and therefore inform this decision.
- 2.3 During the course of the review, the Committee took into account the views from a variety of sources. These included:
- An all- Member Survey
 - Viewpoint Panel Focus Groups
 - Discussion groups with Enforcement Officers
 - Comments from members of the public following publicity of the review
 - Feedback from Enforcement/Resident Group liaison meetings
 - Oral evidence from Mike Batty (Head of Community Protection), Mick McLone (Security Services Manager) and Chief Inspector Gary Gamesby (Cleveland Police).
- 2.4 Members of the Committee also visited the Security Centre, from which the NES is controlled, and went on patrol with officers as they carried out their duties in order to gain a first-hand insight into their work. In addition a press release was issued in order to raise awareness of the review.
- 2.5 The Head of Community Protection has produced an Annual Review of the Enforcement Service and this was considered by the Committee as part of the evidence gathering. The Review has also been considered by Cabinet and wider stakeholders within the Borough. When considered by Cabinet on 5 July, it was agreed to refer the funding position of the NES to Stockton Renaissance and also for it to be included in forthcoming reviews of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, in order for a viable funding package and the scope for 'mainstreaming' to be explored. It is the Committee's wish that this report is considered as these reviews take place.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Enforcement Service (NES) is a Council-run service and was established in April 2006. The NES replaced the Community Warden Service. The Community Wardens had been in operation since April 2001.
- 3.2 The twin aims of the Service are to tackle environmental crime (such as littering, fly tipping etc) and to tackle anti-social behaviour as part of the Council's wider commitment to tackling crime and disorder.
- 3.3 The Community Wardens had a 'patch-based' approach and operated in eight areas of the Borough (Hardwick Estate; Mandale and Victoria; Parkfield/Mill Lane; remainder of Porttrack and Tilery/Newtown/Blue Hall; Norton/St Aidan's/Grange; Roseworth and section of Mile House not covered by Hardwick; Charltons; Stainsby and Village). In addition to this, Ingleby Barwick also had a warden service delivered by the Council but funded by the Parish Council. From April 2007, the Parish Council decided to contribute funding towards additional Neighbourhood Enforcement Service provision in place of the warden scheme.
- 3.4 The Wardens focussed on providing visible reassurance to the community through foot patrols, and reporting issues to Police and other Council services for action. Following the decision to move to the NES, the main changes in the nature of the service provided are set out as follows:
 - a shift from the warden approach of reporting incidents, towards a more response-based approach and the taking of direct action by Enforcement Officers themselves;
 - an increase in the range of enforcement powers available to the officers to enable them to carry out this new approach, and a reduction in the number of officers from 32 to 22 but with higher skill levels;
 - a discontinuation of the patch-based approach, and a move towards flexible, Borough-wide coverage (although with a continuing focus on the more challenging areas of the Borough)
- 3.5 The reasoning behind the decision was also influenced by the anticipated increase in the numbers of Police Community Support Officers across the Borough, and that these would provide similar high visibility patrols to the Warden Service. The increase had taken longer than expected, however during 2007/08 the Borough will see an increase in the number of PCSOs from 24 to 55 together with the implementation of Neighbourhood Policing.
- 3.6 The enforcement powers available to the NES are drawn from a range of sources including local authority powers under the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005, an agency agreement with the DVLA and police powers under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (such as the power to issue a fixed penalty notice for dog fouling and the power to seize alcohol from young persons).
- 3.7 The NES is made up of 20 police-accredited officers (4 seniors, 16 enforcement officers) and 2 enforcement support officers. The previous Warden Service contained some accredited wardens but this was on a voluntary basis, whereas

all enforcement officers have the full range of powers currently at the Council's disposal.

- 3.8 The Service has a fleet of high visibility, marked vehicles, including one motorcycle. The patrol vehicles are equipped with CCTV and microphones. The Service also has two pick-up trucks in order to help towards the removal of rubbish (one of these is funded through regeneration). Officers wear uniform in the style of 'authority', with protective (ballistic) body armour.

4.0 Evidence/Findings

Performance of the Service

- 4.1 The Committee found that the change in approach towards enforcement had brought an immediate increase in the amount of 'taskings' undertaken when compared to the warden service. In the last year of the Warden Service, the wardens completed 1700 taskings, and this compares with 16,793 taskings completed during the first year of the NES, of which 91.6% were actioned within the relevant target times.
- 4.2 It was found that due to the enforcement powers it has acquired, the NES was able to deal with a range of issues. During 2006/07, 3822 reports in relation to anti-social behaviour were attended to. These included the following examples:
- seizure of alcohol and tobacco
 - issuing of AS13 forms
 - verbal warnings
 - intelligence reports to landlords and the police
 - dealing with illegal Traveller occupations (11 incidents down from 48 in 2005/06)
 - incident support to members of the ASB Team and police
 - attendance at fires with the Fire Service
- 4.3 In addition, the NES had dealt with discarded drug litter, the removal of untaxed cars on behalf of the DVLA, abandoned/dangerous vehicles, unlicensed/dangerous skips, and 261 fixed penalty notices (FPNs) have been issued in relation to littering, littering from a vehicle, fly tipping and dumping, fly posting, dog fouling and graffiti.
- 4.4 Most taskings continue to be located within the more deprived areas of the Borough. A detailed breakdown of types of tasking and geographical spread can be found at Appendix 1.
- 4.5 The NES has also undertaken targeted operations in order to deal with specific issues. Operation 'Backlash' targeted street cleanliness and incorrect disposal of waste, whilst Operation 'Lunchbox' led to Enforcement Officers patrolling school lunch routes in order to reduce littering by pupils.
- 4.6 The Committee found that the Service was being held up as an example of best practice and that it had been nominated for and won a series of awards. These included the LGC IT and E-Government Award for the use of handheld computers which allow officers to save time when logging incidents and improve the identification of 'hotspots'.
- 4.7 The Committee found that feedback from residents and ward councillors was overwhelmingly positive. A majority of respondents to the Members' Survey stated that they thought the NES had had a positive impact in their ward and many Councillors had received positive comments regarding the Service. Members reported that the NES had helped in regard to specific ward problems and that the NES was a responsive service when it came to tackling incidents of ASB. It was stated that residents had been pleased with the speed of response

and that it was felt that the NES are able to tackle 'low grade' incidents leaving the police free to deal with more serious incidents.

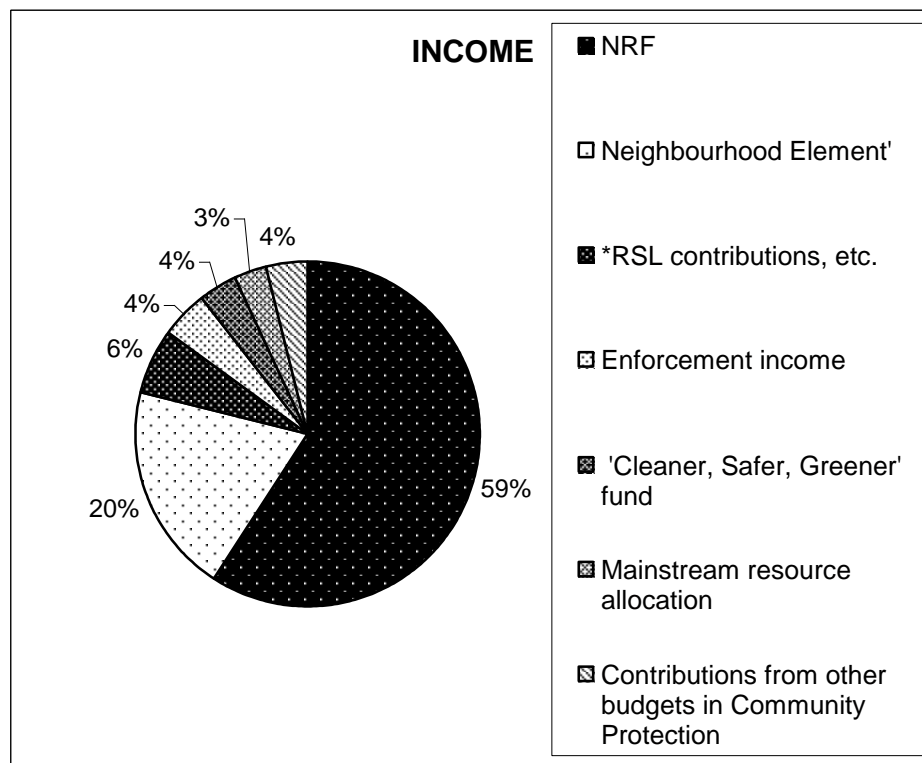
- 4.8 Although some issues were regarded as ongoing, there was general satisfaction from members of the Viewpoint focus groups who reported an improvement in the environmental state of the Borough. When asked the question 'do you think the service should continue to be funded?', there was very strong agreement from all four groups. (A summary of the focus group discussions can be found at Appendix 2). This view was mirrored to a large extent by the feedback from members and resident groups (appendix 3). Enforcement officers themselves felt that there had been a visible improvement in the condition of back alleys since they had started work, and that they had seen a reduction in the amount of alcohol confiscated from young people.

Funding for the Service

- 4.9 The Committee explored the financial situation facing the service. The current revenue operational budgets for 2007/08 are detailed as follows:

Employees	£578,000
Transport	£13,000
Supplies & Services	£34,500
Support Recharges	£74,000
Asset Rental	<u>£4,000</u>
Total Expenditure	£703,500

- 4.10 This expenditure is currently being met through the following sources:



NRF Grant	£417,000
Neighbourhood Element Grant	£138,500
Cleaner Safer Greener Grant	£27,000
Registered Social Landlords Contributions	£42,000
Enforcement Income	£31,000
Contributions from Other Community Protection Budgets	£27,000
Mainstream Resource Allocation	<u>£21,000</u>
Total Funding	£703,500

- 4.11 Enforcement income is mainly from fines for littering, fly tipping, fly posting, graffiti and dog fouling. RSL contributions come from Nomad Homes, Habinteg, Endeavour, Places for People, Accent and Tees Valley.
- 4.12 These figures demonstrate that the NES is heavily dependent on the different elements of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (approximately 80% of the total required). The Committee noted that it will not be know until after the Comprehensive Spending Review of October / November 2007 whether similar funds will be available. If it is available, it is unlikely the Council will receive notification of any allocation before January 2008.
- 4.13 After allowing for inflation and other price rises the costs associated with the continuation of the current service into 2008/09 and 2009/10 are £740,000 and £773,500 respectively. ¹
- 4.14 If the service is to continue at current levels without grant funding and contributions from other Community Protection budgets, which cannot be guaranteed, the resources required, assuming the other funding is stable will be £646,000 in 2008/09 and £679,500 in 2009/10.

	2008/09	2009/10
Registered Social Landlords Contributions	£42,000	£42,000
Enforcement Income	£31,000	£31,000
Resource Allocation	£21,000	£21,000
<i>Required Funding</i>	<u>£646,000</u>	<u>£679,500</u>

- 4.15 Excluded from this breakdown are the arrangements for the funding of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service for Ingleby Barwick. The Parish Council voted to move from a Warden Service which they had retained and funded until March 2007, to a Neighbourhood Enforcement Service and agreed to allocate funds from its precept for this purpose. These funds are equivalent to an additional 1.5 FTE Enforcement Officers.
- 4.16 The Committee found that it would be possible to approach other Town and Parish Councils within the Borough, primarily the larger ones - Yarm, Thornaby

¹ The costs do not include those for the two Support Officers who are funded by Tristar Homes, RSLs and developers to work specifically in the areas of housing regeneration.

and Billingham, in order to explore the possibility of additional funding from these sources.

- 4.17 As part of the review, the Head of Community Protection contacted the DVLA in order to assess the potential for support in recognition of the role played by the NES in tackling unlicensed motorists (using devolved powers). There is a recognised link between untaxed vehicles and criminality. The Committee was pleased to note that the NES had removed 363 untaxed vehicles on behalf of the DVLA.
- 4.18 The DVLA response is attached at Appendix 4. The Head of Wheelclamping signalled her intention to make available comparative statistics on local authority actions on their behalf and, although unable to make direct funding available, is willing to discuss further the issue of future funding and performance related options. In light of Stockton's strong performance in this respect, the Committee fully supports the intention to meet with the DVLA in the near future to discuss the matter further.

Public awareness of the NES

- 4.19 Taking resident comments from the Members' survey, staff feedback and focus group feedback together, the Committee found that there is a general lack of awareness of the Service. Staff members felt that public recognition is increasing, but there is still a need to inform residents that they are not the police, although sometimes being mistaken for the police can initially work in the officer's favour.
- 4.20 The Committee found that there is a lack of clarity amongst the public regarding the role of the NES itself, and also between the roles of the police, the NES and Police Community Support Officers. Members made the comment that residents were unsure who to contact for issues and some members of the public appear frustrated that all they see is enforcement officers 'driving around' and that they are not as responsive as the previous wardens. Those Viewpoint panel members who were not previously aware of the NES were willing to contact them in future once they had received further information; lack of knowledge of the correct telephone number was highlighted as being a stumbling block in this regard for many involved in the consultation.
- 4.21 The Committee recognise the need for a general increase in publicity for the service in order to raise awareness of their achievements and to help clarify in the public mind the roles of the different services within the extended 'policing family.' However, due to the recognised, tactical advantage which is sometimes gained by officers due to a lack of understanding on behalf of offenders as to their identity, the Committee believe publicity should emphasise what the NES can provide rather than what it cannot.
- 4.22 The Committee found that the Members' Survey highlighted that for some Members there was also a lack of clarity as to the role of the Service. It was thought that it would be useful to provide further information for members in order to allow them to respond more effectively to resident enquiries.

- 4.23 The Committee were pleased to note that in general the public seem to have a good relationship with the officers of the NES, and that they are willing to speak to them when they are on duty.

Relationship with partner organisations

- 4.24 The Committee noted the comments made by partner organisations as part of the Annual Review Report; these included responses from the DVLA, Police, Environment Agency, and Registered Social Landlords. These comments can be found at Appendix 5 and provide further positive testimony for the work of the Service.
- 4.25 The Committee found that working relationships 'on the ground' between the NES and the police were generally good. NES officers attend regular morning meetings with police colleagues, and often provide a response to issues on the basis of a police referral through the Police Tasking and Co-ordinating process.
- 4.26 Chief Inspector Gamesby highlighted that although incidents would continue to be prioritised as necessary, it was stated in the Neighbourhood Policing teams' deployment policies that support was to be provided to the NES as and when needed.
- 4.27 Some dissatisfaction had been expressed through Members and their ward residents regarding police responses to incidents of ASB, when compared to that of the NES. The Committee noted the comments of Chief Inspector Gamesby with regard to the police having to deal with 16,000 taskings per fortnight and that Cleveland Police had to deal with 'city-scale' issues within the force area. It was important to regard the police, PCSOs and the NES as all being part of the same 'policing family' and that joint efforts were being made to tackle the issues raised. The Head of Community Protection endorsed the comments of Chief Inspector Gamesby and Enforcement Officers had expressed their willingness to tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour in such a way that left the police freedom to concentrate on more serious problems.
- 4.28 The Committee found that although relationships on the ground in Stockton appear to be on the whole close and productive it was raised by Enforcement Officers that the efficiency of referrals to the NES could be improved further.
- 4.29 Therefore the Committee was pleased to note that further briefing work was to be undertaken by the Enforcement Co-ordinator in relation to the command and control centre at Cleveland Police Headquarters. The aim is to ensure that there is a standard in place to ensure that appropriate taskings emanate from the Police call handlers; this is also in recognition that within the Cleveland force area, no two Local Authorities have the same enforcement capability.

Priorities of service

- 4.30 The Committee found that there was strong public support for the twin aims of the Service. Members of the public were also pleased to learn of the educational aspects of the NES' work.

4.31 Currently, the NES has no direct powers to deal with the problem of out of hours nuisance noise. This is an issue which the NES frequently faces as officers provide a response from 7.30 am until midnight seven days a week, 362 days a year. Officers reported that they sometimes encounter a negative response from the public when they realised there is very little the NES could do in terms of providing a direct response to the problem. Attendance by officers was sometimes sufficient to encourage residents to lower the volume, however sometimes offenders are aware of their limitations and the NES can only report the issue to the Environmental Health service at the next opportunity. Members of the viewpoint panel also expressed agreement with the extension of the role of the NES in this regard. Such a move would entail an increase in resources for Environmental Health; the Committee believe that forthcoming financial reviews provide an opportunity to look at these issues as a whole.

Service support for the NES

4.32 The Committee found that although the Enforcement Officers were currently meeting their response times, the shift to a Borough-wide coverage did mean that the reduced number of officers had a wider area to cover. Officers mentioned that they are quite 'thin on the ground' at times and that an increase of one or two officers per shift would make a real difference. This was also a theme running throughout both the Member and public consultations.

4.33 The Committee noted that paperwork was unavoidable when a service decides to take the 'enforcement' approach and had to then deal with the necessary forms in order to ensure due process is followed. A simple case of the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice for littering could lead to 4 hours paperwork. However, it was hoped that provision could be made in order to speed up the process and in this regard the Committee were pleased to see that efforts were being made to increase computer availability in the NES team room as officers had pointed out that there were only two computers for casework completion. The Enforcement Co-ordinator has since been in touch with Stockton OnLine and the Council's ICT Service to source new computers.

4.34 Although it was necessary for Enforcement Officers to have 'ownership' of their case files, increased administration staff support would assist in this regard. The Committee would like to see the scope for increasing this support from 1.5 FTE where possible explored. The Committee noted the additional responsibilities of the Enforcement Co-ordinator who is also responsible for the security activities carried out from the control room and the Car Parking Enforcement Team which transferred to Security Services in November 2006.²

4.35 The Committee were pleased to note the intention to procure hands-free sets for the mobile phones within the NES vehicles. This had been picked up as an issue during the patrols which Members of the Committee had joined with Supervisors needing to stop frequently in order to deal with calls (Member comments are outlined at appendix 6).

² The projected costs identified at 4.13 do not include this potential additional administration support.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 In view of the level of performance achieved by the NES during the first year of its operation and the high level of regard with which it is held by both the public and partner organisations, the Committee believe that every effort should be made to ensure the continuation of the Service beyond March 2008.
- 5.2 As Neighbourhood Renewal Fund grant cannot be guaranteed, the Committee would like to see the potential for mainstream funding be fully explored through the Medium Term Financial Plan review process. The Committee believe that there is a strong case for removing the reliance on grant funding as far as possible due to the valuable work the NES undertakes.
- 5.3 As part of this process, the Committee believe that there is scope for exploring the potential for developing the role of the NES in relation to the issue of out of hours noise, and that linkages with environmental health should be explored in this regard.
- 5.4 The Committee believe that all options for maintaining and expanding the Service should be considered including discussions with Parish and Town Councils highlighting the benefits that can be gained from additional contributions to the Service. This should take place as soon as possible in order to feed into the precept-setting process. Furthermore, it has become apparent during the review that the DVLA is willing to discuss further the funding arrangements for activities the Council undertakes on its behalf, and the Committee believe that such dialogue should continue.
- 5.5 The Committee concluded that although the Service as a whole appears to have made a remarkable impression since being established, there are still areas where improvements can be made in order to further increase the effectiveness of the Service.
- 5.6 The Committee recognise the implications of increasing the amount of publicity regarding the Service and the potential for extra demands on the Service that could result. However, it is clear that there are residents who remain unclear about the role of the service and its place within the partnership arrangements in place to improve community safety within the Borough. Enhanced publicity may have a beneficial effect on the type of calls and referrals that come through to the service, thereby improving efficiency.
- 5.7 The Committee are pleased to note the immediate improvements which are due to take place as a result of the review. In particular, the increased provision of IT support within the Security Centre and the intention to improve the equipment available within the enforcement vehicles.

6.0 Recommendations

The Committee recommend:

1. that Cabinet note the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee supports the continued provision of a neighbourhood enforcement service to deliver no less a service than that currently delivered and that this aspiration be considered by Council as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
2. that consideration should be given to incorporating the neighbourhood enforcement service with an out of hours noise control service and increased linkages with the environmental health service;
3. that as the funding arrangements for the Service are reviewed, consideration is given to increasing the provision of administration support to the frontline Enforcement Officers;
4. that Parish and Town Councils within the Borough are approached to explore the potential for contributions towards the funding of the Service, using the arrangement with Ingleby Barwick Parish Council as an example;
5. that the Head of Community Protection continue negotiations with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency with regard to future funding of the NES and potential support in that regard, including the consideration of performance related options;
6. that there should be enhanced publicity of the role and achievements of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service, with the emphasis on the services that can be provided;
7. that information is distributed to all Members to further increase understanding of the role of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service.

Appendix 1

A summary of the key productivity figures, as outlined in the Annual Review Report:

- (a) 480 incidents of alcohol seizures, of which 431 were from juveniles and 49 from adults (Alcohol Designation Zones only). Since September 2006, details of the goods seized have been kept, as follows (309 incidents):

Lager / Beer in bottles	62
Lager / Beer in cans	279
Wine	96
Spirits	25
Cider in bottles	186
Cider in cans	3
Alcopops	11

These seizures have the benefits of reducing Anti Social Behaviour under the influence of alcohol and reducing littering, and may have a beneficial impact on the level of teenage pregnancy.

- (b) 31 incidents of tobacco seizures, all from under 16s, with some beneficial impact on health.
- (c) 507 'ASB' forms issued, which refer individuals involved in anti social behaviour to the ASB Casework Team. Since October these have been analysed between Adults (13 %) and juveniles (87 %). It is noteworthy that most juvenile cases are resolved by Warning Letters, and the analysis of 20 Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and Criminal Anti Social Behaviour Orders (CRASBOs) granted by the Courts in 2006 / 07 shows that 18 were for adults and only 2 for juveniles.
- (d) 261 Fixed Penalty Notices issued, including 75 for Littering, 52 for Littering from a Vehicle, 49 for Fly Tipping and Dumping, 27 for Fly posting, 5 for Dog Fouling (in addition to those issued by Environmental Health Staff) and 4 for Graffiti.
- (e) 411 incidents of removal of Combustible Waste.
- (f) 2,146 'Section 46 notices' issued to householders as a warning about proper refuse disposal, and 31 'Section 47 notices' (the equivalent for commercial premises).
- (g) 22 Immediate Removal notices, 343 '24 hour notices' and 159 '7 day notices' placed on vehicles, plus 363 untaxed vehicles removed (on behalf of the DVLA), 51 Abandoned vehicles removed, and 109 dangerous and obstructing vehicles removed.
- (h) 618 incidents of direct advice and assistance to members of the public.

- (i) 3 truants located and returned.
- (j) 44 incidents of removal of discarded sharps (drug litter)
- (k) 11 illegal occupations of land by travellers dealt with (involving 103 site visits, and compares to 48 occupations in 2005 / 06).
- (l) 25 unlicensed / dangerous skips seized.
- (m) 180 shopping trolleys seized.

A breakdown of taskings and Fixed Penalty Notices issued by ward is outlined below, showing that all 26 wards have benefited from the service, including issue of FPNs in all but two wards (Northern Parishes and Western Parishes), although the bulk of the effort has continued to take place in the most deprived wards, where problems are concentrated.

Breakdown of taskings and fixed penalty notices by Ward.

Ward summary		
Ward	Total	FPNS
Billingham Central	623	6
Billingham East	988	3
Billingham North	287	4
Billingham South	703	5
Billingham West	276	3
Bishopsgarth and Elm Tree	240	3
Eaglescliffe	303	3
Fairfield	321	4
Grangefield	368	4
Hardwick	534	4
Hartburn	140	4
Ingleby Barwick East	292	7
Ingleby Barwick West	276	11
Mandale and Victoria	1201	26
Newtown	1067	18
Northern Parishes	118	0
Norton North	713	6
Norton South	1116	10
Norton West	147	1
Parkfield and Oxbridge	1503	27
Roseworth	491	3
Stainsby Hill	500	7
Stockton Town Centre	3062	76
Village	266	5
Western Parishes	89	0
Yarm	308	8
(blank)	861	13
Grand Total	16793	261

Appendix 2

Viewpoint Focus Groups - Summary of Discussions

August 2007

Background

Four focus groups were held in August, three adult; morning, afternoon and evening and one youth session.

Sarah Woodhouse and Jenny Elstob facilitated the sessions and Graeme Small, Peter Mennear and Allison Davis attended the sessions.

A summary of the comments made at all four sessions and comments sent in are as follows.

Do you know the difference between the Police, the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service (NES) and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)?

The majority of people did not know the difference between the services. This was mostly put down to the uniforms being so similar. Some comments were made that the differences should be the same nationally to make it more understandable.

It was commented that the difference was the degree of powers each had.

A lot of adults did not know the difference between PCSOs and the NES, however the young people said they could tell the difference as you often saw them patrolling together. [Youth must mean difference between police and PCSOs as NES and PCSOs don't patrol together normally]. Also a lack of understanding between Police and PCSOs.

Were people aware the service existed?

There was a mixed response to this question, some people were aware that the NES existed, however the majority were not aware, however following the presentation before the discussion there was comments that they now realised they had seen the NES around the Borough, although did not know who they were. One resident asked whether they had replaced the wardens.

Have you seen them patrolling or carrying out their duties in the Borough?

The majority of attendees accepted they had seen the NES on patrol in some areas, mainly in the vans. Graeme informed the group that the service had nine vans. No adults reported seeing the team in action, the young people said they had seen them around approaching people and that this made them feel safer, however they did not normally see them after 8pm. Graeme advised the group that the NES operated from 7.30am to 12 midnight but that if required they worked 24 hours. Youth members said they had seen them at school looking out for parking offences.

Has anyone contacted the NES?

Only one person had contacted the NES direct and had found them to have a fast response rate when discarded syringes had been found. Some people mentioned specific problems in their areas which Graeme promised to look into. One gentleman was chair of a residents group and reported that residents knew to come to him as he would put them in touch with the Service, or provide details.

One resident reported that they had not received a response to a motorcycle issue in Billingham.

All attendees agreed they would feel comfortable contacting the service in future but were unsure of where to find contact details. Ideas included credit card size cards with contact details on, leaflets distributed through the Herald and Post, although not everyone receives this. Local newsletters, the Primary Times-but when targeting young people make it fun and Stockton News magazine. On the side of the vans was a popular method, and it was advised that you can find the number in the A-Z Guide provided by the Council. Other ideas included leaflet drops 'every now and again'.

It was suggested that an article could be placed in Herald and Post or similar, in order to highlight a recent success, to provide a visual example of what the Service do.

The young people thought that the NES should visit schools to inform young people about the service. Adults said that it would be nice to know the names of the NES staff as some PCSOs were reluctant to give personal details.

How do you feel about the NES providing a response to incidents that the Police would normally have dealt with?

All attendees agreed that it was a good idea as it freed time up for the Police to respond to other more serious incidents, although again some clarification was needed on the powers of NES and PCSOs.

Do you think the uniform is distinctive enough?

It was thought that the uniform made it difficult to tell the difference between police and NES officers. From a distance groups found it difficult to tell but the groups were happy that you could tell it was someone in authority. However, overall opinion for the uniforms was positive, in that they look authoritative and command respect. The group noted that the main difference was that the NES didn't wear hats/helmets. Some confusion arose from the fact that many police did not wear their helmets/hats when outside their vehicles.

The need for officer protection was also recognised.

Have you seen a noticeable improvement in the condition of the Borough's neighbourhoods?

Nearly all attendees had noticed a positive improvement in their local areas, with comments like less litter in Yarm, Thornaby is a lot cleaner, visible difference in Hardwick and Billingham.

Durham Road cemetery is noticeably quieter with a lot less gangs hanging round due to the patrols.

It was noted that with less litter more time can be spent on good planting and that the Borough looks better with its floral displays. There was a comment that friends had stayed and complimented on the state of the Borough.

People had noticed less abandoned vehicles/burnt out cars and shopping trolleys. Continued problems such as fly tipping at Victoria Road corner were noted and some of the youth group still did not feel safe going out on a night.

The youth group liked the idea of rewarding children who put litter in the bin, though they were concerned that they might only do this if NES were present. More bins and education in general were also mentioned by the youth group.

Do you support the NES officers having the ability to issue Fixed Penalty Notices?

Everyone agreed that the NES should be able to issue fixed penalty notices, one question was raised asking- can people pay in instalments-answer yes, the aim is not to criminalise but change behaviour. People agreed with this and thought heavy offenders should be pursued through the courts-Graeme gave some examples of this.

There was strong support for making offenders go and clean areas up, giving them some pride in their area.

The youth group were concerned that people could accidentally drop litter and be fined, but thought it was good to have CCTV to determine either way where possible.

Are you happy with the priorities of the service?

There was strong support for the current priorities of the NES for a number of reasons including, taking pressure off the Police, and for young people to visit schools.

One group in particular wanted to see more emphasis on changing attitudes towards litter of young people and their parents. Interested in seeing the NES go into schools more often for educational purposes, and the youth group suggested an organised clean up of local areas in conjunction with schools.

One group was happy to learn that NES officers had more power than the old style wardens. It was confirmed that bad language could be dealt with under ASB responsibilities.

It was also explained that although it is not part of NES responsibilities to tackle speeding cars, evidence recorded on CCTV could be passed to police. Also there

was some interest in the service extending their duties to cover noise abatement work.

Overall, how would you rate the impact of the Service?

There was unanimous agreement that the impact had been positive (although some of this was due to what they had learned on the day) The youth group noted that there was still work to do; still have gangs, graffiti, ASB.

Do you think funding for the service should be sought after March 2008?

There was very strong support for continued funding of the NES, attendees thought the NES should publicise its achievements to show and inform the public of its work. Some even suggested to the group that they should petition their local Councillors to keep the NES going. Young people said that it had made them feel safer and that you can talk to the NES officers.

The comment was made that if the Service was taken away, 'it will go back to the way it used to be.'

It was noted that currently the NES have enough officers but needs could increase with demand.

Any other comments

Better publication would lead to wider recognition and ideas for this included an independent appraisal of the scheme, publication of powers of NES as a deterrent and the issuing figures to illustrate what has happened in a particular neighbourhood (eg. number of FPNs issued), through community newspapers for example.

Those involved in community groups would like more opportunity for the NES to come and reinforce to residents that work is being undertaken in their area.

There was a feeling that the police may place a low priority on some situations but at least the NES would be able to respond in some capacity.

On a more general point, one member of the youth group mentioned that they had been split up by Police as they had been in a group of six. Point was made that they wouldn't mind a respectful chat with the police or NES rather than a general assumption that they would be causing trouble.

The possibility of using a web reporting system was raised, as was a simpler reporting number. Whichever number is used should be free phone however.

The youth group and Graeme noted that some nicknames were being applied to the NES (such as 'litter bobbies') by children and young people in the Borough.

Appendix 3

Public comments received during the course of the review

Resident from Norton South Ward

Had a problem in relation to alleyway; littering and bins being put out on the wrong days. In response to this the NES had been called out numerous times and had provided a quick response, including the handing out of fines.

Resident understood the need for portfolios of evidence to be built up but would prefer it if there was a less lenient approach to begin with.

Would like to see Care for your Area and NES working closely together.

Billingham West Residents Association

The committee and all members of the public who attended the meeting had nothing but praise for the work of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers. The Officers not only attend our meetings and keep the public informed of any problems they encounter but also listen to the public and looked into any problems they raised.

It was the general consensus of the meeting that the Enforcement Officers were doing a very good job – they respond quickly to problems and they interact with the public while patrolling the area.

West End Community Action Residents Group

Since the Enforcement Team was set up I think it has gone from strength to strength. I have had to call them out on a number of occasions for fly tipping, needle removal and un-taxed vehicles. I have usually had a good response.

The only complaint I have had is when calling officers out to youths drinking in Ropner Park and officers driving in their vehicle so youths can see them coming and then go on to hide their drink, I took this up with one of the officers which he thought was a valid point which he said he would take back to his supervisor. I also think that we could do with a few more officers as some of them have quite large areas to cover, other than that I am more than happy with the service given by the Enforcement Team.

Appendix 4



Mr Mike Batty
Head of Community Protection
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
PO Box 232
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Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 1XD

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Head of Wheelclamping
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Llansamlet
Swansea
SA7 0EU

Telephone 565102
Fax 565206
Minicom
Email bethan.beasley@dvla.gsi.gov.uk
Website www.direct.gov.uk/motoring

Your Ref HoCP/MB/bjm

Date: 26 July 2007

Dear Mr Batty

Thank you for your letter of 27 June 2007 regarding the review of your Neighbourhood Enforcement Service. I apologise for the delay in replying but I have been away for the whole of July.

The use of devolved powers provides clear benefits for both DVLA and its' partners. The Agency gains from the additional enforcement, the increased accuracy of the vehicle record and by denying criminals the use of these vehicles on the roads. You will be aware there is a strong link between untaxed vehicles, motoring offences, anti-social behaviour and crime and the current partnership approach is proving to be very effective in tackling this problem. These vehicles are also a serious threat to road safety. Our figures show that up to 80% of untaxed vehicles that we impound have no insurance and up to 70% of occupants of these vehicles have a criminal record.

Tackling unlicensed vehicles is popular with honest motorists. By directly targeting the vehicle underclass and physically removing nuisance vehicles from the roads it also helps to reduce the number of potential abandoned and burnt out vehicles. We are very grateful to your council for carrying on this excellent work.

Unfortunately there are no government statistics available to answer your question but I would be able to provide you with the numbers of vehicles actioned by local authorities using devolved powers if you would find this helpful. Please let me know if you would like these.

Unfortunately the Agency does not currently have a budget to directly fund local authorities to assist with the targeting of unlicensed vehicles. We continue to work with our Devolved Power partners by providing the administrative support. In addition, we put a new national wheelclamping contract in place in May 2006 doubling capacity to 100,000 vehicles per year and have also increased the number of enforcement officers nation-wide, whose duties include detecting unlicensed vehicles on the streets.



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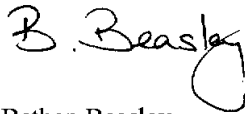
An executive agency of the
Department for
Transport

Notwithstanding this, I think we should take the opportunity to discuss future funding and consider performance-related options in the way you suggest. Wilf Morgan is my boss and is in charge of all enforcement activity. He will be visiting DVLA's Stockton office within the next couple of months and would like to meet with you to discuss things further.

When DVLA carried out an analysis of vehicles authorised for sale following wheelclamping activities it revealed that in over 80% of the cases, the DVLA record was not updated with new keeper details following disposal; i.e. these vehicles disappeared into the vehicle 'underclass'. In light of this, a decision was reached to only authorise vehicles for disposal that were deemed to be of a value in excess of £5,000. Whilst this has resulted in fewer vehicles being sent for auction it has helped ensure that these vehicles are registered and taxed by their new keepers. However, we realise that this level may be set too high in view of the current economy and we are currently reviewing the process.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Bethan Beasley
Head of Wheelclamping

Appendix 5

Views of key partners, as included in the Annual Review Report

DVLA:

“Stockton took on devolved powers on 15 April 2003 and to date 1307 vehicles have been wheel clamped [NB - DVLA have got this slightly wrong – the 1307 refers to the number of vehicles ‘lifted’ under DVLA powers – we do not use wheel clamps] of which 844 have been authorised for disposal.

There is a strong link between untaxed vehicles and criminality. Recent studies show that up to 80% of untaxed cars have a direct link to some form of criminality besides the more obvious traffic offences. Vehicle excise duty evaders are amongst the most anti social in terms of behaviour and their actions clearly have a detrimental effect on the wider community. Pro-active measures such as those taken by Stockton Council can assist in denying criminals the use of the road, lead to reductions in general crime, vehicle crime, anti social behaviour and reduce vehicle arson. There are also enormous benefits in terms of quality of life for your local residents who suffer the effects of nuisance vehicles.”

ACCENT:

“Our Officers have used the service on numerous occasions, mainly in regard to abandoned/untaxed vehicles on our schemes. Feedback is that the team are extremely responsive and very helpful.

Opinion is that their 'high visibility' and increased powers has made them appear to be more effective than the Community Street Wardens. Also, with our Primrose Hill CCTV Project, they will be the first responders to any environmental/enforcement issues.

I am also advised they provide detailed information of other type of issues they could assist with, which has been very useful.”

HABINTEG:

"I have called NES on one occasion and their response was very rapid and efficient".

Tees Active Limited:

“We have had Enforcement Officers working with us every Friday evenings 6-00pm - 10-00pm for an 8 month period. The Partnership has been extremely successful from a facility point of view. Our customers and staff have commented on the benefits of the Enforcement Officers and I'm sure that the image of Billingham Forum and Billingham Town Centre has benefited from this work which has addressed issues of anti-social behaviour. Excellent Service”.

Environment Agency:

The Positives:

- 1) Communication between the EA and Stockton Council has greatly improved. This allows secure, intelligence information to be passed between authorities to enhance enforcement of environmental legislation.
- 2) Sometimes the time delay in the EA receiving information/incident and the time of attendance can be an issue, the NES is fast reacting and can provide a superbly fast response.
- 3) No attempts to "pass the book". There have been no issues of passing the book between the EA and the NES. We work together where possible and reasoning is provided where an incident has to be passed.
- 4) The EA and the NES have an informal agreement to assist each other where possible, either in terms of information or physical resource.
- 5) The NES are open to comments/suggestions from the EA for improvements. The NES also ask for help when they need to which allows the EA to offer advice and information to allow them to proceed.

Possible Improvements:

- 1) The NES to deal with illegal waste burning incidents. A lot of EA incidents are small amounts of business waste being burnt which could be dealt with by any NES member of staff.
- 2) My personal opinion is that the NES would be useful as a single-point-of-contact. For instance, when the EA need a Council tax search or electoral roll check, if this could be done by a member of the NES team then that would improve the efficiency of EA staff as they only need to contact one person.
- 3) Training. A lot of the staff are still relatively new to enforcement/environmental legislation, training on formal PACE interviews, evidence gathering etc would improve the efficiency of the NES.
- 4) Prosecutions. The EA don't have many details of prosecutions by Stockton Borough Council involving appropriate environmental legislation. If and when they are successful it would be useful to have this information just in case we are investigating the same individual/organisation.

Cleveland Police ('S' District):

"I am happy with the contribution that the Enforcement Officers make to achieving a safer Stockton. They are a valued, contributing member to the Police Tasking and Coordinating process.

I find that all the Enforcement Officers who attend the Police morning meetings are committed and willing to take ownership of problems identified.

I have heard comment at some Community meetings that some members of the Community are disgruntled that they only see the Enforcement Officers driving around in vehicles. They feel they do not interact with the public as much as they did when Community Wardens”.

Tees Valley Housing Group:

“The Stockton Borough Council Website is a particularly good source of information for anyone interested to learn more about Council activities and future plans. There is a comprehensive section on community safety activity where residents can see what has is going on across the Borough as well as in their own locality. At an operational level Tees Valley Housing Group is pleased to attend Area Liaison Meetings with members of the Community Safety Team and Cleveland Police to improve the day-to-day quality of life for people living and working in Stockton. The Neighbourhood Enforcement Service plays a vital role in making this happen. We look forward to continue working with those providing this valuable service and others interested in making the neighbourhoods of Stockton safe places to both live and visit”.

Appendix 6

Feedback from Members on patrol with NES

- **Which tasks did the Officers concentrate on whilst you were with them?**
 1. Patrolling known hot spots but mainly responding to calls as they came in.
 2. Removal of untaxed cars; parking of cars/vans in restricted areas; calling out Cleveland Fire Brigade to attend a fire (burning of cable) and watching over the fire until they arrived.
 3. We did tours of estates in one of the EN vehicles, tasks varied from talking to a group of teenagers to litter throwing to off road mini motor bike being used at an Industrial Estate.

- **How did the public respond to the Enforcement Officers? Were there any issues regarding public awareness of the service?**
 1. Generally people were pleased to see a response. A lot of calls seem to be about young children playing football near their homes and this obviously requires a very delicate response. I wonder if giving more publicity to the “Ball Games Leaflet” so that people know what can and can’t be done might be useful?
 2. Seem to accept the situation.
 3. One member of the public who was caught on CCTV throwing litter from his car window was very irate; the Enforcement Officer asked for assistance from the Police although this had not arrived during the time I was with the Team. I think some of the public have the perception that the Enforcement Officers role is the same as the Police, expectations are very high from the public.

- **Overall impressions of the patrol**
 1. The Officers put up with a lot of abuse, not only from youths but also adults and yet remain calm and professional.
 2. Excellent service.
 3. I enjoyed the session, I learned that the Officers have a very large area to cover, often by the time the Enforcement Officer was to reach his destination the problem has moved or been solved, more Officers needed for a more effective service.

- **Any other comments**

1. The Supervisor carries a mobile phone whilst out on patrol. However, there is no “hands free kit” in the vehicle so each time the phone rings they have to find somewhere to pull over or let the call go to voicemail until they can call back.

I recommend that the service consider buying a hands free kit as soon as possible.

2. Certainly very eye opening and a service which should be retained at all costs.
3. If this service was to operate to its full potential it needs more Officers. It is a great service that can only grow and become a credit to Stockton Council.