

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 4
11 JANUARY 2015	Public Report

Report of the Service Director for Adult Services and Communities

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT OF RURAL AREAS

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities with an overview of the activities that are and could be delivered in the rural areas of Peterborough to ensure that environmental issues within the rural community remain relatively low. The report describes what levels of environmental pollution exist, what activities are already in existence to tackle this and explores some sustainable alternatives that would empower the rural community.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Commission scrutinise the content of this report.
- 2.2 That the Commission prioritise the schemes contained in this report or identify alternative schemes. Officers will then develop the business cases for these schemes further to inform a debate at a future Commission meeting ahead of any recommendations being made.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Our rural area comprises 26,307 hectares which is 77% of Peterborough City Council's Land Mass and contains 21,776 residents. This is 12% of the overall population. There are a number of environmental issues affecting this community that the Scrutiny Commission asked officers to focus on: fly tipping; general anti-social behaviour; and vehicle nuisance.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 FLY TIPPING ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

- 4.1.1 Amey are contracted to remove all fly tipping found on Peterborough City Council owned land. They are required to remove non-hazardous fly tip within 2 working days of being notified and hazardous within 2 hours. Amey are paid a fixed fee each year as part of the corporate contract to collect all fly tipping.
- 4.1.2 During the period of August 2014 – September 2015 there were 54 requests for fly tip clearances in the rural areas and 10,909 over the rest of the City. The rural incidents were spread out across the whole of the rural area with no specific hotspot areas. They were a mixture of general fly tip / house clearance items and some garden waste.

4.2 GENERAL ASB ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

- 4.2.1 Reports of general ASB in rural areas consist mostly of 'rowdy/nuisance' type incidents and generally involve groups gathering (e.g. hare-coursing) and noisy people.

4.2.2 In order to give some context to the figures the rural area was divided into two: North West (Glinton, Barnack, Northborough, Maxey, Wittering and surrounding villages) which was subject to 108 calls to the police since 01/01/15, whilst the North East area (Eye, Eye Green, Newborough, Thorney and surrounding villages) were subject to 233 calls for service.

4.2.3 For both areas there have been a total of 76 hare-coursing/poaching reports in this timeframe.

4.3 VEHICLE NUISANCE ASB ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

4.3.1 These reports generally consist of “Off Road Motocross” vehicles and quad bike use as well as bad parking and abandoned vehicles. During the same reporting period as above (since 01/01/15) there have been 10 incidents in the North West area and 20 in the North East area. Most notable is that in the latter area, 17 of the 20 incidents reported were in the Eye vicinity.

4.4 CURRENT KEY ACTIVITIES

4.4.1 The quoted figures above are small when compared to the number of incidents reported in urban areas. However, it is recognised that within rural areas these issues are more noticeable and thus have a greater perceived impact. In addition, this does not negate the fundamental fact that the community living in rural areas deserve to be provided with a service that makes them feel safe.

4.4.2 It is for these reasons that a number of initiatives, specific to the rural areas, are prioritised. These include:

- (i) A campaign launched last year called ‘Clean and Green’ where Amey worked jointly with the council to tackle environmental crime which predominately included littering, graffiti and fly tipping. As part of this campaign they produced posters demonstrating the cost of fly tipping and what this could better be spent on. They also had both radio and TV coverage with presenters going out with the fly tipping crews for a day. In addition, Amey work very closely with the Environmental Enforcement team to ensure if there is any evidence that can be obtained, they are informed so prosecutions can occur.
- (ii) There are examples of joint enterprise initiatives with landowners and the Safer Peterborough Partnership (SPP) where CCTV cameras are placed at strategic places in order to catch offenders. These do have limitations due to the vast areas that need to be covered and multiple access points. For example in Helpston the fly tipping locations are on tracks and bridleways so it is very hard to pinpoint the method of entry. Nevertheless Woodcroft Lane in Marholm and Helpston Road in Ailsworth are examples of where we have had success. Both were subjected to soil and refuse dumps on three occasions but due to our activity there are two cases being progressed with hopes of prosecution.
- (iii) Defensive measures is another tactic used, for example in Willow Hall Lane, Thorney there was a series of historical issues. Environmental officers worked with the landowner to create defensive measures and no more fly tips have occurred.
- (iv) Countryside Watch continues to be very active in the rural community and is a great tool for the community to circulate intelligence with each other as well as with Cambridgeshire Constabulary. This is something the SPP continues to support and encourage.
- (v) The rural Special Constabulary Team continues to have an impact in the Peterborough area. The SPP has the ability to task them directly and there are recent examples of where they have had an impact on several rural ASB issues.
- (vi) There is a very vibrant Police Service Volunteers scheme that have their own mobile CCTV vehicle. They have carried out a number of operations in the rural areas focusing on ASB and Fly Tipping issues. This team currently consists of ten members but this is being expanded to a further ten members in February.

- (vii) The SPP and Safer Schools initiative have been carrying out lots of work within the schools in order to educate young people on the penalties of littering and committing ASB.
- (viii) Neighbourhood Watch is about local communities working together and with the Police to help make their neighbourhood safer. Neighbourhood Watch continues to be a productive way of impacting on these types of issues.

There are currently 71 neighbourhood watch schemes in the rural wards of the City:

- 11 in Eye & Thorney Ward
- 5 in Newborough Ward
- 12 in Barnack Ward
- 15 in Glinton & Wittering Ward
- 28 in Northborough Ward

Where schemes work effectively with both Police and other partner agencies the areas do not experience as many problems as non-Neighbourhood Watch areas. The setting up of new schemes is led by Neighbourhood Watch with Police support and there is a committee for Peterborough.

4.5 SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

4.5.1 There are a number of other sustainable schemes for the Commission to consider and these are described below. In all cases these schemes would require significant investment of time and potentially financial resource, and so the Commission need to consider the implications of this as part of their discussions. The Commission are asked to prioritise the list of options with a view to more detailed and costed plans being developed by officers and brought back to a future meeting for further debate prior to recommendations being made. The options for consideration are as follows:

(i) Rural Watch Patrols

Countryside Watch and Farm Watch are part of the Neighborhood Watch scheme and operate specifically to serve farm and rural land owners. At various times of the year, Peterborough could conduct 'Rural watch patrol' evenings, where members of the Countryside Watch patrol their own land in their own vehicles and phone in suspect sightings/occurrence to the Force Control Room, who in turn dispatch officers to these sightings.

(ii) Wildlife cameras

The use of these devices could be explored as they have recently become more cost-effective. These devices are run by batteries but because they are only activated on movement they are power efficient and last a substantial amount of time. Most are capable of being powered for around 12 weeks and there is the option to work with the landowner to replace the batteries. The majority of wildlife cameras are around £250 each (see overleaf for an image) and this type would work well in areas such as Willow Hall Lane.

Image of wildlife camera technology



(iii) Rural Specials

It has been agreed by the Constabulary that if persons are identified within a rural village or community who have the skills and abilities to become a Special Constable then a large proportion of their time will be allocated to their own community once they have completed their probationary period. New technology advances will allow the officer to book on from home or at a local public building such as the village hall. Whilst this initiative has been pushed for a number of months there has been limited uptake. We are now in a phase where specific village posters are being distributed by the Parish Councils and these can be designed on request. All that is needed is high pixel images of local landmarks. The advantages include having Specials who are committed to their own community and are able to use their local knowledge of the area and people.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As previously mentioned, any new schemes specific to rural communities would require investment of time and potentially finance.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The options contained in this report have been developed with the input of Cambridgeshire Police.

7. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 7.1 That the Commission discusses the contents of the report, and prioritises the schemes they think would benefit the rural area most or identify alternative schemes.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 That the agreed list of prioritised or alternative schemes is developed further to inform a debate at a future meeting of the Commission ahead of any recommendations being made.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

10.1 None

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