
**Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services
and Advisory Panel**

5th June 2008

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

Use of York Pride Funding to Improve Environmental Maintenance

Summary

1. During the summer of 2007 and independent review of the Council's Neighbourhood Pride Service was undertaken by EnCams resulting in several recommendations to improve performance. One of the recommendations was to improve street washing to remove staining in heavy usage areas such as outside of shop fronts, at bus stops and areas close to litter bins provided throughout the city.
2. This report proposes a change to the current arrangements of utilising the York Pride budget to address this recommendation whilst also requesting £10k from this budget to support an initiative to tackle graffiti throughout the city working with partners.

Background

3. During the summer of 2007 an independent review of the Council's Neighbourhood Pride Service was undertaken by EnCams resulting in several recommendations to improve performance. One of the findings of the review was that the council should aim to improve street washing to remove staining which is a problem particularly in the summer when footfall is at its peak.
4. Staining can look unsightly and give a poor impression of the city and the street cleaning service. In addition to providing improved street washing officers consider that it would be beneficial to provide additional resources to remove graffiti quickly from public realm and to undertake additional work such as the cleaning of street signs and litter collection.
5. Street Cleaning performance has significantly improved in recent years following the introduction of the Neighbourhood Pride Service which is evidenced by our performance. Streets considered to be unacceptably dirty in 2007/08 were 14% compared with 19% the previous year. EnCams consider that the council is providing a good service although officers consider that more can be achieved by utilising existing budgets to improve performance.

The Proposal

6. It is proposed that £53k is allocated to the Neighbourhood Pride Service from the existing York Pride Budget to allow a new team to be provided. The team would be responsible for providing an enhanced street washing, graffiti removal, street sign cleaning and litter collection service from public land and buildings. The new team would also have a role to assist environmental enforcement officers to bring about improvements on private land through partnership working and enforcement, where necessary, with private land owners. The new team would be multi-functional so that they could also assist with a variety of environmental maintenance related tasks as required.
7. It is proposed that the team would start and finish later than the existing teams so that they can react quickly to issues and requests for service that are experienced up to 7pm. At the current time the existing service operates up to 4pm although a sweeping service is provided in the city centre on evenings during the summer when footfall is at its peak.
8. The new service will operate throughout the city including rural areas if required. However officers will identify problem areas which will be prioritised whilst a schedule of street washing will be produced so that the increased investment has the required impact. By targeting resources as known problem areas, this will ensure that graffiti hot spots across the wards and key locations such as main roads, shopping areas and the city centre receive a prompt graffiti removal service. Information gathered by the removal team will be shared with partners in SYP to help develop intelligence to catch perpetrators. Likewise, data being gathered centrally will help to direct resources should new problem areas are identified.
9. Officers and EnCams consider that the proposed arrangement will have a positive impact on performance, customer satisfaction and our reputation.

Graffiti Database

10. Community consultation carried out by the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams has regularly identified graffiti as an issue of major concern to the community. Graffiti, along with litter, buildings and utilities in disrepair acts as a signal crime, triggering other wider damage, disorder and causing criminal activity to escalate.
11. For the last two years the Safer York Partnership (SYP) has been in discussion with North Yorkshire Police (NYP) on how best to record incidents and intelligence relating to graffiti in a format that all responsible authorities can access. This would need to be based on GPS mapping so that officers could build a picture of information that will eventually link tags to those who are responsible for creating them. Research and enquiries with other Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP's) has identified that no such 'off the shelf' product exists to record information in this way, although when raised

through the general community safety information sharing forums, it has generated interest from others who face similar issues.

12. A small working group, which includes representation from SYP, NYP and CYC Street Environment, has been looking at the possibility of developing a suitable system for York that would be accessible by all partners. They have identified a web designer to work with them on this project. The intention being that once developed, SYP will own the intellectual property rights enabling them to generate income from selling the product to other police forces, CDRP's and Local Authorities. Given the innovative nature of the product, it is likely to result in a great deal of interest.
11. SYP are requesting £10k from the York Pride budget fund to contribute to the £30k cost for developing and running the project over the next three years. The costs include maintenance and further development for the three year period and the purchase of a license for the encrypted use of Google Earth to allow the information to be drilled down to specific properties within the database.
12. The database will provide a single point of contact for the Police, Council and all other stakeholders that are working to tackle this problem. The site will provide an accurate database of all tags found in the city which will be provided by Street Environment Officers, Neighbourhood Policing Teams and other partners such as community watch, estate workers, councillors, parish councillors and resident associations.
13. The front page of the site will provide information for all councilors and residents on what York is doing, how others can help, reporting, target hardening tips, removal advice, removal kit loaning, success measures of the website and any other messages we want to share. It is thought that this will improve public perception of how CYC and NYP are working in partnership to positively tackle graffiti/criminal damage whilst hopefully catching those who are causing damage to property throughout our city.

Consultation

14. Consultation has been held with EnCams, SYP, NYP and related partners regarding these proposals.

Options

15. Members could decide to support the proposals detailed in the report or alternatively support one of neither of these.

Analysis

16. No analysis is required.

Corporate Priorities

17. This proposal supports the following corporate priorities:
 - *To reduce the actual and perceived impact of violent, aggressive and nuisance behaviour on people in York;*
 - *To Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and public spaces.*

Implications

Financial

18. The base budget for York Pride is £163,690. It was agreed by Executive in October 2006 to top slice £30k from the base budget in 07/08 to support campaigns and it is proposed that this continues in 08/09.
19. In addition it is proposed that the 08/09 base budget is top sliced to fund the environmental maintenance team on a recurring basis to the value of £53,800 and £10,000 one off funding is provided to the graffiti website. The remaining budget will be allocated to Wards.
20. It should be noted that in recent financial years £30k additional base budget has been made available by the Executive. This is subject to the Councils previous year (07/08) overall financial position which has not been finalised at this stage. If £30k is made available in 08/09 the budget allocated to Wards will total £99,890.

Other implications

21. There are no significant HR, equalities, legal, crime and disorder, IT, property or other implications other than those set out in the body of this report.

Risk Management

22. There are minimal risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

23. The Advisory Panel are recommended to advise the Executive Member to agree to top slice the York Pride budget by £10,000 in 08/09 to support the development of a new graffiti database which will allow partners to tackle this problem more efficiently and effectively in the future.
24. The Advisory Panel are recommended to advise the Executive Member to agree to top slice the York Pride budget by £83,800 on a recurring basis to fund the new Environmental Maintenance team and to continue to fund campaigns.

Reason: To improve environmental maintenance within the city including in it's neighbourhoods and parishes.

Contact Details

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Report Approved **Date** 02/05/2008

Specialist Implications Officers: Financial – Sarah Kirby, Finance Manager

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Regulator's Compliance Code (published by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform)

Annexes

None