



North Devon Council

Report Date: Monday, 4 September 2023

Topic: Street Marshal Scheme

Report by: Hannah Harrington, Place Manager (Town Centres) and Jon Triggs (Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The concept of providing a reassuring visible presence in town centres was first introduced following the pandemic in December 2020. Known locally as Place Makers (nationally as Covid Marshals) their role was primarily to provide a warm, friendly welcome to residents and visitors and to provide assistance to both residents and businesses on Covid restrictions and regulations, in line with Public Health measures when town centres re-opened.
- 1.2. All Placemakers were required to be SIA (Security Industry Accredited) and First Aid trained.
- 1.3. This visible presence was highly valued by both members of the public and businesses and schemes in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe were funded through the Welcome Back Fund following the lockdown periods in 2021.
- 1.4. The scheme was reinstated in March 2022 using the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) with an expanded role to include de-escalating situations that could lead to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
- 1.5. Following the success of these schemes; a subsequent increase in antisocial behaviour incidents in Barnstaple Town Centre once they stopped and a public survey which determined that an increased presence by uniformed enforcement officers was the main intervention that would make people feel safer, a successful bid to Safer Streets round 4 was submitted which included funding for street marshals in Barnstaple.
- 1.6. The street marshals have been an unprecedented success, contributing towards a significant reduction in overall crime and incidents of ASB reported to the Police. In the 12 month period June 22 – May 23 compared to the same 12 month period the year before (21-22)
 - Reported crime has decreased by 18% a reduction of 382 incidents
 - Reported incidents of ASB have decreased by 34% a reduction of 145 incidents.
- 1.7. The marshals are now a highly valued service by NDC staff, businesses, local residents, visitors, Police and other emergency services.
- 1.8. The Safer Streets funding comes to end on 30 September 2023, the purpose of this report is therefore to set out the benefits of the current scheme and seek approval for funding to enable a scheme to continue until end of March



2024 in both Barnstaple and Ilfracombe with a view to seeking a long-term partnership funding solution from April 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Contract Procedure Rules be waived and approval be given to enter a new contract up to 31 March 2024 with the existing provider on the basis that they have been delivering the service for the last 9 months and have established trusted, invaluable contacts and relationships with NDC staff, Police, businesses and the wider community.
- 2.2. That authority be delegated to Place Manager (town centres) and the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive to determine the exact operating hours of the scheme in consultation with key partners such as Police, based on demand and available budget.
- 2.3. Subject to approval of 2.1 and 2.2 above, the cost of the Street Marshal contract be funded from the Town Centre Management earmarked reserve as set out in Section 5.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The current provider has been delivering the service since November 2022 as part of the Safer Streets project and have therefore established strong relationships with partners. A new supplier would struggle to get the same point during the length of this contract.
- 3.2. The current funding for Street Marshals through Safer Streets round 4 comes to an end on 30 September 2023 and there are concerns that if the service is simply withdrawn the situation will deteriorate rapidly.
- 3.3. Extending the funding until April 2024 will give officers time to explore other funding opportunities with partners to provide a long-term solution to the provision of street marshals in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. Without a partnership approach to funding, the scheme is not sustainable into the longer term.

4. REPORT

- 4.1. The concept of providing a reassuring visible presence in town centres was first introduced following the pandemic in December 2020. Known locally as Place Makers (nationally as Covid Marshals) their role was primarily to provide a warm, friendly welcome to residents and visitors and to provide assistance to both residents and businesses on Covid restrictions and regulations, in line with Public Health measures when town centres re-opened.
- 4.2. This visible presence was highly valued by both members of the public and businesses and schemes in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe were funded through the Welcome Back Fund following the lockdown periods in 2021.

- 4.3. The scheme was reinstated in March 2022 using the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) with an expanded role to include de-escalating situations that could lead to anti-social behaviour.
- 4.4. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) can blight communities, have a serious impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals, and ruin the enjoyment of, and feelings of safety within, public spaces. ASB is a symptom of, and can contribute to, the social and economic decline of neighbourhoods.
- 4.5. In September 2022 ASB in Barnstaple town centre was higher than the Devon and Cornwall Force average with the majority of incidents relating to rowdy / inconsiderate behaviour, including street fights, threatening and intimidating behaviour and street drinking.
- 4.6. The results of a public survey to understand what makes people feel safe in Barnstaple highlighted the need for high visibility patrols and additional capable guardianship to deter crimes, detect offenders and improve feelings of safety.
- 4.7. In response to the above North Devon Council and partners submitted a successful bid to The Home Office Safer Streets Fund 4, which included the creation of a visible presence in Barnstaple Town Centre. This was achieved by establishing a team consisting of street marshals, NDC's ASB Officer, NDC's CCTV staff, NDC's Civil Enforcement Officers and the Police Neighbourhood team providing a multi-agency, high profile presence with the ability to be flexible, responsive - tackling local problems quickly and efficiently.
- 4.8. In order to be truly effective and have maximum impact on all types of ASB incidents, marshals were given certain delegated powers in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation under statutory provisions and delegations with reference to the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing act 2014, sections 63 and 68. This includes requiring a person to surrender their alcohol when requested to do so within the PSPO area. Failure to do so is a breach of this order and may result in a fixed penalty notice or court enforcement action.
- 4.9. The street marshals form the core of the team through a continuous daily presence within the town but are often accompanied by other members of multi-agency team.
- 4.10. The aims of the current scheme include:
 - To provide public reassurance / safety to the public and businesses.
 - De-escalate situations that could lead to anti-social behaviour
 - Provide a direct link to Council and Police teams by utilising the existing town centre radio network (Shopnet)
 - Provide first aid assistance as required
 - Report any environmental ASB issues to NDC

- Build relationships with local businesses, encouraging use of the Shopnet radio system and reporting of incidents. Provide a link between businesses and public services and reporting any issues and helping these to be addressed quickly.
- Where reasonable to assist Council and Police staff in their daily duties
- Gather intelligence and enforce the Public Spaces Protection Order.

4.11 The service currently provides:

- 2 x SIA accredited, FREC 3 first aid trained security staff covering Barnstaple Town Centre with specific focus on the Public Spaces Protection Order 10.30 am to 5.30pm 7 days a week.
- Each officer is equipped with a full medic kit, including a defibrillator and oxygen, ensuring they are prepared to provide life-assisting assistance if needed
- Daily reports and if appropriate body worn camera footage to North Devon Council and the Police.
- Witness statements when appropriate
- A dedicated mobile number for businesses to contact them.

4.12 Since the start of the contract the team has been diligently working each day to ensure the safety for all, whether it is Barnstaple's residents, businesses or visitors. The incidents they deal with are wide ranging, from dealing with anti-social behaviour and street drinking to curbing retail theft and vandalism. Another crucial aspect of their role is offering protection and support to those in most need, whether it is safeguarding vulnerable people or being a first responder in a medical emergency.

4.13 Since the start of the current contract:

- Marshals have responded to 427 incidents in total
- Street drinking is the most reported incident (101)
- Police were only called involved in 14% of incidents, which helps alleviate pressure on emergency services and allows them to deal with more serious incidents.
- 63 medical incidents have been attended to with an ambulance called to 25% of those. This is estimated to have saved the NHS £10,575 due to the team being able to deliver essential care on the scene, freeing up valuable NHS resources. Note, this saving is for period November 2022 to July 2023 (9 months).

4.14 The results of a recent survey of businesses and general public showed that:

- 87% of respondents (208) had seen a reduction in ASB
- 81% of respondents (208) had seen a reduction in violence
- 83% of respondents (208) had seen a reduction in criminal damage

- 80% of respondents (208) had seen a reduction in street drinking
- 82% of respondents (208) had seen a reduction in theft
- 74% of respondents (208) had seen a reduction in drug use

4.15 The overwhelming response is that the marshals are having a hugely positive impact on the day-to-day running of businesses and on the community as a whole with the majority seeing decreases in issues such as anti-social behaviour, violence and street drinking.

Comments received include:

“We have suffered with shoplifting, drink and drugs on the street for a long time, we rely on summer trade and having marshals in the town improves our town and makes it more welcoming for visitors and locals.”

“Amazing group of people, as a young girl who works by herself they have made me and my colleagues feel very safe in our work hours. Have seen a massive decrease in issues surrounding the areas”

“Great service, feel safer knowing they are there to help if we need them”

“A great service that has benefitted us, we have seen a huge reduction in regular shoplifters coming and stealing, as well as being threatening and violent. The problem was out of control before”.

The following comment was also received from the Centre Manager at Barnstaple Library:

“I heard that the Street Marshall's funding comes to an end in a few weeks, sometime around the beginning of September.

We have noticed a vast improvement in the anti-social behaviour here at the Library and in general, staff and customers have commented on the improvement they have seen and felt around the town. The guys have been so supportive and helpful and deal with any situation in a professional manner. I was at a meeting earlier this week with Age Concern & the Town Council re Elder Day, which we hope will encourage older people back into the town. A lot of them when surveyed expressed their concerns around the anti-social behaviour, crime etc.

Do we know if there is likely to be any further funding to continue having the SMs please, it will be a real shame if things revert to how they were.”

- 4.16 Similar comments and concerns have been made to various members of the team over the past few weeks.
- 4.17 Whilst the scheme in Barnstaple has been a huge success, the issues aren't unique to Barnstaple. In the last three months the Council have received complaints of increased street drinking in Runnymede Gardens and the sea front area of Ilfracombe. NDC's ASB officer has carried out joint patrols with the Police in these areas resulting in individuals being asked to surrender their alcohol and dispersed out of the area.
- 4.18 A number of repeat drinkers have been issued ASB warning letters with further enforcement action being considered. Additional signage is also being implemented in these areas. Both the Council and Neighbourhood Policing team have limited resources and it has not been possible to have a daily presence in this area to tackle issues as and when they occur.
- 4.19 As demonstrated above the street marshal scheme has been a huge success in Barnstaple, resulting in reduced incidences of ASB and improving confidence in the town centre. A provision in Ilfracombe would be expected to make a similar significant difference to the community of Ilfracombe.
- 4.20 There is not currently enough budget available to provide the same level of service in both Barnstaple and Ilfracombe however it is considered important that a level of service be maintained in Barnstaple and implemented in Ilfracombe in order that there is a level of coverage across both towns.
- 4.21 As shown above there are significant benefits to all public services, it would therefore be appropriate that a long term, multi-agency funding solution be sought to ensure the scheme is sustainable moving forwards. Approving funding until April 2024 would enable such an agreement to be explored and implemented and a further report would be brought back to Members once this has been identified.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As part of the Safer Streets fund during 2022-23, an element of NDC officer time was recharged to the project where officers were directly providing interventions under the scheme. The result of this created a budget underspend within the 2022-23 year on those service budget areas where those officers were providing the interventions.
- 5.2 As part of closing the 2022-23 year, it was approved as part of the financial outturn to place the above savings into a specific earmarked reserve to reinvest back into our town centres as part of ongoing management provisions such as safety and security.
- 5.3 The balance within the Town Centre Management Reserve is £49,332 and it is proposed that the 6 month contract outlined within this report, if approved, be funded from this earmarked reserve balance and that delegation be given to officers to determine the exact operating hours of the scheme in consultation with



key partners such as the Police, based on demand and the available funding above.

5.4 The estimated cost of a 6-month contract, providing 7 days a week / 7 hours per day coverage (days and hours to be split across Barnstaple and Ilfracombe) is £46,000.

5.5 A longer term funding solution for Street Marshals post April 2024 needs to be found and over the next six months discussions will take place between NDC officers and multi-agency stakeholders to seek options for a sustainable solution moving forwards for this much valued provision for our town centres.

6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be updated for this scheme.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1 There are no environmental impacts from this scheme.

8 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1 What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

8.1.1 Improving customer focus: the scheme addresses some of the key concerns that customers have around feelings of safety in town centres. The marshals provide a reassuring presence, provide intelligence to NDC and can respond quickly to incidents.

8.1.2 Regeneration or economic development: the presence of street marshals contributes to people's feelings of safety and encourages them to visit town centres thus supporting the regeneration and economic development of those centres.

9 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1 Part 3 Annexe 1 paragraph 1

10 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: (The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

- Safer Streets Round 4 bid

12 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Hannah Harrington, Place Manager (Town Centres)

