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## **COMMUNITY SAFETY ACCREDITATION SCHEME - CONSULTATION**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report apprises Members of a document concerning a community safety accreditation scheme that Essex Police are currently consulting on.
- 1.2 The Chief Constable of Essex is currently considering whether or not to introduce such a scheme to the Essex Police area, and if so, what form such a scheme should take.
- 1.3 Before doing so, the Police Reform Act 2002 requires the Chief Constable to consult with the Police Authority and all local authorities within the respective force area.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The community safety accreditation scheme is a “stamp of approval” which enables an organisation and its employees to exercise some powers that have hitherto largely been only available to police officers and support staff employed by police forces.
- 2.2 The scheme (see Appendix A) is aimed primarily at ‘uniformed’ local or public authority staff, although many companies within the ‘private security’ industry have already identified the commercial and growth opportunities that accreditation could bring them. Accredited staff would be permitted to wear the National Home Office ‘Community Safety Accredited’ badge on their respective uniform.
- 2.3 In addition to displaying the ‘approved’ Home Office ‘Community Safety Accredited’ badge on their uniform, ‘accredited persons’ would require a photo Identification Card with a standard wording e.g. ‘Accredited Person’ under Section 41 - Police Reform Act 2002) and an ‘accreditation’ card listing their ‘accredited powers under the Police Reform Act for production on demand by a member of the public. This mirrors the requirement for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). However, unlike PCSOs, accredited staff can be those already employed within their organisation.

### **3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The Police Reform Act 2002 empowers, but does not require, Chief Constables to accredit non-police staff with limited police powers. However, from April 2004 each police force’s annual Police Plan will need to contain details of schemes that operate in their area, and, where there isn’t any, an explanation as to why not.

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- 3.2 The Police Reform Act 2002 states that a community safety accreditation scheme can only be established if it is appropriate for the purposes of contributing to community safety and security, and, in co-operation with the police force for the area, combating crime and disorder, public nuisance and other forms of anti-social behaviour.
- 3.3 All or any of the powers set out in Schedule 5 of the Police Reform Act 2002 can be granted to an accredited organisation:
- Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling, littering and riding a bicycle on a footpath
  - Power to request name and address for Fixed Penalty Offences
  - Power to request name & address of person acting in antisocial manner
  - Power to confiscate alcohol from young persons
  - Power to confiscate cigarettes / tobacco from young people
  - Power to regulate traffic for purposes of escorting abnormal loads
  - Power to require removal of abandoned vehicles
  - Power to stop a vehicle for emissions testing.
- 3.4 Additional Fixed Penalty Notice 'powers' (contained in Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001) will be available to Accredited Persons under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, when the relevant parts are implemented in 2004:
- Throwing fireworks in a thoroughfare
  - Knowingly give a false alarm to Fire Brigade
  - Trespassing on railway
  - Throwing stones at trains
  - Buying or attempting to buy alcohol for consumption in a bar by a person under 18
  - Wasting police time or giving false report
  - Using public telecommunications system for sending message known to be false in order to cause annoyance
  - Consumption of alcohol in designated public place
  - Behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress.
- 3.5 The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 also contains additional Fixed Penalty powers for Accredited Persons regarding:
- Extending 'litter' to include graffiti and fly-posting
  - Power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents for truancy
  - Power to 'stop' pedal cyclists if suspected of riding on footpath.
- 3.6 Accredited persons will not have the power to detain persons who provide a false name and address.
- 3.7 Some organisations may wish to have 'Accreditation' with some, or none, of these powers.

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## **4 TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 In order to meet not only potential public expectations, but also existing employer liability within the context of health and safety legislation and the like, the following list of core skills has been suggested:
- Cultural diversity, ethical standards, and community awareness
  - Inter-personal skills and resolving conflict
  - Basic first aid
  - Self defence (empty hand skills)
  - The basics of solving local problems and reducing crime and disorder
  - Initial crime scene management
  - Information gathering
  - Evidence gathering and witness skills
  - Citizen's powers of arrest
  - Fixed penalty notice completion (where appropriate)
  - Radio procedures and associated communication skills (where appropriate)
  - Fire safety awareness.
- 4.2 The Chief Constable is seeking views as to what extent should a training requirement, and indeed a developmental training scheme, be a prerequisite to community safety accreditation. It is understood that this will probably be dependent on the range of powers and duties likely to be exercised through accredited community safety organisations.
- 4.3 There has been no indication as to the costs incurred upon applicants of accreditation for training fees.
- 4.4 Chief Constables can charge fees "as considered appropriate" for considering applications for accreditation, renewal of accreditation, or granting accreditation. There has been no guidance nationally on the level of fees other than accreditation schemes should, in essence, be self-financing and not for financial profit.
- 4.5 Clearly, suitable candidates for training would need to be identified at the recruitment stage.

## **5 COMMENTS**

- 5.1 The scheme as outlined would offer the Council potential to secure accreditation for appropriate staff to address a range of public nuisance offences.
- 5.2 Possible staff who might come under such an initiative includes the Parking Inspectors and Contract Monitoring Officers.

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5.3 However, in terms of responses to this consultation, key issues would seem to revolve around the costs of the accreditation, the need for proper training delivered in a standardised fashion and as much clarity as possible in relation to the roles of accredited persons.

5.4 There remains a concern that this type of initiative may further increase public perception of a police withdrawal from 'civil type' issues.

## **6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Accreditation, with powers, for the Council would result in accredited officers being able to exercise certain powers that are at present only available to police officers and support staff employed by Essex Police. This could contribute to the overall crime and disorder reduction strategy.

## **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There is no indication as yet to the cost of fees for accreditation and those relating to training.

## **8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 These relate directly to the new powers available for accredited officers, as stipulated in the Police Reform Act 2002 and associated Acts.

## **9 RECOMMENDATION**

9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To support the officer comments outlined above, subject to any further considerations Members might have.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

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### **Background Papers:**

None

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