

CRIMINAL DAMAGE

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates Members on criminal damage relating to Council property over the past year. It also outlines the initiatives currently underway and others which are now being started. The report seeks Members' approval to further expenditure of Home Office funding specifically on Anti Social Behaviour initiative.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The last report on vandalism was reported to Members in November 2003. It covered the cost of vandalism to council property covering the period October 2002-30th September 2003.
- 2.2 The attached appendix provides a breakdown by area and month of the number of incidents that have now occurred in the period October 2003 – September 2004. The data relates to the Council's land and buildings but also includes separate information now provided by Holmes Place. Where possible, the cost of addressing the criminal damage has been quoted. In some instances, it is not possible to give a direct cost, as part of the grounds maintenance contract is a requirement for ServiceTeam to carry out various work associated with dealing with this issue (mostly clearing up glass and graffiti).

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

Local Context

- 3.1 As a background to the statistics outlined in the appendix, Members should note that the following local initiatives have now been put in place
- Police Dispersal Orders were implemented from mid-July in specific areas within Rayleigh, Hullbridge, Hockley, Hawkwell and Rochford.
 - No Alcohol Zones came into force in June around Clements Hall, Magnolia Park and Rochford Town Centre.
- (Maps for both the Dispersal Order Zones and Alcohol Exclusion Zones have been placed in the Members Library).
- At the end of August the Council appointed an Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator.

- Specific schemes for young people during the holiday periods are an integral part of the Council's leisure and arts programme.
- New initiatives such as the "hyper" scheme have been introduced in specific areas e.g. Great Wakering sports centre.
- A new graffiti protocol is being rolled out to tackle abusive and offensive graffiti in particular.

Analysis Of Criminal Damage

- 3.2 From the information available, it appears that most damage to Council land and buildings is spread throughout the whole year although there is an increase during school holiday periods and particularly during Easter and the summer break. The impact is District-wide although certain play areas and recreation grounds come under a lot of abuse.
- 3.3 Excluding criminal damage to leisure buildings, recorded incidents have risen to 368 compared to 121 from the previous year, with incurred costs rising from £8,222 to £10,576.
- 3.4 Broken down further, there has been a sharp rise this year with 87 incidents of graffiti in open spaces compared with just 20 last year. However, the cost for its removal has dropped to £632 from £890.
- 3.5 From information provided by Holmes Place, the cost of criminal damage to leisure buildings over the year has risen to £10,722 compared to £6,596 from the previous year.
- 3.6 Information obtained from Essex Police supports the view that it appears that generally criminal damage across the District has risen significantly over the same period from 1004 incidents to 1755 incidents.

Effect Of Initiatives Upon Criminal Damage

- 3.7 At this point in time, it is too early to say whether any or all of the specific initiatives outlined above are making a positive impact in terms of tackling criminal damage. The one exception is in connection with the "hyper" project in Great Wakering at the Sports Centre. In that area following its introduction, there has been a drop from 20 incidents to 3, and a reduction in costs from £1,500 to £165 since the project started. It will be interesting to see if that trend continues.
- 3.8 It is suggested at this point in time that, given the positive impact of this project, further funding of £5,000 be applied for under the Home Office Anti-Social Behaviour budget allocation of £25,000 for 2004/2005 to prolong this

project. There is money available but specific consent will be required from the Home Office.

- 3.9 In respect of CCTV, an evaluation of all the different systems across the District is currently in hand in order to assess their effectiveness and impact. As yet, there is no indication to show that the alcohol exclusion zones have had an impact in reducing criminal damage as such.
- 3.10 At the end of October, the police will commence their review of the use of the powers used under the Dispersal Order Zones. To date, a total of 76 people have been dispersed. Their ages range from 13 to 20 year olds. Two people have been arrested for failing to disperse. Although initial feedback suggests that reported incidents for nuisance have dropped by 40% since the start of the use of these powers, incidents of criminal damage have not. However, this needs to be examined in more detail once all the information is available.

New Initiatives

- 3.11 With the introduction of the new post of Anti Social Behaviour Coordinator from August 2004, a new approach is being developed with the Police to tackle anti social behaviour and the associated effects of criminal damage. This approach covers two areas.
- 3.12 Firstly, it aims to target prolific offenders and the ringleaders who cause or incite the majority of anti social behaviour. This involves gathering intelligence by mechanical and physical surveillance ie using CCTV, mobile CCTV, police stop checks and information recording from the residents most effected by the behaviour. With the evidence secured, action can then be taken.
- 3.13 The second strand is an awareness campaign around the effects and consequences of anti-social behaviour. The method is to attend schools and speak to the age groups most at risk of offending. The schools and classes targetted relate to the evidence gathered under 3.12 above. Through this strand, it is hoped that those most at risk can gain a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions. It will also provide a forum for the youths to impart their ideas on what services can be provided to stop anti-social behaviour in the future.
- 3.14 Work on both these strands has commenced. However, it is already becoming clear that the Council's decision to employ the Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator on 22½ hours per week should be reconsidered and his hours extended to full time. This post is funded from the Home Office Anti-Social Behaviour budget and, subject to Home Office approval, there is sufficient funding remaining to finance the full time employment of the post over the duration of the two year temporary contract.

4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 These are contained in the detailed sections of the report.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Many of the instances of criminal damage have environmental implications and can have a negative effect on the overall environmental quality of the area.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The effects of criminal damage have an impact on the Council in terms of the maintenance and upkeep of our land and buildings as outlined in the report. There is also a wider cost to the community at large.

6.2 The two proposals put forward can, subject to Home Office approval, be funded from the Home Office allocation specifically relating to Anti-Social behaviour. This allocation is £25,000 per annum for two years.

7 RECOMMENDATION

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

- (1) To note the content of this report and requests that the Rochford Crime and Disorder Partnership specifically focuses on Criminal Damage as one of the key topic areas in the production of the 2005-2008 Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and Action Plan.
- (2) To approve a request to the Home Office to the allocation of £5,000 from the Home Office Anti Social Behaviour budget for the further funding of the “Hyper” project at Great Wakering Sports Centre.
- (3) To approve a request to the Home Office for funding under the Home Office’s Anti Social Behaviour Budget to extend the Anti Social Behaviour Coordinator’s post over the two year contract from 22½ hours per week to 37 hours per week.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

Background Papers:-

None

For further information please contact Stephen Garland on:-

Telephone (01702) 318103

E-Mail:- stephen.garland@rochford.gov.uk

