

 Executive Meeting – 3 September 2014		Agenda Item No. 6
Title	Ranger Service	
For further information about this report please contact	Paul Garrison – Project Officer, Contract Services Ex 6754. Email – paul.garrison@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A	
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes. Reference 630
Equality and Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No
Assessment not applicable to the project	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	02/08/2014	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	01/08/2014	Robert Hoof
CMT	11/08/2014	N/A
Section 151 Officer		
Monitoring Officer		N/A
Finance	6/08/2014	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	01/08/2014	Cllr Dave Shilton
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Parks and Open Spaces Household Audit Warwick District Council Local Plan Consultation Consultation to follow on Public Space Protection Orders and the list of behaviours that will be enforced		
Final Decision?		No
Subject to agreement by Employment Committee on 17 th September 2014.		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The decision by the Council to retain the off-street car parking service has created an opportunity to create a generic "Ranger" role, to provide a range of functions, including car park management, reassurance for service users, sign posting, resolving operational issues and various enforcement activities.
- 1.2 It is proposed that this service will operate across the district focusing on car parks, destination parks, local parks, and areas of informal open space, using a combination of foot patrols and mobile teams.
- 1.3 The proposed service changes will be subject to approval by Employment Committee.
- 1.4 It is proposed that recruitment for the Ranger Service will commence in October 2014 to ensure sufficient staff are in place to deliver the new off-street parking service from the 1st November 2014. The full complement of staff will be in place for the 1st April 2015 in order to deliver the full Ranger Service.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That a Warwick District Council Ranger Service is established as set out in section 8 of the report.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Parks and Open Spaces Audit Household Survey that is referenced in the Green Space Strategy identifies a barrier to wider use of the District's parks and open spaces was a concern over safety. According to the Green Space Strategy this was a reoccurring theme amongst adults, young people and children.
- 3.2 The Warwick District Council Local Plan Consultation in 2011 asked respondents to identify what the most important considerations were when identifying a good place to live in the District. Of twenty items to choose from, level of crime and parks and open spaces were chosen within the top six considerations. It is hoped that the Ranger Service would contribute positively to reducing levels of crime (or public perceptions of crime) in the District's parks and open spaces.
- 3.3 The Districts parks and open spaces are used every day of the week and especially popular in evenings, weekends and Bank Holidays. At present the only Council representation in these areas on a regular basis are contractors, who fulfil a predominantly operational role. A Ranger service would be able to fill this gap and offer an opportunity to provide a range of functions more efficiently and effectively.
- 3.4 There is the opportunity to combine the off-street car parking service, operational contract resources, and the Jephson Gardens Ranger to create a new service with a number of benefits that currently cannot be delivered.
- 3.5 A new generic Ranger Service will improve service delivery and provide an annual saving of £45k. This saving will contribute to the shortfall of £200,000 faced by WDC as a result of Warwickshire County Council externalising on-street parking enforcement.

- 3.7 Warwickshire Police support the proposed approach as a means to further engage with and support our local communities. Superintendent Tedds provides the following statement of support:

"This is an exciting initiative and one that Warwickshire Police will be keen to support. I can see significant value, not only in terms of financial savings, but in creating further opportunity to engage with local communities and visitors to the District providing reassurance and confidence within the many parks and open spaces. Any initiative that continues to build on the strong working relationships between the Partnerships providing increased visibility within Communities has our full support."

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 The provision of high quality parks and open spaces makes a significant contribution to making Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit.
- 4.2 Work in tackling anti-social behavior is a significant part of the Council's vision for Safer Communities.
- 4.3 The provision of off-street car parking is key to supporting the economic viability of the local towns.
- 4.4 The principles of Fit for the Future have been considered when reviewing and designing the new Ranger Service. This proposal will improve service delivery to our customers; create a generic multi skilled role to maximise the flexibility and resilience of the service, and to deliver a financial saving.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The funding of the Ranger Service can be funded by drawing together several areas of spend. The details of how the service can be funded and the cost of the new service are set out below.

Cost of Current Services Per Annum

Multi-storey car park cleansing	£70k
Parks teams	£200k
Jephson Park Ranger	£25k
Additional locking costs	£14k
Off-street car parks staff costs	£186K
Total	£495k

Cost of Proposed Ranger Service Per Annum

Staff costs	£417k
Vehicles	£30k
Equipment	£3k
Total Cost	£450K

- 5.3 The new service would deliver an annual saving of **£45k**.

- 5.4 There are a number of other functions that could be accommodated within this service, in order to make them more resilient/efficient and possibly deliver further savings, although at this stage they have not been fully investigated.
- 5.5 There may be potential funding opportunities for the role through the Police and Crime Commissioner Office.

6. RISKS

- 6.1 Due to the generic role of a Ranger, staff will require a range of skills, in particular the ability to interact with customers effectively and to work under their own initiative. Attracting the right people to these roles is essential to making the new service work effectively. By basing the new Ranger role around the requirements for parking Civil Enforcement Officers, the Council has a pool of current employees that it can select from who have the necessary skills.
- 6.2 The proposed Ranger Service supports the principles of Fit for the Future, as it introduces a highly visible, accountable and approachable presence into the District's key parks and gardens. If the Ranger Service is not established these improvements will not be realised.
- 6.3 It is believed that there are no risks associated with the employment changes.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED

- 7.1 To continue with the proposal to recruit Civil Enforcement Officers just for the off-street service parking service, however this has been discounted as there is the opportunity to create a more resilient and effective generic role.
- 7.2 Not to include the Jephson Gardens Park Ranger in the new broader Ranger Service, however this has been discounted as the current agreement with Action 21 who employs the current Jephson Gardens Park Ranger comes to an end in March 2015.
- 7.3 To continue with the two parks teams provided through the Street Cleansing Contract, however this has been discounted as it has only been effective in delivering better cleansing standards, rather than the range of benefits it was intended to deliver.
- 7.4 To provide a Ranger Service through one of the Council's major contracts, however this has been discounted as it would not be possible to include the off-street car parking staff, and there are concerns over the calibre of staff a maintenance contractor could attract for this role.

8. BACKGROUND

8.1 How the service currently operates

- 8.1.1 Neighbourhood Services is responsible for both the management of off-street car parking and parks and open spaces.
- 8.1.2 Parking enforcement duties are undertaken by Civil Enforcement Officers employed by Warwick District Council.

- 8.1.3. Basic maintenance (litter picking, sweeping, emptying of litter bins) of the District's parks and grounds maintenance is delivered through the Council's street cleansing contract by staff employed by Veolia.
- 8.1.4 The Jephson Park Ranger is provided through an agreement with Action 21 which is due to end in March 2015. The Council will need to continue to provide a Ranger as this was part of the Heritage Lottery fund grant conditions for the refurbishment of Jephson Gardens.

8.2 How will the Ranger Service operate?

- 8.2.1 Implementation of the Ranger Service would see the responsibility for some elements of park maintenance to be taken in-house and delivered as part of a Ranger job role.
- 8.2.2 The Ranger Service would have responsibility for enforcement in the Council's off-street car parks.
- 8.2.3 Surface car parks will continue to be cleansed as part of the street cleansing contract. Covent Garden, Linen Street and St. Peters multi-storey car parks will be cleansed by the staff that are based in those locations. Cleansing of the parks will be one of the duties of the Rangers.
- 8.2.4 It is proposed that a total of 18 Rangers will be employed on a rota basis to be deployed on foot or as part of a mobile units as required.
- 8.2.5 The foot patrols will be organised into small geographical locations that will enable them to spend a significant time within destination parks, where one of their main roles will be to provide support and assurance to park users.
- 8.2.6 Mobile teams will visit local parks and informal open spaces on a regular basis, giving greater flexibility in responding to local issues, and supporting the work of the foot patrols.
- 8.2.7 The Service Area Plan for Neighbourhood Services will be amended to reflect the changes to the team's operational structure and organisation.
- 8.2.8 The existing Civil Enforcement Officers receive training in lone working and conflict management and it is envisaged the any newly recruited Rangers will be similarly trained. Rangers will carry two-way radios which can be tracked by GPS as a further safety measure.

8.3 Benefits of the Ranger Service

8.3.1 Greater control of resources

Bringing the responsibility for some elements of parks maintenance in-house will ensure the Council has a greater control over how its investment is used and how available resources are organised and allocated.

8.3.2 Improved quality control

By bringing the Ranger Service 'in-house' the Council will have direct control of the employment and management of the staff. This will ensure sufficiently qualified and experienced staff members are employed for these roles.

8.3.3 Greater resilience

The proposed structure ensures there is a pool of skilled staff available that can be organised and allocated to meet changing service requirements throughout the year.

8.3.4 Supporting Other Council Services

A greater presence of uniformed officers in parks and open spaces, that are able to issue fixed penalty notices, will drastically increase the Council's ability to tackle issues such as dog fouling, littering, graffiti etc.

8.3.5 Supporting/Support From Partner Organisations

The Ranger service would be flexible to the demands of the local community. Contract Officer's routinely attend local community forums and there will be sufficient flexibility within the Ranger role to be able to direct the resource to resolve any relevant issues arising from forums.

Rangers' will also gather intelligence as part of their role to support the work of local Police, PCSO's and Street Wardens. Rangers' will monitor and respond to incidents of anti-social behaviour within parks and open spaces and will work closely with local Police teams to resolve issues. Any relevant information gathered during the undertaking of their duties will be shared at routine meetings between Warwick District Council and Warwickshire Police.

As a result of this joint working arrangement it is anticipated that Warwickshire Police will support the Ranger Service with a further uniformed presence where circumstances require it.

8.3.6 Cost Savings

The annual cost for operating the proposed Ranger service will be £450K (including staff costs, vehicles and equipment). The annual cost of delivering the existing parks maintenance and parking enforcement services is £495K

8.3.7 Visibility and Reassurance

Rangers will be a uniformed presence working in the District's key parks and open spaces and off-street car parks. Within the structure of the service there will be a number of foot patrols covering small geographical areas. Their presence will provide park users with an increased level of reassurance and a point of contact for a range of issues. It is also anticipated that a uniformed presence will provide a level of deterrent against inappropriate and anti-social behaviour in parks, open spaces and car parks.

8.3.8 Enforcement

The Rangers will replace Civil Enforcement Officers and as such enforcement will form part of their role. Enforcement as always will be considered a last resort however it will be a useful tool for the Rangers to be able to issue penalties for non-compliance as it will affirm their credibility as a capable guardian within the park. As well as parking enforcement it is envisaged that the Rangers will be authorised officers and trained to issue penalties for minor crime and anti-social behaviour as part of the new Public Space Protection Orders which come into force on October 20th 2014. Further details on the

scope and implementation of Public Space Protection Orders will be formally submitted at a later date by Pete Cutts in a report titled 'Changes to ASB Legislation'.