

Report of: Strategic Director – Physical Environment

To: Executive Board

Date: 3rd April 2006

Item No:

Title of Report : City Centre Enforcement – Littering, Waste & Other Environmental Offences



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: This report is presented to set out proposals for utilising additional Council funding for environmental enforcement.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Susan Brown

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment

Ward(s) affected: Carfax Ward

Report Approved by: Strategic Director – Physical Environment

Jimmy Thomas – Legal Services

Mike Baish – Financial Services



Policy Framework: None



Recommendation(s): That the Executive Board endorses the proposed approach to utilisation of the additional Council funding and grants major project approval.



Background

- 1 The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 has introduced several new powers which extend the earlier Environmental Protection Act provisions. A key element in the provisions is the power for local authorities to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for matters such as littering, the discarding of waste, dog fouling and fly-tipping.
- 2 The City Council invests significant sums in cleaning up roads and open land and the new enforcement powers will present an opportunity to address poor behaviour - which ultimately can result in unnecessary costs for Oxford's tax payers.
- 3 Enforcement activity needs to be co-ordinated with a public education campaign across the City to encourage responsible behaviour.

New Provision

- 4 As part of an on-going programme of improving aspects of the environment, the Council approved new funding of £60k per annum for the 2006/07 year onwards - which will help use to be made in particular of the enforcement powers under both the existing and the new legislation. Best use will be made of the additional funding (subject to major project approval) via healthier Corporate working across business units to ensure that a joined up approach results. The ongoing objective will be to work in a co-ordinated way to ensure a seamless service and the Strategic Director, Physical Environment, will oversee this activity.

Major Project Approval

- 5 Since the lifetime value of the project is over £100k the financial regulations require that:
 - a. The objectives and alternative ways of achieving the objective are addressed
 - b. Any responses to consultation and how they've been addressed.
 - c. Staffing consequences and contract/legal implications
 - d. The amount of phasing and estimated capital and revenue expenditure and any ongoing revenue consequences
- 6 The objectives are to introduce a fixed penalty enforcement regime to the City Centre in particular, so as to address offenders allied with a programme of public education . No alternative way of achieving this objective has been identified. No specific consultation has taken place and therefore there have been no responses. It is assumed that it will be possible to recruit two suitable officers and this will be via a contract of employment with the concomitant legal implications. There is no phasing of the revenue expenditure save for that arising from the recruitment process. There are ongoing revenue consequences arising from the creation of the posts, including the need to make savings to contain unbudgeted inflationary costs.

The City Centre

- 7 Following the review of existing enforcement provision across the City, the City Centre has been identified as an area requiring attention on a continuous basis. It is therefore intended that two full time Environmental Enforcement Officers be recruited to provide cover mainly to the City Centre area. The job description will focus upon the enforcement of the fixed penalty notice regime. They will work alongside other enforcement officers in the Environmental Health Business Unit and be authorised to issue fixed penalty and other notices to offenders for a range of matters including Byelaws, littering, discarding of waste, dog fouling and fly-tipping. They will have a presence in the City Centre on workdays and weekends, except where specific educational events involve them elsewhere. (Full 7 day per week cover is not possible within the budgetary constraint).
- 8 Officers have examined good practice elsewhere and the programme of work will be designed with this in mind. In general, the enforcement officers will need to work together given this is, at times, a confrontational task, though there will be occasions when it will be possible to supplement the arrangements with a relevant officer who happens also to be working in the locale, eg., the street trading enforcement officer. Existing CCTV will assist the enforcement officers.
- 9 The Strategic Director, Physical Environment will coordinate the work of these and related Officers with educational, PR and clean-up campaigns and will make further reports to the Executive Board as the programme of work rolls out.
- 10 Recommendation – that the Executive Board endorses the proposed approach to the utilisation of the additional Council funding and grants major project approval.

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Background papers: None

