



High Wycombe Town Committee – Street Wardens Update.

For Information Only

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Background

In 2017 Councillors and members of the community noted increasing concern from residents and businesses regarding a rise in instances of anti-social behaviour across the district and within Wycombe Town Centre in particular.

In order to address these concerns, the Council set up an Anti-Social Behaviour Task and Finish Group and published a report of its findings in September 2018. One of the recommendations of the report was the introduction of the Street Wardens Scheme.

Subsequently in 2019 wardens were introduced in High Wycombe with funding provided by legacy council reserves for a 3 year period. Initially, there was only one Warden covering High Wycombe, and two more wardens were recruited in early 2021.

Recently Aylesbury Community Board approved funding for two wardens for their town centre, with one warden working in Aylesbury since October 2021.

Current Structure

The Street Wardens are part of the wider Community Safety team. The team is managed by a Street Warden manager, with three staff based in High Wycombe and two in Aylesbury.

The team provide cover for seven days a week, depending on operational need. They mainly work during the day and will cover early evenings to support any partnership work.

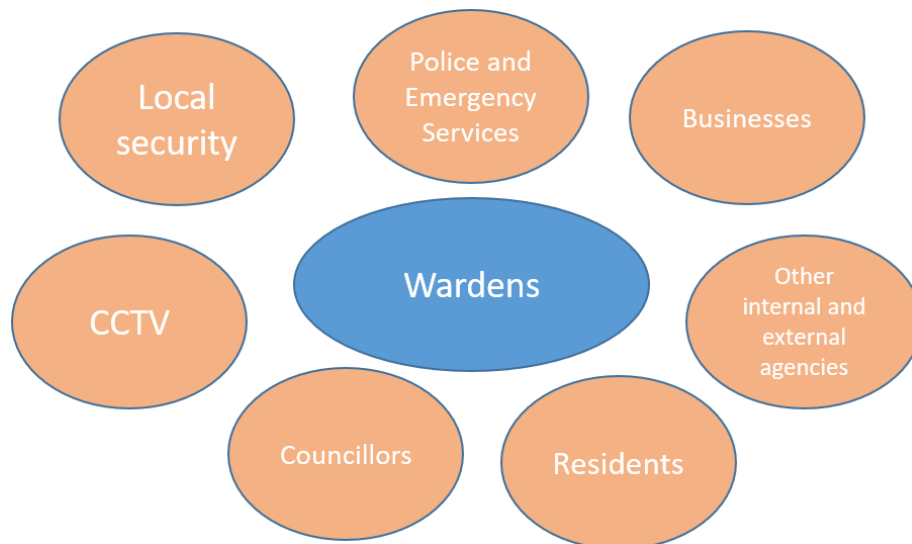
Presently, the team have two vacant posts, due to one of the Wycombe wardens leaving after securing permanent employment with another council department and the service only managing to recruit to one of the two posts in Aylesbury.

The Council is looking to recruit to these vacancies. However, due to the short term nature of the contracts it is difficult to attract and retain staff.

Street Warden roles and responsibilities

The Street Wardens complete regular high visibility patrols in Town Centre areas to deter crime and anti-social behaviour. They work in close partnership with Thames Valley Police, local businesses, Council departments and support partner agencies.

The Wardens are trained in Safeguarding, Emergency First Aid, Conflict Management, CCTV (SIA Licence), Radio Communications, Naloxone (opiate overdose), scene management, anti-social behaviour, and securing evidence.



Examples of the types of work undertaken

The Wardens undertake a variety of duties, examples of these are listed below. However, this is not an exhaustive list, as they will pick up and undertake any other tasks as and when required.

High Visibility Patrols - to deter Crime and ASB

Engagement - with public, Partners and Businesses

Begging – using persuasion, visual presence to deter and obtain evidence in support or enforcement action

Street Drinking – Public Spaces Protection Order enforcement action

Theft – working with businesses and use of Shopwatch Radio System to deter shoplifters

Rough Sleeping – verification of rough sleepers, guidance and signposting, partnership meetings

Emergency First Aid – Fully trained. Carry Naloxone kits in case casualty has overdosed.

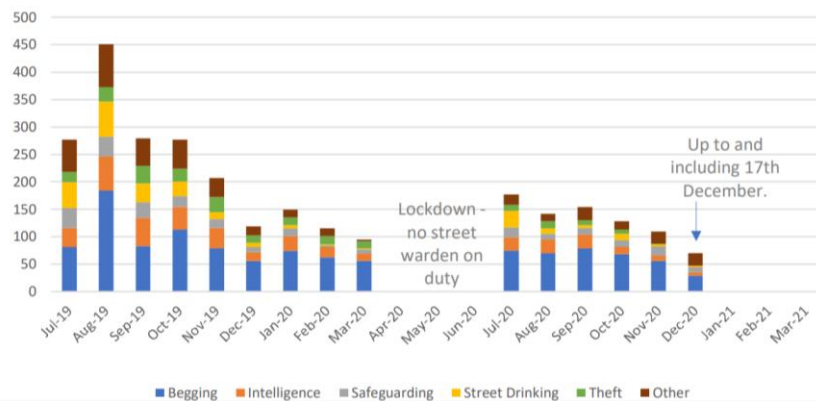
Safeguarding - supporting vulnerable people, signposting and submitting referrals to Safeguarding Hub.

Information Sharing – Sharing intelligence in accordance with local information sharing agreements.

Waste – removing abandoned items, drugs paraphernalia and reports to Waste Team.

Street Wardens

The number incidents logged by Wycombe Street Wardens in 2019/20 and 2020/21.



The chart above shows the number of incidents dealt with by the Wardens. In August 2019, this peaked at 450, an average of 15 per day. This data is only from High Wycombe, as the scheme in Aylesbury did not commence until late 2021.

Benefits of the Service

The Wardens provide a high visibility reassuring presence for the public and businesses in and around the two town centres. In particular, they have powers to deal with ASB, provide intelligence to the Police or other partner agencies, support the local community and respond to incidents in the town centres.

They attend multi-agency partnership meetings and work with stakeholders to address complex issues and ASB matters, by providing appropriate support to individuals and also undertaking enforcement action, as and when necessary.

Their work supports other Council teams and front lines services. This was seen during the Covid restrictions, when their roles were swiftly repurposed, enabling them to support community hubs, external staff at events and with marshalling duties, as lockdown and restrictions were eased.

They are unique in their role and are valued by Police, local businesses, partner agencies and visitors to the town centres.

The Council is looking to further extend the enforcement powers of the Street Wardens by applying to the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme. This will allow the wardens to issue fixed penalty notices for a number of ASB related offences, including littering, truancy, graffiti, disorder, and require persons committing offences of ASB and begging to provide their names and addresses and have their picture taken.

Risks to the Service:

There are a number of risks which currently affect the service, these include the following;

- Lack of long-term funding- this impacts on long term planning and poses a risk to all areas of the service, with uncertainty around whether the service will be present and be able to deliver long term outcomes.
- Short term temporary employment contracts- This has resulted in staffing issues, with staff leaving (one staff member has already resigned) and others looking for different employment which offer more job security. This impacts on recruitment, as the short term contracts mean suitably qualified and experienced applicants are deterred from applying.
- Increasing demand (from other agencies, departments, Community Board areas)- the success of the scheme in High Wycombe has resulted in a similar scheme being set up for Aylesbury. Other community board areas have approached the service asking for similar service within their areas. Demand from partner agencies has also increased with Wardens being requested to support campaigns, festivals and partner activity.

In conclusion, the Street Wardens are a valuable and useful service to the council, partner agencies and most importantly to the communities in and around High Wycombe. They provide a uniformed service and a reassuring presence in the town centre, particularly at a time when other uniformed services have limited resources. The staff are trained in a number of areas to support partner agencies, respond to incidents and identify and address some of the more complex problems associated with the town centre, which require a coordinated multiagency response and long-term solution.

The service is well known by businesses, internal and external partner agencies, and visitors to the town centre. Due to the success of the wardens in High Wycombe, the scheme in Aylesbury was set up after the community board for the area provided funding. Similar requests are being received from other community board areas and discussions are underway to determine how they too can have wardens in their areas.

