

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny

DATE: 17th July

SUBJECT: Community Guardians

REPORT OF: Strategic Director of Neighborhood Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Member about the Community Guardian Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the report.

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET

None.

CONTACT OFFICERS

Mike Reardon, Director of Neighbourhood Services	0161 234 4821	m.reardon@manchester.gov.uk
Rachel Christie, Head of Environmental Services	0161 234 4916	r.christie@manchester.gov.uk

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

WARDS AFFECTED

None.

IMPLICATIONS FOR

<u>Anti Poverty</u>	<u>Equal Opportunities</u>	<u>Environment</u>	<u>Employment</u>
Yes	Yes	Yes	No

1. Background to the Community Guardian Scheme

1.1 The Council's approach to achieving a clean city encompasses:-

- Excellence in service delivery – through ensuring responsive services such as clean teams and SEMs
- Enforcement – against the minority who attempt to blight our environment
- Campaigns/education – to engender civil pride and raise awareness of environmental care

The Guardians were established with the aim that they would create public support for clean neighborhoods and encourage public ownership for the local environment. The idea of an environmental scheme that residents could:-

- Gain real environmental improvements
- Encourage the community to take more responsibility for their local environment
- Build valuable relationships with the Council's environmental services

The Community Guardians Scheme was first piloted in Newton Heath ward in January 2004. Immediately, 9 residents in the ward signed up and their work within the community was promoted as part of the first 100 Days campaign. By the end of the 100 Days, the pilot was expanded and running in the remaining PSA10 areas: Miles Platting, Ancoats and Clayton and Bradford. Owing to the success of the scheme, funding was secured to allow the appointment of a full-time Community Guardian Co-ordinator and rollout of the scheme citywide.

2. Role of a Community Guardian

2.1 Quote from Marlene Garnett, a local resident and community guardian

“The Community Guardian Scheme has made an enormous impact on our community already. It's a wonderful initiative that we hope will grow and develop. It's a team effort – a true partnership between the residents and the Council. It helps people take pride and we know that with a bit of effort we can really make a difference so I urge others to get stuck in and be part of this fantastic scheme”

There are now over 720 active Community Guardians in the City. These Guardians report environmental defects to our Environment On Call centre on a regular basis via a special freephone number. All Guardians receive an information pack and supporting materials for joining the scheme. They meet on a regular basis with the Street Environment Manager for their ward to discuss longer-term environmental improvements for their area or to raise any problems that they may have encountered. The scheme is now running right

across the City and has received a Beacons Recognising Excellence Award in East Manchester.

- 2.2 A Community Guardian is a resident who volunteers to 'adopt' their local area, by taking an active interest in working with the City Council to ensure that any problems or defects relating to the environment and street scene within that neighbourhood are dealt with promptly and efficiently by the relevant agency.

The role of Community Guardian can include:

- Taking a few minutes to report graffiti, litter or a broken light etc.
- Organising and / or participating in clean ups or litter picks
- Identifying necessary local environmental improvements
- Generally reporting anything wrong (or right) with the environment and the Council's services in their area
- Monitoring potential dog fouling problems and reporting offenders
- Keeping trees in their street watered
- Volunteering to unlock / lock alley gates on bin emptying day
- Meeting regularly with their local Street Environment Manager

- 2.3 Community guardians can join the scheme online, at events or request registration forms from Council officers by telephoning. Potential Community Guardians are asked to complete a declaration form on joining, and they are made aware that all data is held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

3. Community Guardian within local neighborhoods

- 3.1 Many of the Community Guardians play an active role in their local area, which regularly goes beyond reporting environmental crimes to Environment On-Call. Within this role, the Community Guardians help enlist like-minded volunteers to engage in improvement schemes with a visible impact on their area.
- 3.2 The Community Guardians play an important role in the 100 Days campaign and 2007 saw even more Guardians participate and make an even bigger impact on their communities than previous years, with Community Guardians organising and running their own local events and ensuring work would be sustained for the longer-term. Many of the Community Guardians take a keen interest and support other environmental headline campaigns such as Wildabout Manchester and a small group have been vital to ensure the success of one of the Mancunian Agreement pilots within Blackley Forest, this is a credit to their commitment to the overall scheme.
- 3.3 The Community Guardians are actively involved in the Bloom competition run by the Environmental Campaigns Team. It is fair to say that in some areas, the success of the entries is due to the

contributions and hard work of the Community Guardians, especially in Newton Heath where we have over 60 Community Guardians. Newton Heath won North West in Bloom Urban Communities Award 2005, North West in Bloom 2006 and this year are competing in the 2007 Britain in Bloom National competition.

- 3.4 Two Community Guardians have this year received Respect Awards for Taking a Stand against anti-social behaviour. The award recognises individuals who have made a difference in their communities. Guardians often undertake speeches at Council run events and inspire others to work for their local community.

4. Scheme Review

- 4.1 Since the scheme was introduced, the number of volunteers has increased dramatically and the activities of the Community Guardians have expanded. It is felt that the current scheme requires a review to gauge the successes of the scheme and how Guardians can be supported and potentially developed in the future.
- 4.2 The 'informality' of the scheme was deemed an attribute to its success; the Guardians liked the fact that they could contribute and participate as much or as little as they like, leaving them free to join in with seasonal projects or taking a daily role in reporting local environmental problems.

It is clear that Guardians operate at different levels some are keen to be active in their community while others are happy to be "eyes and ears". It is important that the scheme retains its inclusiveness while recognising that support for Guardians differs. The review will take into account a number of key factors. As Community Guardians become recognised in their local area it is important that Guardians continue to operate in a way which does not represent a risk to the reputation of the scheme. As can be seen from the report Guardians undertake extremely valuable work in their community and good practise should be shared to create a virtuous network of committed individuals. Some Guardians thrive on challenge and there is an opportunity to develop schemes such as the "recycling challenge".

Focus groups with Guardians are being set up so their experience and views can be incorporated into the review. In the review issues such as support needs, management arrangements, sharing good practise, conduct/reputation, and local challenges will all be considered.