



## Environmental Wardens

March 2006

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# Environmental Wardens



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## Environmental Wardens

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
	2.1 Background	7
	2.2 Methodology	7
<b>3</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>9</b>
	3.1 Introduction	9
	3.2 Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	9
	3.3 The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	10
	3.4 Defining Mainstreaming	12
<b>4</b>	<b>Warden Schemes</b>	<b>14</b>
	4.1 Introduction	14
	4.2 Warden Schemes in Birmingham	15
	4.3 Environmental Wardens	15
	4.4 Benefits	18
	4.5 Performance	19
	4.6 Management	20
	4.7 Staffing	20
	4.8 BSP Wardens Report	21
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	<b>22</b>
	5.1 Should Environmental Wardens Schemes be Mainstreamed?	22
	5.2 Recommendations	25



## Environmental Wardens

# Preface

**By Councillor Timothy Huxtable**

Chairman, Local Services and Community Safety  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee



In a response from Ward Committees/Advisory Boards as to what services currently provided by NRF monies Members would like to see mainstreamed, the most popular response was that of Environmental Wardens.

Environmental Wardens have proved to be very popular wherever they have been employed across the city. They are a very visible and pro-active presence within our neighbourhoods and greatly assist in the corporate objective of creating “vibrant urban villages” by helping make our neighbourhoods cleaner, greener and safer.

An example of this is found in the “You Are Your City” Scrutiny review conducted in 2005, which noted that Wards employing Environmental Wardens could more easily identify land clearance sites, allowing Council officers to concentrate on the identification of sites in Wards without Environmental Wardens.

Environmental Wardens also assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations, such as duty of care inspections and its responsibilities under the Clean Neighbourhoods Act, and in maximising income generation.

However, the employment of Environmental Wardens has been very much on an *ad hoc* basis, so that a ‘patchwork quilt’ of Environmental Warden coverage across the city has resulted. A co-ordinated approach has been lacking and it is not clear exactly how many Environmental Wardens there are. There is also an element of confusion over the various Warden functions, how they are funded, where they work and how they are managed or supervised.

The short-term nature of the funding of Wardens can promote employment and financial insecurity. This may result in the loss of some highly talented and motivated individuals, in whom the Council will have invested much time and money.

This may have a serious effect on the Council’s ability to deliver on our ‘clean, safe and green’ agenda. This report attempts to address such concerns in addition to discussing some of the issues surrounding the concept of ‘mainstreaming’.

*Timothy Huxtable*



## Environmental Wardens

# Glossary

<b>BCSP</b>	<b>Birmingham Community Safety Partnership</b>
<b>BSP</b>	<b>Birmingham Strategic Partnership</b>
<b>DSP</b>	<b>District Strategic Partnership</b>
<b>FPN</b>	<b>Fixed Penalty Notice</b>
<b>IMD</b>	<b>Index of Multiple Deprivation</b>
<b>NDC</b>	<b>New Deal Communities</b>
<b>NRF</b>	<b>Neighbourhood Renewal Fund</b>
<b>ODPM</b>	<b>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</b>
<b>PSA</b>	<b>Public Service Agreement</b>
<b>SOA</b>	<b>Super Output Area</b>
<b>SR02 / SR04</b>	<b>Spending Review 02/04</b>



## Environmental Wardens

# 1 Summary

- 1.1.1 The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) serves as one important resource to support local initiatives which tackle deprivation and locally-determined priorities. However, the availability of the NRF is far from infinite, and it is thus necessary for the Council to address the need and, where suitable, the financial security of such projects in the long term.
- 1.1.2 The Local Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to undertake this review with a view to addressing the current status of NRF-supported projects in the city and their future post-NRF.
- 1.1.3 In particular, the Committee wished to investigate issues surrounding the concept of 'mainstreaming' – whereby the funding of such projects is absorbed, through a variety of methods, into the Council's and, where appropriate, partner agency budgets.
- 1.1.4 As there are a multitude of NRF projects in operation across Birmingham, the focus of the review was directed towards a prominent city-wide initiative – Environmental Wardens.
- 1.1.5 A review group nominated by the Committee undertook a number of evidence gathering sessions, speaking to a range of officers charged with the implementation and management of Environmental Warden schemes across the city.
- 1.1.6 Key findings from the review coalesce around three particular issues:
  - Lack of evaluation and performance monitoring;
  - The strategic place of Environment Wardens – District or Centre;
  - Management structures.
- 1.1.7 The first key issue concerns a distinct lack of evaluative measures to monitor the success (or otherwise) of Environmental Wardens. Fundamental to this is the fact that currently, no strategic 'map' of all Wardens, including Environmental Wardens, exists for Birmingham. This gives rise to particular problems in understanding exactly how many Wardens operate and where the need for Environmental Wardens is greatest. This lack of knowledge also makes it very difficult to evaluate and monitor the role of Environmental Wardens. Thus, a starting point for the recommendations is that a mapping exercise is carried out as a matter of urgency.



## Environmental Wardens

- 1.1.8 Arguments were also put forward to support both central control of warden schemes and District level management. A number of issues were raised, including the requirements of regulatory functions at the Centre and the importance of local priorities. However, the review concludes that although the District is the natural 'unit' for Environmental Wardens, they should continue to be managed centrally, with day-to-day supervision provided at district level.
- 1.1.9 Whilst the report notes the perceived success of Environmental Wardens at a local level, strategically this is less tangible. For this reason it has not been possible to formulate a recommendation on mainstreaming at this stage - more work is required to address the issues raised.



## Environmental Wardens

# 2 Introduction

## 2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 In 2005, the Local Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to undertake a review of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) Schemes, and the potential to 'mainstream' successful projects.
- 2.1.2 At the time of the review, there were 887 ward-based NRF schemes in operation, reflecting by and large, the whole spectrum of Birmingham City Council's responsibilities. This figure does not include Community Chest schemes, of which there were 256.
- 2.1.3 Clearly it was neither practical nor appropriate for us to evaluate each individual project. Therefore we undertook the examination of Environmental Warden and NRF-supported youth schemes.
- 2.1.4 This selection was based upon the results of a survey conducted by the Committee during April 2005, where District Directors were asked to indicate two NRF projects they would most like to see mainstreamed.
- 2.1.5 The Review of Youth Schemes Support by NRF Monies is still ongoing; however this report serves to present the findings for Environmental Wardens.

## 2.2

## Methodology

- 2.2.1 The key question we sought to answer was:

*"To what extent is it (i) desirable and, (ii) possible, to fund Environmental Warden projects presently funded through the NRF, via mainstream funding?"*

- 2.2.2 Three evidence gathering sessions were held during the course of the review, attended by officers and District Directors involved with Environmental Wardens. Each session focussed its discussion round a series of key questions aiming to assess:



## Environmental Wardens

- The current status of the projects under discussion;
- Their impact on service delivery;
- The shape of any potential mainstream service;
- The likely consequences were NRF allocations to cease.

2.2.3 The evidence gathering has been supplemented by a number of other case studies, a 'walkabout' with District and Ward Environmental Wardens in Bournville Ward, evidence from other Scrutiny reviews and external reports.



## Environmental Wardens

# 3 Context

## 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Before looking specifically at Environmental Wardens however, we need to pause and consider the context in which Environmental Wardens in Birmingham evolved, as well as understand what we mean by 'mainstreaming'.

## 3.2 Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

- 3.2.1 The Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, launched in 2001, sets out a long-term strategy to address the 'spiral of decline' in deprived neighbourhoods.
- 3.2.2 The Strategy aims to develop and improve mainstream public services in order to tackle crime and unemployment, reduce health inequalities, and improve educational attainment whilst providing better housing and environments. It applies to the 10% of most deprived wards in England, in 88 Local Authority districts – Birmingham being one of these.
- 3.2.3 Driving these changes are Public Service Agreements (PSAs), which focus on raising the quality of public services through a range of floor targets. Delivery of PSAs has largely taken place through using 'mainstreaming' techniques (for example bending mainstream resources, joining-up services or re-focussing policy and services to reflect local needs).
- 3.2.4 Within the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, the government set six thematic areas with associated sub-categories, or floor-targets. Floor targets either aim to set minimum standards, or to focus on reducing the gap between more deprived parts of the country and national averages. There are six themes:
- Community Safety;
  - Employment;
  - Health;
  - Education and learning;
  - Housing;
  - Liveability.



## Environmental Wardens

- 3.2.5 Birmingham has individual strategies for the six areas - last drafted in March 2005. It is particularly important to recognise the links between these strategies, and other floor targets in different thematic areas. For example, 'young people' are a concern for not only the education and learning strategy and health strategies, but also for Community Safety. Another example is that the main proposals for improving local environments in the strategy are closely aligned to the Safer and Cleaner Neighbourhoods priority of the Community Safety Strategy.
- 3.2.6 The Strategy is supported by shorter term funding initiatives, aimed to 'kick-start' improvements to public services. One such initiative is the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

### The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

- 3.3.1 As a targeted grant, NRF can be spent in any way that focuses on the Government's floor targets and tackles deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods. Aiming to address locally-determined priorities (whilst also reflecting national targets), the flexibility of the NRF has been widely recognised as a vehicle for initiating innovative service provision, adding value through the development of best practice.

#### Allocation of NRF

- 3.3.2 The NRF provided £900 million nationally between 2001/02 and 2003/04, whilst the 2002 Spending Review (SR02) provided a further £450 million of NRF in 2004/05 and £525 million in 2005/06. Of this, Birmingham received £49.5 million between 2001/02 and 2003/04, with allocations of £22 million per annum for 2004/05 and 2005/06.
- 3.3.3 Of the current £22 million, £16 million has been allocated to the local ward programme whereby Ward Committees and the District Committee in Yardley, in consultation with local community groups and organisations, release money to approved local projects.
- 3.3.4 Individual ward allocations in Birmingham are calculated using the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. There are two elements:
- The Community Chest element is allocated on the basis of £25,000 per ward to all wards that have a Census Super Output Area (SOA) whose IMD 2004 score is in the worst 25% in England. Thirty nine of the 40 wards receive this allocation totalling £975,000.
  - The remaining £15,025,000 is allocated proportionately to wards using IMD 2004 and population numbers. Those wards that have Census SOAs whose IMD 2004 score is in the worst 25% in England receive an allocation. The level of resources is calculated using the population resident in the relevant SOAs weighted by the IMD 2004 score for the individual SOA.



## Environmental Wardens

- 3.3.5 The City Council allocates an additional £1.025 million of its own resources as matched funding for the Community Chests in 39 wards. As Sutton Coldfield, Four Oaks has no Census SOA whose IMD 2004 score is in the worst 25% in England, the City Council provides the full £50,000 to form the Community Chest.
- 3.3.6 The NRF allocations for the 2006/07 financial year were only indicative at the time of this Review.
- 3.3.7 The Government's Spending Review 2004 (SR04) has allocated a further £525 million nationally for 2006/07 and again in 2007/08. However, no decision has yet been taken as to how these provisions will be allocated to local authorities, although this does not affect NRF allocations already announced in SR02. Furthermore, there is no indication as to whether the NRF will continue post-2008.

### Current NRF Issues

- 3.3.8 There are a number of issues relating to the current allocation and spend of NRF which have prompted this review. One of the key concerns relates to the short-term nature of the NRF. In recent years the allocations have been re-designated each financial year and this holds particular problems for NRF projects in terms of:
- Funding applications and business planning;
  - Individuals job and financial security;
  - Staff morale;
  - A lack of strategic approach;
  - Uninterrupted service provision; and,
  - Evaluation and monitoring of NRF project outcomes.
- 3.3.9 Allocating NRF directly to wards to spend has proved both positive and negative. Whilst the devolution of NRF decision-making allows the allocation of money to tackle directly local needs, there have also been historical consequences such as:
- Creating artificial boundaries between wards;
  - Creating differing levels of service provision depending upon ward NRF allocation levels and ward priorities;
  - Deprived pockets within more affluent wards not receiving appropriate levels of NRF.
- 3.3.10 A more recent focus in 2005/06 upon SOAs has directed more funds to deprived neighbourhoods within more affluent wards.
- 3.3.11 A further issue is the key question of how the Council ensures central floor targets and city-wide priorities are met. Whilst the majority of NRF is currently allocated at ward level, £5m is divided by the BSP amongst thematic groups – of which there is a large allocation for environmental issues.



## Environmental Wardens

- 3.3.12 A further, obvious problem relates to the NRF over the next few years. Post-2008, the future of the NRF is very unclear, and this raises serious concerns for the continued funding of current NRF projects.
- 3.3.13 This review recognises that the NRF was never intended to be a long-term solution to the City Council's service improvement targets; however, there are concerns around continuity of provision in key areas.

### 3.4 Defining Mainstreaming

- 3.4.1 Before describing our findings, it is important to pause and consider what we mean by mainstreaming. The definition envisaged in our key question emphasises funding – that if an NRF project is worthwhile and effective, the statutory agencies ought to fund it from mainstream budgets.
- 3.4.2 Therefore, where an agency has been allocated NRF monies from the BSP, it may wish to consider funding NRF projects in the future from mainstream budgets if it finds it worthwhile and effective to do so. A specific example of this happening was Birmingham's paper recycling collection scheme – this was originally funded by a BSP thematic group but was mainstreamed by the Council when BSP funding ceased.
- 3.4.3 Therefore, this review set out to consider the "mainstreaming of NRF projects" – i.e. integrating services currently funded through NRF into the mainstream Council delivery.
- 3.4.4 However, central government definitions, and others, take a wider view. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit defines mainstreaming as:

*"re-aligning the allocation of mainstream resources - such as the police and health services - to better target the most deprived areas".<sup>1</sup>*

- 3.4.5 In other words, it is the outcomes and practice that is mainstreamed, not simply the funding. The ODPM document 'Smarter Delivery, Better Neighbourhoods' expands on this definition, identifying mainstreaming as:
- Re-allocating mainstream resources – changing spending patterns to target the most deprived areas;
  - Focusing policy on poorer areas;
  - Reshaping services to reflect local needs;
  - Joining-up services, programmes and targets – through inter-departmental action and multi-agency deliverers;

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/glossary.asp>



## Environmental Wardens

- Learning from good practice developed by pilot projects.<sup>2</sup>

3.4.6 Thus, when considering the forthcoming evidence, it is worth bearing both definitions in mind.

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<sup>2</sup> ODPM (2005)



## 4 Warden Schemes

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 There are a number of warden schemes employed across the city tackling issues relating to the clean, green and safe agenda. These include:

*Environmental Wardens:* These have regulatory powers to enforce statutory powers delegated by the local authority to wardens relating to fly-tipping, litter, refuse collection, dog fouling etc. They use both enforcement and education to improve the environment.

*Neighbourhood, Community and Street Wardens:* Although non-regulatory, these report incidents to the appropriate authority. They work with residents to improve the local environment, reduce crime/fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and give assistance to vulnerable groups.

*Street Champions/ Stewards /'Good Neighbours':* These act as the 'eyes and ears' of the community and provide a referral link for residents to key services such as waste management and the police. Each volunteer street champion might 'keep an eye on' 60 -100 homes. Some, but not all, are paid expenses.<sup>3</sup>

*Park Rangers:* Urban Ranger Services work to nationally agreed performance indicators and targets from local Community Strategies. Rangers operate in a variety of different capacities e.g. Park Rangers or more specific roles such as the River Rea Ranger. They serve to provide conservation work, environmental education and organise events to explore and learn about the natural environment.



<sup>3</sup> Report on the Enquiry into the Funding of Warden Schemes in Birmingham and Mainstreaming, Birmingham Strategic Partnership, September 2005



## Environmental Wardens

### 4.2 Warden Schemes in Birmingham

- 4.2.1 Birmingham's Environmental Wardens evolved as a result of both developments in national neighbourhood renewal policy and local issues. Locally, the problem was two-fold:
- 1) Birmingham's residents were noticing an increasingly poor quality street scene; and
  - 2) The City Council's Environmental Services needed to operate within the continued emergence of legislative requirements – limited by codes of practice – which meant enforcement officers were not typically focused on street scene issues.
- 4.2.2 Following examination of practice in other authorities, including a visit to view Edinburgh's popular Street Warden scheme in 2003, a Warden scheme in Birmingham was set up on the basis of utilising NRF allocations and other funding streams – some of which were external to the Council. This proved popular, and during 2005, further funds were earmarked from the You Are Your City Programme for two regulatory Wardens in each District.
- 4.2.3 Therefore, because of the decision-making involved in NRF allocations to Wards, and also as a result of ward level priorities, the funding of Wardens has not proved to be homogenous across the city, both in terms of numbers and type of Warden.
- 4.2.4 Currently, Birmingham has a range of Environmental Wardens across the city at both Ward and District level. Added to this is a plethora of other non-regulatory Warden schemes. This has created a 'patchwork' effect across the city.

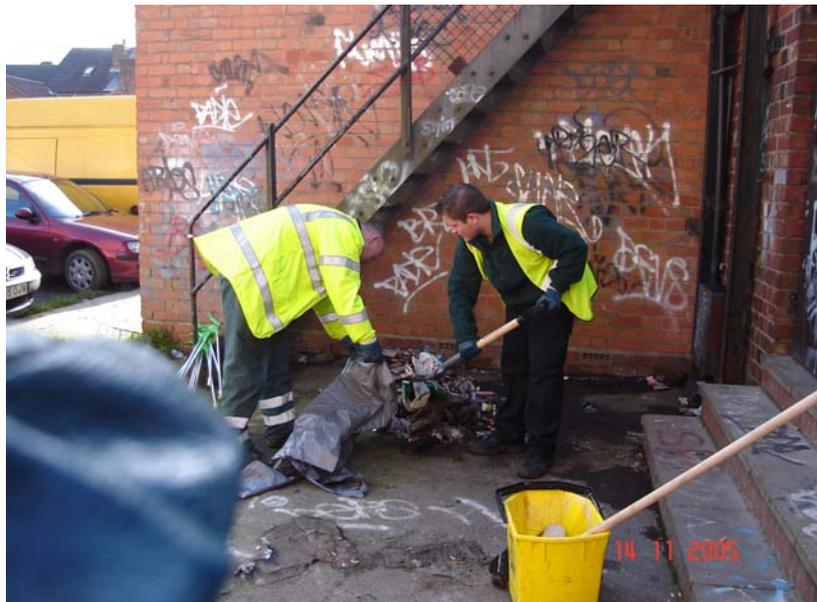
### 4.3 Environmental Wardens

- 4.3.1 Environmental Wardens represent a high profile for tackling visible signs of deprivation both locally and throughout England. From the evidence received from the Ward Committee surveys undertaken during this review, and from Table 1, which shows that 22 out of 40 Wards currently use NRF money to fund Environmental Wardens, it would appear that Environmental Wardens represent a highly popular use of NRF money.
- 4.3.2 Their popularity is hardly surprising. The Environmental Warden scheme is aimed at supplying a visible and pro-active presence of Wardens within local neighbourhoods.
- 4.3.3 Environmental Wardens carry out duties aimed at protecting and improving the environment including:
- Tackling a range of problems (e.g. litter, graffiti, dog fouling, placarding, fly-tipping and fly-posting);



## Environmental Wardens

- Engaging with the public in identifying local issues;
- Developing and promoting awareness within their neighbourhood of environmental issues through, for example, school visits and attendance at community meetings;
- Developing working relationships with local businesses;
- Working in partnership with schools, residents and local forums, as well as other service providers such as the Housing Department, Police and Fire Services;
- An educational element: leaflets are distributed which address issues of waste reduction and disposal (including the free Bulky Waste Collection Service) and generally promote awareness of services offered by Birmingham City Council.



4.3.4 The distinguishing characteristic of the Environmental Wardens from other Wardens/Rangers, is that they possess regulatory powers. Environmental Wardens have the ability to:

- Issue fixed penalty notices;
- Collect evidence;
- Attend court hearings; and,
- Under the most recent legislation, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act will have extended powers to tackle flytipping and household waste put out on the wrong day.



## Environmental Wardens

4.3.5 As indicated in table 1 the time of gathering evidence for this review (October 2005), there were approximately 60 Environmental Wardens across Birmingham – of these, around 40 were funded through NRF Ward allocations. Around 19 were supported through mainstream District budgets, as part of the Clean, Green and Safe agenda.

**Table 1. Warden Projects in Birmingham**

Funding Source	Ward	Number of Environmental Wardens
<b>WARD NRF</b>	Ladywood	2
	Moseley & Kings Heath	1
	Oscott	1
	Soho	2
	Handsworth Wood	2
	Perry Barr	1
	Kings Norton	1
	Lozells & East Handsworth	2
	Stockland Green	4
	Washwood Heath	2
	Edgbaston	1
	Hodge Hill	2
	Kingstanding	2
	Nechells	2
	Erdington	2
	Aston	2
	Acocks Green	2
	Springfield	4
	South Yardley	1
	Sparkbrook	1
Bournville	1	
Selly Oak	1	
<b>WARD NDC</b>	Aston NDC	4
	Kings Norton	1
<b>HOUSING REVENUE DISTRICT</b>	Masefield Estate	1
	Perry Barr	2
	Edgbaston	2
	Hodge Hill	2
	Northfield	2
	Hall Green	2
	Ladywood	2
	Erdington	2
	Selly Oak	1
	Yardley	2
	Sparkbrook	1



## Environmental Wardens

### 4.4 Benefits

4.4.1 Highly visible (and from evidence received from Members popular), Environmental Wardens are one of the services that are pro-active – both in terms of tackling environmental problems and in engaging local people.

4.4.2 Beat patrols have proved a very important feature. With Wardens patrolling neighbourhoods up to 80% of the working day, this encourages face-to-face contact and interaction with local members of the community.



4.4.3 A further impact of beat patrols is that they contribute to the Council's Duty of Care Inspections, many of which could not feasibly be carried out without the Environmental Warden resource. Encouraging businesses to dispose of their waste lawfully both reduces the cost for the Council of dealing with illegal disposal and may bring additional revenue to the Council.

4.4.4 The effect of this level of interaction is that Environmental Wardens have been found to be successful, in some cases (e.g. in Bournville Ward – see 3.2.3) in:

- Engaging local businesses in initiatives;
- Understanding local issues and problem areas;
- Demonstrating very visibly to the public that something is being done;
- Pro-actively seeking problems and tackling them on the spot, e.g. fly-tipped waste which in turn can lead to rat infestations.





## Environmental Wardens

- 4.4.5 Through being pro-active, Environmental Wardens have taken on a new role. They are a visible signal to the public that “something is being done” and also contribute positively to work with the City Council’s partners through links with the Police for instance.
- 4.4.6 The ability to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) is a key element of the enforcement powers Environmental Wardens have, and the small amounts generated can be used to off-set to some degree the cost of the service.

### 4.5

### Performance

- 4.5.1 As noted above, Environmental Wardens are undertaking a new kind of service. However, what is immediately striking is the lack of performance monitoring data – an issue raised consistently throughout the course of the evidence gathering. It is therefore not possible to identify the specific impact of Environmental Wardens on City Council service delivery.
- 4.5.2 The lack of performance data comes down to two issues:
- The difficulty in isolating benefits directly resulting from Environmental Warden action;
  - The structure and practice of NRF allocation.
- 4.5.3 The first of these is best illustrated using the practice of referring fly-tipped waste to Fleet and Waste Management. These have increased since the introduction of Environmental Wardens. However, it is impossible to say whether this is entirely due to Environmental Wardens.
- 4.5.4 Additionally, as referrals are a last resort, waste management have no dealings with the rubbish being removed by the wardens – which amounts to an unseen benefit for the department. In actual fact, the propensity for referrals may decrease overall, as fly-tipping ought to reduce as a result of the Environmental Warden scheme.
- 4.5.5 The second issue stems from the pressure on wards to allocate the money quickly and departments to implement these decisions quickly. The cycle of annual NRF allocations leaves no space for evaluation. In addition, given that, as already noted, there is a multiplicity of warden schemes with differing powers under different schemes, and little central co-ordination. Overall management of the schemes is currently piecemeal.
- 4.5.6 The procedures for NRF require that all projects go through a pre-implementation appraisal, quarterly monitoring during implementation, and post completion evaluation (one by the delivery agent and one by the users). However, evidence gathered in the course of the review did not reflect this.



## Environmental Wardens

- 4.5.7 A further point is that at the time of the Review, no single strategic map of warden schemes/functions across the City existed to assist with the co-ordination of warden services. The lack of performance data is therefore not surprising.

### 4.6 Management

- 4.6.1 All Environmental Wardens are managed by Regulatory Services. However, daily supervision and day-to-day tasking is very much related to the nature of the funding body. Those wardens funded by NRF allocations most generally operate at a ward level, with guidance from District Wardens.
- 4.6.2 Whilst Regulatory Services make every attempt to respond positively to District needs, such a management arrangement has been found to create a number of issues:

A complex management structure – for example, the Selly Oak District Warden, whilst reporting back to District management, is required to take responsibility for a number of Wardens at ward-level, who report back to Regulatory Services.	A lack of co-ordination between Districts and Regulatory Services, potentially resulting in reduced effectiveness amongst staff.
A degree of isolation – particularly at ward level where employees are managed centrally.	District Managers may not be aware of what centrally-managed ward wardens are doing on a daily basis, and there is a perception that many wardens are 'self-tasking' with little support.
Different priorities reflecting central line management vs. local needs	Lack of alignment with other services.
Resource support for Environmental Wardens has been seen to be problematic at times. This extends to the delayed provision of computers and digital cameras for example, both of which are necessary items of equipment for the role.	The effect on the relationship between Wardens and Elected Members as jobs are dependent upon decisions made about NRF spending at ward level.

### 4.7 Staffing

- 4.7.1 The consequence of the short-term nature of NRF is that funding for posts are all on short-term contracts. This creates problems for both the Council and the employee on many levels, all of which impact on consistent service delivery:



## Environmental Wardens

<p>If the post is not renewed at end of contract, the Council will lose its investment in the training and experience of the employee.</p>	<p>As these are fixed-term contracts, due to employment legislation and the timetable of NRF allocations, the Council's redundancy/redeployment policy is such that Environmental Wardens can be given redundancy notices up to 3 months before their contracts expire while decisions are taken.</p>
<p>The redeployment policy has often led to employees being employed in different departments whilst the Environmental Warden salary is still being paid – i.e. money being spent, but effectively job not being done.</p>	<p>Warden schemes traditionally do not fit into a regulatory role. Through the NRF however, there are now more Environmental Wardens than Council Enforcement Officers. This has created a need for more technical training and support.</p>
<p>Difficulties in recruitment and retention as a result of the uncertainty.</p>	<p>Short-term contracts may likely affect the quality of new recruits, as well as the morale and performance of existing staff.</p>

### 4.8 BSP Wardens Report

- 4.8.1 The Birmingham Strategic Partnership (BSP) agreed in March 2005 to an Enquiry into why many Warden schemes in Birmingham remained dependent upon the NRF, despite their apparent success.
- 4.8.2 Through an evaluation of 43 of the Warden schemes, local decision making and national government policy, the enquiry found:
- Nothing to challenge the favourable evaluation of Warden schemes at a national level;
  - Shortcomings in the way in which the NRF in Birmingham has been managed – particularly with regards to the evaluation of NRF projects;
  - Existing procedures are inadequate to ensure that good NRF projects/schemes are sustained and mainstreamed;
  - A lack of joined-up thinking between the City Council, the BSP and other Partners such as the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP); and,
  - An urgent need to inject financial stability into warden schemes, possibly through partnership working.
- 4.8.3 The key recommendation from the Enquiry Panel was that the City Council and the BSP set up a Warden mainstreaming programme as a matter of urgency so as to address the issues raised, as well as demonstrating that Birmingham can take the lead in developing a strategic, evidence-based approach to modernising public services. However, no performance monitoring data was presented in the BSP report to substantiate a warden mainstreaming programme.



## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Should Environmental Wardens Schemes be Mainstreamed?

- 5.1.1 There are a number of agencies involved in delivering warden-related activities, and it should not be assumed that the City Council is the only body placed to consider mainstreaming. However, given this Review is focusing on benefit to the City Council, the question of mainstreaming has been considered from this perspective.
- 5.1.2 There are several considerations in determining whether the City Council should undertake the funding of Environmental Wardens:
- Do Environmental Wardens contribute to City Council priorities?
  - Is the funding available for such a move?
  - What would a mainstream Environmental Warden service look like?
- 5.1.3 The truth is that evidence gathered has proved inconclusive in terms of mainstreaming the Environmental Warden service as it currently stands. The lack of evaluation and monitoring is a major barrier to mainstreaming this service. However, it is noted that there are moves by BSP to undertake this with the introduction of its Programme Board.
- 5.1.4 What we have learnt is that Environmental Wardens contribute to Birmingham's 'vibrant urban villages' as a valued and visible part of neighbourhood management. They are a good example of a well-received and effective community-based approach to meeting neighbourhood renewal targets.
- 5.1.5 The question of funding is ultimately one for the Executive, particularly as any mainstreaming will, of necessity, require the transference of money from one service area to another. However, our thoughts on what a mainstream service would look like will shape how much would need to be spent and where.
- 5.1.6 From our study of Environmental Wardens there are two facets to any consideration of mainstreaming:
- The strategic placement of Environmental Wardens;



## Environmental Wardens

- The location of the management of the scheme – at the centre or District level?

### The Strategic View of Environmental Wardens

5.1.7 The Environmental Warden service has grown rapidly, a sign of the scheme's success, but equally the source of its main problems:

- The lack of a city-wide 'business plan' or management structure;
- The lack of alignment with other Warden and regulatory functions.

5.1.8 As already noted above, Environmental Wardens can play a key role in meeting Council priorities, particularly in the promotion of a clean, green and safe city. If they were to be mainstreamed, they should become a key part of the overall approach to tackling this issue, along with all other warden schemes, park rangers, Environmental Health Officers etc.

5.1.9 A strategic decision would therefore need to be taken on the balance of each of these roles – particularly where regulatory functions are involved – and how and where they are best deployed and how many are needed.

5.1.10 As previously noted, Environmental Wardens are set apart from other Warden functions due to their regulatory powers. It is the regulatory framework underpinning Environmental Wardens which determines how they are managed.

5.1.11 The Council, as a unitary authority, is one legal entity. Therefore the implementation of its regulatory regime needs to be standardised across the city, in order to adopt a consistent approach. This is essential for the administrative and support processes involved in regulatory activities to be rigorous and well-organised.

5.1.12 This does not, however, conflict with the Council's Devolution and Localisation policy, as Environmental Wardens operating in each district vary in their approach to tackling the priorities specific to their locality. This is consistent with the Council's philosophy on Localisation and Devolution to allow local variations in governance.

5.1.13 It is for this reason that Districts do not directly manage regulatory activities – including Environmental Wardens. However, central management does not facilitate joining up all environmental / street scene activities at District level to ensure efficiency and effectiveness through what is a significant resource. Conversely, the training required for regulatory functions is felt to be best delivered centrally.

5.1.14 Co-ordination is critical, both at a central and District level. However, the evidence suggests that this is not happening effectively. It is worth noting however, that if the roles of Environmental Wardens were to change or expand significantly, it would be necessary for a job evaluation process to be implemented.



## Environmental Wardens

### At the Centre or District Level?

- 5.1.15 Arguments have been put forward to support both central control of Warden schemes and District level management.
- 5.1.16 In favour of the centre, regulatory functions and economies of scale were the main arguments, along with the ability to cross-cover Districts where necessary. The use of Regulatory powers in particular demands that Environmental Wardens are able to keep in touch with fellow holders of regulatory powers to ensure they are kept up to date and able to share experiences.
- 5.1.17 At a District level, however, the deployment of Environmental Wardens would be in response to local needs. District leaders would be able to take decisions as to what priorities lay within their boundaries and organise the appropriate structure and number of wardens.
- 5.1.18 District Directors in particular advised that Environmental Wardens would not necessarily be their first choice in meeting the aims of the clean, green and safe agenda. Mainstreaming could therefore see the number of Environmental Wardens go down or remain stable, though the coverage of those tasks increased and better co-ordinated.
- 5.1.19 However, what is apparent is that under current circumstances, not all Districts would be suitably equipped to directly manage Environmental Warden schemes. Neither do all Districts have a Warden Plan which outlines the key issues, targets and outcomes for the coming year.

### Summary

1. *Environmental Wardens have proved to be an enormous, visible success in terms of public popularity, both locally and at a national scale.*
2. *From a strategic viewpoint, the success of Environmental Wardens is less tangible – primarily a result of the lack of performance data. There is therefore not sufficient evidence to recommend mainstreaming or otherwise with regard to Environmental Wardens.*
3. *The current situation with regard to short term contracts and uncertain funding is detrimental to both Environmental Wardens and the service they provide.*
4. *Should NRF be withdrawn in the future, the potential loss of Environmental Wardens would be noticed across the city. However, simply replacing NRF funding with City Council funding would not tackle the main issues with regards to Environmental Wardens.*
5. *There is a need to co-ordinate Environmental Warden schemes with other warden schemes and other players in the clean and green agenda. This would ensure overall coverage of all tasks without unnecessary duplication.*
6. *Part of this is determining where the management of Environmental Wardens would best lie.*



## Environmental Wardens

7. *Environmental Wardens are clearly a part of meeting City Council priorities and the importance of their visibility should not be underestimated. However, we would not expect the Executive to take on such a scheme without evidence as to its effectiveness. It is therefore a matter of urgency that evaluation takes place.*

### 5.2

### Recommendations

- 5.2.1 The Review Group's primary conclusion is that it is not possible to formulate a recommendation on mainstreaming at this stage. More work is required in terms of performance monitoring and evaluation.
- 5.2.2 However, there are a number of pertinent conclusions and recommendations which can be made. Indeed, it is arguable that the issues raised within them need to be addressed prior to any mainstreaming decisions being made.
- 5.2.3 A foremost conclusion is that any mainstreaming decision should consider all forms of Warden schemes, and not simply Environmental Wardens on their own. This introduces greater flexibility to meet local needs.
- 5.2.4 The Review Group views the natural 'unit' for Environmental Wardens to be at District level to maintain flexibility to meet needs, but this unit should be a team which operates across any given district.
- 5.2.5 Having heard all the evidence, the Review group believes that Environmental Wardens should continue to be managed centrally, but day-to-day supervision and work programs should be the responsibility of the District. Furthermore, during the course of evidence gathering it has become apparent that there is an element of confusion as to who currently holds managerial/supervisory responsibility for Environmental Wardens.
- 5.2.6 Moreover, the work programme for Environmental Wardens should be determined by the relevant targets outlined in the Districts Warden plan, in order for local needs to be accounted for. This will require that all Districts produce a plan of this kind.
- 5.2.7 Another element of this issue is the range of regulatory functions held by the city, of which powers held by Environmental Wardens are only a small part. These include parking wardens and licensing officers for example. Combining regulatory functions would be beneficial to all concerned, as it would allow the deployment of teams to undertake spot checks on a range of activities. This would also allow Environmental Wardens to report or act on a range of problems, including illegal parking, environmental problems and other issues.



## Environmental Wardens

- 5.2.8 The Review Group is keen to see such issues surrounding Environmental Wardens and their place within Regulatory Services explored further – in particular, ways in which the department could realign budgets to support a mainstreamed warden service.
- 5.2.9 Wider issues were also raised by this enquiry – in particular the question of how the Council ensures important new initiatives which have been piloted in one area can be rolled out throughout the city. This touches the flexibility of budgets and the ability of service and District Directors to reshape spending patterns away from historic areas into new developments. Options to assess this may include the introduction of annual savings targets for all departments which they can use to spend on new projects in their own areas.
- 5.2.10 Another issue relating to NRF more generally is the need for regular dialogue between the BSP and DSPs on projects being commissioned, to reduce the opportunity for duplication and increase co-ordination. This is an issue that will be picked up by the Committee in its future work.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
R01	The Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety should ensure that Regulatory Services and Districts work together to produce regular and informed Warden Plans which also encompass details of both central management/District supervisory arrangements, and funding.	Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety  District/Constituency Committee Chairs	30 September 2006
R02	That the Cabinet Member instigates a programme of city-wide mapping of all Warden schemes (not just Environmental Wardens) which are drawn up at District level.	Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety  District/Constituency Committee Chairs	30 September 2006
R03	Drawing on the experience other Local Authorities, Regulatory Committees should explore the benefits of combining regulatory functions for Environmental Wardens, where sensible to do so, and report back on this to the Local Services and Community Safety O&S Committee.	Chair, Public Protection Committee	30 March 2007
R04	The Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety to undertake a monitoring exercise on Environmental Wardens, assessing their impact and performance, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit to the City Council;</li> <li>• Benefit to local neighbourhoods;</li> <li>• Benefit to other partners, e.g. the police, Fire Service.</li> </ul>	Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety  Chair, Public Protection Committee	30 September 2006
R05	Progress towards achieving these recommendations should be reported to the Local Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee no later than its September 2006 meeting.  Subsequent reports on progress will be scheduled by the Committee on a regular basis thereafter until all are completed.	Cabinet Member for Local Services and Community Safety	30 September 2006