

BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Review of CAN Ranger Service

14 December 2015

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Foreword of Councillor Rose Bowler Chair of the Customer Service & Transformation Scrutiny Committee

At the Scrutiny Conference earlier this year it was noted that members once again requested a review of the CAN ranger service, therefore the Customer Service and Transformation committee decided to take on this piece of work.

We started our review by looking at why the service was started and to ensure we meet any future demands that may occur. The committee have interviewed Senior Management, Cabinet members and resident groups. We also spoke to all the Rangers over two sessions. The review became quite challenging with the extent of the different tasks they were taking on. There is a strong feeling however amongst members of the committee this service has moved away from some of the original remit and it was felt the need to return to the duties of dealing with Anti Social Behaviour which seems to be again on the increase.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all officers and Rangers for their contribution to this review, also to Abby Brownsword our Governance Officer and to Claire Millington, Scrutiny Officer for her continued commitment, and thanks to the committee members for their support.

Cllr Rose Bowler

1. Introduction

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory responsibility on Local Authorities to address Crime, Disorder and Anti-Social Behavior (ASB). The CAN Ranger Service was set up to contribute towards this statutory duty.

The review was identified during the discussions at the Annual Scrutiny Conference because elected Members felt that the role of the CAN Rangers had evolved since the service was established to the present role and the job description had been changed a number of times over the years. For this reason Members wanted to understand the current demands on the service. Also Members which to consider whether the service was prepared to meet future demands.

It was agreed from the outset that the review would look at the service as a whole from a transformation point of view and that it wasn't within the remit of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee to consider individual Community Safety concerns i.e. how many Fixed Penalty Notices were issued within a certain period of time as these issues were considered in the review of Enforcement carried out by the Safe and Inclusive Scrutiny Committee in 2014.

Members were sensitive to the fact that the Rangers had been the subject of a number of reviews over the past few years and it was made clear to the CAN Rangers that the review wanted to consider the demands on staff time and the support that they received or required.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing together with the Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion reiterate the role and duties of the CAN Rangers Service with departments and partners, particularly the Police.

Throughout the Review, Members heard concerns that reducing Police budgets and Officer numbers was leading to an increase of situations where people were advised to contact the CAN Rangers instead. The CAN Ranger service is valued by the Authority but there is a danger that it can be abused. Rangers reported that they worked closely with PCSOs but unfortunately, because Bolsover District Council has this service, people who dial 101 are often told to contact the Rangers instead. During the focus groups Members were told, *"The Police are stretched and we do perhaps get calls that we shouldn't be dealing with"*.

Examples of where the Rangers are sent to deal with a matter that actually requires Police attendance include when dealing with nuisance

motorcycles. Rangers advised that they do not have any enforcement powers under S. 59 and therefore can only request that a group or individual move on. *“Don’t send us to this kind of job when we have no power to deal with the issue when we get there!”* or being sent to noise complaints involving large groups of people who have been drinking – which would clearly require the Police to attend at the time the incident was reported. Rangers questioned during the focus groups, *“what would happen if we were involved in an accident whilst dealing with a call that shouldn’t be our job?”* As an Authority, it is our duty to ensure that our employees are safe.

2.2 That a set of guidelines and/or a criteria is developed which assists the Rangers and Central Control in assessing the urgency of a job (particularly out of hours calls) where a job is not an emergency and could be left until the following day or if in fact some jobs should be attended at all.

As part of the evidence gathering Members of the Committee considered job logs collected between May – June 2015 to give an example of the variety of work undertaken by the Rangers on both the day and night shifts.

Examples of jobs that Members queried whether or not a Ranger should have been sent out to include;

- Radiators too hot. Kevin sorted them out for her. She might ring back in the morning saying she’s too cold! (Central Control log) (5.14pm)
- Blown Bulbs. (9:54pm)

Rangers themselves commented on some of the jobs that they have attended; *“When jobs are passed on, we don’t always have an option as we are usually the last stop. People don’t know who to forward a job to so it gets sent to us”* and a question was asked; are you spread too thin? To which the response was, *“Possibly, everyone wants a bit of us”*.

Although the Job Description details the tasks that the CAN Rangers are required to undertake, Members queried whether some of the jobs that the Rangers were attending (including the examples given above) were above and beyond what Rangers should be expected to do. It is clear that the Rangers take pride in the fact that they can do anything and everything and this attitude towards their work is highly commended. The concern is that this level of service will be expected from Tenants and the CAN Rangers simply don’t have the capacity or resources to continuously provide this level of service and nor should it be expected to.

2.3 That information be provided to Tenants which provides details and examples on what is classed as an emergency and what calls will be dealt with as part of the out of hours service.

This recommendation follows as a result of recommendation 2.2. Members would like to see information to tenants published in an appropriate way which sets out the service tenants can expect from the Authority including what should be dealt with as an emergency.

2.4 That the Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing be asked to consider whether a contribution from the Community Safety Budget received from the Police and Crime Commissioner can be made towards the CAN Rangers Service.

Rangers are involved in many of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) activities including, Crime Cracking Events, Winter Safety and 'have your say' consultation days. Rangers are also involved in diversionary activities with the Police.

Because the Rangers are out and about within the Community, a lot of local intelligence is provided to the Community Safety Partnership through the Tasking Meetings with the Police and the Crime Theme Groups. Rangers are considered a valued part of the Community.

Members were advised by the Community Safety Officer that the Community Safety Partnership received £25,000.00 from the Police and Crime Commissioner each year for initiatives that link to the Countywide Police and Crime Plan.

Members were of the opinion that as the CAN Rangers carried a proportion of work on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership then it should be considered whether there is sufficient budget to contribute towards the CAN Rangers service.

2.5 That the CAN Rangers uniform include high visibility jackets so that it is clear to Members of the Public when there is a Ranger present in an area.

Members recalled that the Rangers uniform had included high visibility clothing. The current black uniform was smart but Elected Members and the Tenants and Residents involved in discussions agreed that the Rangers should be instantly recognisable and visible which should include the use of high visibility jackets.

2.6 That a clear Training Record be developed which highlights dates that training is undertaken and dates of when the training needs to be renewed or updated.

Training has been the subject of many discussions during the course of the review and it was confirmed that there was no set training programme.

Training tended to be arranged as and when to include Lone Working, First Aid and Housing Training and was raised through the appraisal process. Rangers commented that they would welcome a regular training programme.

Having a training record in place would ensure that staff were up to date on required training which was particularly important for the CAN Rangers and the range of expertise required to carry out their role.

2.7 That the levels of staffing in the CAN Rangers Service be regularly monitored to ensure that the service is coping with current demand.

During the focus groups with the Rangers, Members expressed concerns about the potential for one Ranger to be covering the nightshift alone including when the other Ranger called in sick or was on annual leave. (Currently 2 Rangers work the night shift together – covering the whole of the District).

Whilst there are no concerns with staffing currently, having 8 Rangers doesn't allow for much flexibility or cover if a Ranger due to work the nightshift was unable to for any reason. Members asked, "*Are 8 Rangers enough?*" to which the response was, "*When we had 10 there was more continuity in the shift pattern and more cover/flexibility for annual leave*".

Rangers confirmed that they enjoy the elements of Housing work particularly the 'out of hours' work. By attending out of hours calls rather than Tomlinsons (the contractors) being called out, between April and September 2015, approximately £1,710.00 was saved. (Tomlinsons out of hours call out fee is £57.00).

There has been an increased demand for the Rangers experienced in Shirebrook this year, mostly due to Community Cohesion issues and events taking place. Rangers did comment that the fact that they don't speak Polish is often a barrier and the Community Cohesion Officer is not always available. Also, a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) had been implemented on 4th November 2015 which covered specific areas of Shirebrook and Langwith for a duration of three years. This will inevitably increase the demands upon the CAN Rangers time in enforcing the PSPO over this period. The Council may choose to recruit a new employee with

specific community language(s) skills as a genuine occupational requirement under S.159 of the Equality Act 2010 if this level of demand continues. Some language training could be arranged for all staff in the meantime.

Finally Members heard that one Member of the Rangers team would turn 65 in the next 12 months and whilst workforce planning was an issue in all departments, the amount of training and expertise required for this particular role meant that this should be planned in accordingly.

3. Scope of the review

The aim of the review was to identify whether the current CAN Ranger Service was the most appropriate and cost effective way of delivering services to our Communities.

The objectives of the review were;

- To compare the job description/role from when the service was first established to the present role.
- To understand how the authority discharges its duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and how this compares to other authorities.
- To ascertain the involvement of Parish Councils in Community Safety and their duties under the Crime and Disorder Act.
- To consider the Budget for the service.

The Committee comprised the following Members,

Councillors;

Rose Bowler (Chair)
Pauline Bowmer
Malcolm Crane
Andrew Joesbury
Emma Stevenson

Jim Smith (Vice Chair)
Paul Cooper
Ray Heffer
Duncan McGregor
Rita Turner

Support to the Committee was provided by the Scrutiny Officer and the Governance Officer.

4. Method of review

The Committee met on four occasions to consider the scope of the review, key issues they wanted to discuss and the people they wished to interview.

The Committee sought evidence by way of questioning Officers, Rangers and local tenants and residents. Each Committee Member was tasked with contacting a neighbouring Authority to discuss how other Local Authorities discharged their duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and asked questions on enforcement powers. Parish Councils were also asked similar questions by email to which 12 of the 16 Parish Councils in Bolsover District provided a response.

Attached at **Appendix A** is a list of stakeholders involved in the review.

Equality and Diversity

Within the process of the review, the committee has taken into account the impact of equalities and the Improvement Officer has provided guidance and advice on the draft report.

5. Evidence

The following evidence was considered as part of the review:

- Citizens Panel results and analysis – July 2004 (Community Action Network or CAN Rangers)
- Verbal evidence from Officers and Portfolio Holders (please refer to **Appendix A** for the details of officers involved.)
- Job Descriptions dated from 2000 up to 2014
- Budget information
- Telephone interviews with neighboring authorities
- Questions to Parish Councils

6. Key findings

The CAN Ranger Service budget for 2014/15 was £310,628.00. This budget is split between the General Fund and the Housing revenue Account as follows;

General Fund – 25% = £77,657.00

Housing Revenue Account – 75% = £232,971.00

Members were advised that the 2015/16 budget had reduced to £224,000.00 as a result of salary savings, split as follows;

General Fund – 25% = £56,000.00

Housing Revenue Account – 75% = £168,000.00

The Housing Revenue Account budget provides services to Council House Tenants.

The CAN Rangers are line managed by the Housing Enforcement Officer who reports to the Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing.

When questioned about the safety of the CAN Rangers when working alone or at night, the Housing Enforcement Manager confirmed that all Rangers have received Lone Worker training, they have a mobile phone and out of hours could contact Central Control and there are trackers fitted in all vans.

When drafting the report Members agreed that the service should go 'back to basics' and carry out the duties that the Rangers were initially set up to do. Members considered the most up to date Job Description dated 4th February 2014 and agreed that this clearly stated what the Rangers should be doing, however, as the Rangers were asked to be involved with more and more jobs and tasks, there was less time for the 'basics' as set out in the Job Description.

Concerns were expressed throughout the duration of the review that the Rangers had become reactive and by moving the emphasis back to the duties set out in the Job Description, this should mean that more time and effort could be freed up for some of the activities and initiatives that made the service proactive.

When asked about their vision for the service in future, Rangers came up with the following:-

- More proactive
- Still providing a good service
- Ensuring that communities understand the service we provide
- Ensuring that those citizens that we don't get to engage with (those that don't cause any trouble or issues) understand what we do and the benefit of the service to communities.
- Better working relationship with PCSOs (as we have in the past)
- Be the best we can and provide best service we can.

There was a sense that the line of supervision wasn't always clear and that no one was 'fighting the Rangers' corner' in respect of control over the jobs and tasks that they were being asked to do. It is hoped that the recommendations made will help to address some of these issues.

To ensure that the Committee had a complete picture, questions were asked to Parish Councils and neighbouring Authorities regarding the discharge of their duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which states that all relevant authorities – which includes town and parish councils – have a duty to consider the impact of all their functions and decisions on crime and disorder in their local area.

12 of the 16 Parish Councils in Bolsover District responded to the questions which focused on how Anti-Social Behaviour was addressed across the District. It emerged from this consultation and discussions with Officers that there are still two Parish Councils who contribute a sum of money to Bolsover District Council for 'subscription to the CAN Ranger Service' there is also one GP in the District that contributes. This is an historical payment where most Parish Councils and some GPs contributed towards the service when it was first set up. Over the years, Parish Councils and GPs have stopped their contributions.

Members of the Committee would like this issue to be highlighted as these contributions are received in the belief that a service is provided in return. When questioned, the Housing Enforcement Officer advised that the GP/Parish Councils do not receive a greater level of service than any other Parish within the District and it appears improper that the Authority still accepts this contribution on an annual basis.

A range of examples of how other Authorities managed Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour were received from 5 of our neighbouring authorities.

7. Conclusions

The CAN Rangers Service is an asset to Bolsover District Council and everyone involved in the review agreed that it would be a major loss to the Authority if the Service was reduced or withdrawn.

The Community issues in our towns will not disappear overnight and our Rangers play a major role in maintaining safer communities.

Council tenants appreciate the fact that the Rangers attend out of hours calls, meaning that urgent jobs are dealt with quickly and saving the Authority money in the process.

We need to ensure that the Rangers receive the support and training they require to continue to do their job and provide the expected level of service whilst dealing with demands for the service that will continue to increase in future.

APPENDIX A

Stakeholders

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Councillor Karl Reid | Portfolio Holder – Community Cohesion, Audit, Legal and Governance |
| Councillor John Ritchie | Portfolio Holder – Housing and IT |
| Peter Campbell | Joint Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing |
| Deborah Whallett | Housing Enforcement Manager |
| Anthony Stewart | CAN Ranger |
| Brian Stray | CAN Ranger |
| Chris Lindley | CAN Ranger |
| David Baddams | CAN Ranger |
| Jo Wilson | CAN Ranger |
| Kevin Higgins | CAN Ranger |
| Simon Winder | CAN Ranger |
| Tim White | CAN Ranger |
| Lynne Cheong | Improvement Officer |
| Tenants and Residents | Bolsover Tenants Panel |
| Tenants and Residents | Carr Vale Residents Group |

Parish Council Consultees

Barlborough Parish Council
Blackwell Parish Council
Clowne Parish Council
Elmton with Creswell Parish Council
Langwith Parish Council
Old Bolsover Town Council
Pinxton Parish Council
Pleasley Parish Council
Scarcliffe Parish Council
South Normanton Parish Council
Tibshelf Parish Council
Whitwell Parish Council

District Council Consultees

Amber Valley Borough Council
Ashfield District Council
Erewash Borough Council
Mansfield District Council
North East Derbyshire District Council