

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET MEMBER

Operation Athena: Progress Report

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To report on progress with Operation Athena coordinating the work of Neighbourhood & Environmental Services to improve the local environmental quality and community perception of an area of Crosby, Scunthorpe.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are:
- A high level of community support and voluntary response to identified problems.
 - The results show a sustained reduction in the level of littering and graffiti.
 - A significant reduction in the number of properties with accumulations of waste in their gardens.
 - Improvements to working practices within the department have delivered improved results for the community.
 - An Executive Summary report on the project is attached as Appendix 1. The full report is available on request from Neighbourhood and Environmental Services.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Operation Athena is an on-going project in an area of Crosby to co-ordinate the work of various Neighbourhood and Environmental Services teams including Neighbourhood Services, Neighbourhood Response Team, Waste Management, Housing as well as the Highways & Planning Department. The purpose is to improve the local environmental quality and the perception of local residents by focusing and deploying existing resources more effectively.
- 2.2 Operation Athena was born out of other activities designed to improve the visual amenity and environment of parts of Crosby. The Home Zone was followed by Advance Crosby, which

collectively tackled some of the worst housing conditions in the area but both of these focussed on relatively small areas.

- 2.3 In July 2009 the 'Crosby Clean Up' focussed on clearing ten foots, removing weeds and detritus and improved mechanical sweeping. From October 2009 this approach was extended to what has become Operation Athena embracing all relevant services to provide a more intensive and lasting improvement.
- 2.4 The most dramatic changes can be seen in and around the area of the Memorial Gardens. Once derelict properties on West Street have been cleared and replaced with wild flower beds. Within the Memorial Gardens overgrown hedging has been removed, new seating and bins installed and railings repaired.
- 2.5 Other improvements, whilst less dramatic, are making a significant difference, with less litter, flytipping and graffiti to be found.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option 1 is to revert to previous working practices dealing with environmental issues on a reactive basis only.
- 3.2 Option 2 is to continue with Operation Athena Phase 3 as intended to provide a fuller evaluation over a broader area.
- 3.3 Option 3 is to continue to explore opportunities for coordinated proactive work in other areas where this approach may be appropriate.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 initially requires less resource but is likely to lead to a gradual return to the pre-existing poor environmental quality and poor levels of community satisfaction.
- 4.2 Option 2 is the preferred option to test the effectiveness of this approach in another slightly different area of Crosby.
- 4.3 Option 3 is an aspirational option but no other areas have been identified at this time.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 Some parts of Crosby also covered by the Operation Athena project, and some services delivered within the area have benefited from additional resources prior to Athena starting.
- 5.2 The resources used for Athena have come from existing resources providing a new proactive coordinated approach to problems to deliver a single solution. This resource more likely

than not would eventually have been used reactively to deal with the same issues over a protracted period but without the perceptible improvements.

- 5.3 All costs incurred as a result of formal action have been recovered via the Magistrates Court. To continue with Option 2, to extend the project in to the final phase, should not have any additional resource implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 – CRIME AND DISORDER AND OTHER)

- 6.1 Operation Athena contributes to the sustainable community strategy and the following council ambitions and priorities:
 - 6.1.1 An area that is thriving.
 - 6.1.2 Communities that are confident and caring.
 - 6.1.3 Individuals can see the difference.
 - 6.1.4 Everyone works together for the benefit of North Lincolnshire.
- 6.2 The Council has a statutory duty to deal with situations deemed to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance. However this programmed and targeted approach is delivering much better results for the community than could have been achieved by purely statutory means.
- 6.3 Operation Athena also contributes to our Section 17 duty to reduce anti-social behaviour and behaviour adversely affecting the environment.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 No specific consultation has been carried out. Athena has been an internal project to explore opportunities to deliver better environmental outcomes for the local community.
- 7.2 Feedback from staff involved in Athena is very positive. What was at the outset a daunting task has been tackled enthusiastically with commendable dedication. Understanding of the various work streams is much improved and consequently a better service is being provided.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Operation Athena project report and Executive Summary be noted.
- 8.2 That Phase 3 of the project is completed (option 2) and a final report be submitted.

SERVICE DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

OPERATION ATHENA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND

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Operation Athena was born out of other activities designed to improve the visual amenity and environment of parts of Crosby. The Home Zone was followed by Advance Crosby which collectively tackled some of the worst housing conditions in the area but both of these focussed on relatively small areas.

In July 2009 the 'Crosby Clean Up' was started focussing on clearing ten foots, removing weeds and detritus and improved mechanical sweeping. From October 2009 this approach was extended to what has become Operation Athena embracing all relevant services to provide a more intensive and lasting improvement.

The most dramatic changes can be seen in and around the area of the Memorial Gardens. Once derelict properties on West Street have been cleared and replaced with wild flower beds. Within the Memorial Gardens overgrown hedging has been removed, new seating and bins installed and railings repaired.

Other improvements, whilst less dramatic, are making a significant difference, with less litter, flytipping and graffiti to be found.

Athena Areas

Athena is being approached in three phases with work on Phases 1 and 2 well advanced. Phase 3 will be the subject of a further report.

Phase 1

The Phase 1 area includes part of the High Street, the Memorial Gardens, the area to the west as far as Frodingham Road and north to the southern side of Sheffield Street.

Phase 2

The Phase 2 area includes the northern side of Sheffield Street, the area to the west as far as Frodingham Road and north to Old Crosby.

2. SURVEYS

For each phase an initial survey of the area was undertaken to identify issues such as household waste accumulations, litter, graffiti, flytipping and premises in disrepair.

The survey involved an inspection of each street, its premises, associated 10 foot areas and any other areas of open land. The issues identified were recorded against each street/premises. A Local Environmental Quality Survey (LEQS) was undertaken and the

Appendix 1

street allocated a grade according to the levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and flyposting present. The grading was undertaken in accordance with LEQS standards taken from the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (Section 89(7) Environmental Protection Act 1990), DEFRA, 2006.

The Phase 1 survey was undertaken over a period of 4 weeks (4 – 30 October 2009, by a member of staff trained in LEQS surveying.

The Phase 2 survey was undertaken over a period of 4 weeks (27 January – 24 February 2010), by the same member of staff.

3. LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY SURVEY RESULTS

The Environmental Quality Grading system grades are:

Grade A	Completely Free (litter, detritus, graffiti, flyposting)
Grade B	Predominantly Free - apart from small items (litter/detritus) Some, minor in nature, (graffiti/flyposting unnoticeable)
Grade C	Widespread with minor accumulations (litter/detritus) present and clearly visible (graffiti/flyposting)
Grade D	Heavily affected with significant accumulation (litter/detritus) extensive, clearly visible, obtrusive (graffiti/flyposting)

Phase 1 – Litter

The results show a sustained improvement in the reduction of levels of litter and refuse in the Phase 1 Area. In October 2009, 61% of streets were graded A/B, this increased in January 2010 to 89% and again in May 2010 to 95%, an overall increase/improvement of 34%. This corresponds

Phase 1 – Graffiti

The results show a sustained improvement in the grading for graffiti in the Phase 1 Area. In October 2009, 23% of the streets were graded A/B, this increased in January 2010 to 55% and again to 78% in May 2010, an overall improvement of 55%.

Phase 2 – Litter

The results show an improvement in the levels of litter and refuse in the Phase 2 Area. In February 2010, 50% of streets were graded A/B, this increased in May 2010 to 100%.

Phase 2 – Graffiti

The results show an improvement in the levels of graffiti in the Phase 2 area. In February 2010, 50% of the streets were graded A/B, this increased to 70% in May 2010, an increase/improvement of 20%.

4. ACCUMULATIONS OF WASTE

In total 1396 properties were inspected for accumulations of waste, 173 accumulations were identified, accounting for 12% of premises.

Appendix 1

The Phase 1 survey identified 130 accumulations of waste at premises, 95 (73%) of which were removed by residents voluntarily. Five (4%) premises were dealt with via formal action.

The Phase 2 survey identified 43 accumulations of waste at premises, 38 (89%) of which were removed by residents voluntarily. A total of 3 (7%) of the premises were dealt with via formal action.

5. GRAFFITI

Overall 243 incidents of graffiti were identified, 158 (65%) in Phase 1 and 85 (35%) in Phase 2. Of these 6 (2%) were on private property and referred to other organisations for removal e.g. Post Office, B.T., Yorkshire Electricity etc.

Of the remaining 219 (90%) 182 consents/disclaimers were obtained from residents/property owners, permitting the removal of graffiti from 75% of the affected premises.

6. HOUSEHOLD WASTE ACCUMULATIONS

With regard to the reoccurrence of household waste accumulations a survey took place 6 months after the commencement of Phase 1 and 3 months after the commencement of Phase 2. Only 4 waste accumulations/ deposits were identified. Of these, two were located within the Phase 1 area and were cleared promptly by the owners. The remaining two were within the Phase 2 area, 1 was already being dealt with under the original project and the other was cleared by the owner.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Operation Athena was started to try and deliver an improved environment for a defined area of Crosby by adjusting existing working practices.

So far, on this limited scale, it would appear that improvements have been delivered and appear to be sustainable. However staff have noted subjectively that even in the small area covered so far there have been subtle differences in the responses from the community. It is important to recognise and appreciate these differences before assumptions are drawn about applying the same approach elsewhere.

In the Phase 1 area residents were more responsive to house calls and found to be more co-operative when asked to clear waste and sign graffiti removal consent forms. The land owners and landlords were found to be local.

In Phase 2 it was found that a greater proportion of residents were not home during the daytime or were simply not responding to officers when they knocked at the doors. Consequently numerous attempts were required at some properties to make contact. This meant obtaining results was a more lengthy process. A good example of this is shown in the number of outstanding graffiti removals yet to be approved by the residents/owners.

It was found that there was some lack of awareness of the recycling and collection service in households where English is not the first language. Once these properties were identified assistance was provided.

The full version of this report is available from the North Lincolnshire Council website www.northlincs.gov.uk <insert reference>