



Belfast City Council

Report to: Health and Environmental Services Committee

Subject: **Future Alleygating Projects - Community Consultation**

Date: 18th January, 2010

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Relevant Background Information

Alleygate Pilot

As the Committee is aware, Belfast City Council has delivered an Alleygate pilot project which involved the erection of 200 gates in Little America, Lower Windsor, Woodvale, the Mount and Beechmount. £490,000 was made available from the NIO Community Safety Unit and BRO for this pilot (£420,000 for gates and the remainder to support revenue costs for delivery partner Bryson House).

An evaluation of the pilot project in March 2006 showed that:

- The most positive impact of the gates was in terms of reducing the fear of crime in the areas with **89%** of respondents reporting that they believed the gates had a positive or very positive impact on **reducing the fear of crime**
- **73%** of residents reported a positive impact on the **reduction of littering and dumping**
- **87%** of residents believed that the gates had a positive impact on **reducing crime**
- There were substantial reductions in anti-social behaviour reports in four of the five pilot areas.

In addition the Development Department's Arterial Routes Programme initiated the erection of alleygates in the Lower Ormeau Road area. In 2008 this scheme transferred to the Community Safety Team for completion and to allow the coordination of the emerging citywide approach.

Current Position

At present no significant funding has been made available to gate further areas in Belfast, apart from some small one off funding opportunities, the most recent being through DSD in the Cooke Court area. However, there is considerable public and political demand for an expansion of the current pilot.

A business case for £500,000 has been prepared which would be subject to the Council's gateway process should Alleygating be agreed as a new project under the capital programme. Furthermore the NIO Community Safety Unit has submitted a bid for a regional scheme to the value of £1.5 million and it is hoped that Belfast would secure considerable match funding. Initial discussions with DSD have also indicated that there may be opportunities to work in partnership in neighbourhoods of common interest. The Housing Executive has also been approached to see if a pilot could be carried out in areas of intensive concentrations of Houses in Multiple Occupation and a report on this will be brought before Committee should more firm proposals be agreed.

Key Issues

Members will be aware that the process to gain permission to install alleygates is often a lengthy one. The steps involved include the completion of a household consultation and then an application to the DRD Roads Service for a Road Traffic Order (RTO) to allow the alley to be gated. This in itself involves a statutory consultation period and thus in total these processes can take in the region of 6 months, assuming there are no objections.

However, in light of the proposed transfer of functions from central to local government, as part of the RPA, Roads Service has indicated that it is unable to direct the same level of resources to support this legal process. As a result it is possible that the processing of Road Traffic Orders may slow down considerably, particularly from autumn 2010 onwards.

There is a significant risk therefore that, when the funding does become available, this delay could make it difficult to deliver the gates within the necessary timescales.

In order to manage this risk therefore the community safety team proposes to submit applications for Road Traffic Orders in some of the highest priority areas that may potentially be gated as soon as is practicable. When granted, the RTO stands indefinitely and therefore would allow for quick installation of gates in these areas when funding becomes available. The areas chosen would be based on the prioritisation process agreed by the Council at its meeting of June 2009. It would not preclude securing RTOs for additional areas if this was required at a later stage. The householder survey to facilitate these applications will be undertaken in January and February.

Clearly it is important that we manage expectations when we undertake this consultation as funding for gates in these areas has not yet been secured. A communications plan will therefore be developed alongside this consultation process to ensure elected representatives, residents and stakeholders are aware of the purpose of the consultation. Forms of communication will include advisory leaflets, public meetings and using existing community networks. Crucially we want to work closely with Elected Representatives to distribute accurate and relevant information. Copies of the leaflet and questionnaire to be used are attached as appendices.

Resource Implications

Financial

The necessary budget to undertake this specific time bound community consultation is allowed for in the revenue estimates for the 2009/2010 year.

Human Resources

Gavin Bell, Community Safety Project Officer will manage the consultation process in line with his current role and responsibilities.

Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of this report.

Decision Tracking

The Head of Environmental Health will report back to Committee on the status of the consultations by the end of June, 2010

Key to Abbreviations

NIO - Northern Ireland Office
RPA – Review of Public Administration
RTO – Road Traffic Order
DSD – Department of Social Development

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Advisory Leaflet
Appendix 2 - Community Consultation Questionnaire

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