

Report to: ADULT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 6th February 2007

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Report No:

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Report Title: Update on the use of 'Alley Gating' in Bolton

**Confidential /
Non Confidential:**
(delete as approp)

(Non-Confidential) This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Purpose:

To provide members with an update on the use of 'alley gating' in Bolton as a means of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

Recommendations:

Decision:

Members are asked to note the report

Background Doc(s):

Summary:

*(on its own page
with background docs)*

The report outlines the alley gating process, achievements so far and the future development of the project based on a revised policy.

1. Background

- 1.1 Alley gating is one tool in a whole range for tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. It involves the erecting of secure gates to an alley way to prevent unauthorised access.
- 1.2 Funding (£100,000) has been made available through the Environment Department to fund alley gating projects in the borough, this funding was match funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund in 05/06. The process for identifying schemes and allocating the funds was agreed by the Executive members for Environmental Services and Community Safety.
- 1.3 Bolton at Home has been commissioned to implement alley gating schemes. Implementation includes conducting resident consultation, providing a specification, ordering gates and installing.
- 1.4 A list of all completed and pending alley gating schemes can be seen in Appendix 1.

2. The 'alley gating process'

2.1 **Funding**

The funding made available for alley gating so far has come from two sources,

- Neighbourhood Renewal Fund £100,000 (2005/6)
- Environmental Services £100,000 (2005+)

- 2.2 The Environmental Services funding allocation has no restriction on when it must be spent, whereas, with NRF, there was a requirement to spend by the end of March 2006. With this in mind, the process for managing alley gating has been split into two phases.

2.3 **Phase 1 2005/2006 - Neighbourhood Renewal Fund**

The primary focus for phase 1 was to target alley ways which would prove more 'straight forward' in terms of closure. Un-adopted, non-highways do not require formal closures and, unless there is opposition from residents, can be closed with minimal difficulty. The phase 1 approach was thus taken to ensure the NRF funding allocated could be spent to the funding deadline set.

2.4 **Phase 2 April 2006 + - Environmental Services Allocation**

A broader approach is being followed in phase 2. The Cleaner Neighbourhood and Environment Act enables problematic alley ways which are public rights of way to be tackled using Gating Orders. As the process for a formal closure can be lengthy, the Environmental Services allocation, with no time limit, will be utilised in Phase 2. A policy for implementing this is currently being developed by Highways.

2.5 **Identifying Alley Ways**

Requests for alley gates have come from a variety of sources including elected members, police, housing officers and members of the public. The type of alley way referred also varies in terms of problems encountered, location, housing tenure and highway status.

- 2.6 All requests have been assessed by Community Safety Services against a number of criteria.

- Levels of recorded crime attributed to the alley way
- Levels of recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour attributed to the alley way
- Other evidence about the problems eg diary sheets, anecdotal evidence.
- Whether the alley way 'lends' itself to alley gating ie viable in terms of physical design, in use or not to other users etc

2.7 Only alley ways which can demonstrate a causal link with significant levels of crime and/or anti-social behaviour are recommended for closure and go forward to the next stage which is consultation.

2.8 **Consultation**

Consultation is carried out with all those affected by the gating of an alley way. Only with community support can an alley way be gated off.

3 Progress to date

3.1 Since September 2005, Community Safety Services have dealt with 102 separate referrals.

3.2 So far, a total of 26 gating schemes have been implemented with a further 27 planned to commence following agreement of a new policy. A full break down of completed and pending schemes can be seen in Appendix 1.

3.3 A formal evaluation is planned of the completed schemes by the end of the year which should highlight positive impacts on levels of crime and anti-social behaviour but also assess whether gates displace problems to other areas. So far, anecdotal feedback from residents suggests that, where gates have been installed, this has had a very positive impact on their quality of life.

4. Evaluation

4.1 Alley gating is an intervention that can have a significant impact on levels of crime and disorder and equally on the communities perceptions of safety and quality of life. Therefore, measuring the impact that alley gates are having in the community will be carried out on two levels,

- Measuring levels of recorded crime and anti-social behaviour
- Measuring resident's perceptions of their local area and fear of crime.

4.2 Prior to implementing any gating schemes, a baseline of recorded crime and anti-social behaviour is taken in the area immediately affected by the alley way. Additionally, as part of the consultation process, a baseline position is taken of the resident's views about crime in their area, in particular, how the alley way in question affects this view.

4.3 A process for evaluating the impact of alley gates is currently underway which will look at both recorded levels of crime and anti-social behaviour and capture residents views six months after implementation. It is hoped that this evaluation will be completed in the New Year

4.4 Based on anecdotal feedback from residents it is anticipated that there will be a positive evaluation of residents' perceptions. Gates generally provide residents with a safe communal area where previously there was none. The analysis of crime data will provide interesting analysis of how gates have impacted on levels of crime and whether this has led to displacement of problems ie moved to another area.

4.5 The results of the evaluation process will help inform future use of alley gates as a tool for reassuring communities and reducing crime. For example, issues such as displacement may require a broader approach and put more emphasis on looking at options to address the cause of the problem

4. Future development

- 4.1 The Highways section is leading on the development of a new policy which takes into account the provisions contained within the Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (see box below for key features). The policy will facilitate a much more robust assessment of proposed schemes which will address the key issues around sufficient evidence, consultation and Highways' requirements. Members will be consulted on the new policy towards the end of this year.

Some key features of the Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

- Allows local authorities to close highways for the purpose of reducing persistent crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Local Authorities must demonstrate clear evidence that the highway is facilitating crime or anti-social behaviour;
- Local Authorities should be satisfied that alternative routes exist;
- Alley ways retain highway status when gated.

- 4.2 The future of the alley gating project will depend largely on the successful implementation of the new policy and any future funding arrangements. Gating Orders have so far not been used anywhere else in the country which means that the legislation is untested and could potentially draw opposition.
- 4.3 Phase 1 of the project used alley gating sporadically across the borough focussing on referrals made by elected members, the public etc. Phase 2 will continue this way of working but take a broader approach which will consider public highways using the new policy. Before the possibilities of a phase 3 can be considered, it will be necessary to evaluate the schemes implemented in phase 1 and 2 in order to assess their impact, and the process used.
- 4.4 Possible future developments could include focussing on specific blocks of housing in order to maximise impact and avoid displacement or allow for resident/community led and funded schemes to go ahead where possible.

5. Decision

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the report.