

## INFORMATION NOTE

### Street Begging - Update

At the March EHH Committee, a discussion paper was introduced regarding the issue of street begging in the town centres. It presented options available to deal with street begging and laid out the evidential thresholds required for each option.

The report confirmed that over the last ten years or so, there has been a noticeable increase in the numbers of people begging in streets and public places in the Fylde area. Though the numbers overall are small, the individuals concerned often beg from prominent locations in town centres. Whilst officers do receive anecdotal reports relating to street begging, the level of official complaints and supporting evidence is quite low.

The current approach followed by officers is to utilise a Community Protection Notice (CPN), which target a persistent individual. An alternate option would be to utilise a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which is a blanket approach addressing specific behaviours rather than individuals, requiring an evidential approach to support a public consultation. The evidence base in support of a PSPO is not presently available as the required evidence must demonstrate that the behaviour is having, or likely to have, a detrimental (harmful) effect on the quality of life of those in the locality and be persistent or continuing in nature to justify the restrictions imposed i.e., the restrictions must be proportionate as required under the legislation (Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014).

At the meeting, it was RESOLVED:

1. To continue with the approach of responding to street begging through Community Protection Notices (CPN's) and to collate any evidence, including reviewing other local authorities approaches, to demonstrate that street begging is having a detrimental effect on quality of life; is both continuing in nature and unreasonable, to justify restrictions being considered through a Public Spaces Protection Order; and
2. That a further report be brought back on this matter in six months to update on the position, as detailed below.

*At present (August 2021), we have Community Protection Warnings prepared for 2 individuals. Both have accommodation and are in receipt of benefits coming in and not homeless. However, they are known to beg on occasion but there have been no recent complaints about either individual and their behaviour does seem to have improved in recent times.*

*Greater challenges are being presented by a couple who have left their accommodation in Blackpool in favour of sleeping rough in St Annes whilst an alternative property is identified. The couple are known to services and officers are pushing for support, but again, very few official complaints have been received to date. The new Enforcement Team have been tasked with keeping a close eye on them, documenting any anti-social behaviour they witness and noting any comments made by passing members of the public to build up the evidence base in support of moving on to the next stage. Blackpool Council are also being consulted on this process. Community Protection Warnings have been issued to both individuals*

*Whilst the report relates to street begging, officers have also been engaging with a couple living in a tent near to Squires Gate Train Station, on the boundary of the borough. There has some anti-social behaviour, but they have not been observed begging and the police have been informed regarding their actions.*

#### FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM

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