



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23rd March 2010

Report from the Director of Environment and Culture

For Action

Wards Affected:

ALL

Gating of alleyways

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Alleyways tend to be secluded areas, the majority of which are either in private ownership or the collective responsibility of those abutting / adjoining the alley. They are rarely the responsibility of Brent Council.
- 1.2 Their seclusion leads them to be vulnerable to environmental crime and anti-social behaviour, British Crime Statistics indicated that a half of burgled properties are entered from the rear, which will include those attached to alleyways.
- 1.3 Gating of the alleyways makes it more difficult for fly-tippers, reduces the opportunity for anti-social behaviour and acts as a deterrent to burglaries from the rear.

2. Development of gating

- 2.1 Gating developed within Environmental Health as an experimental response to measures that sought to permanently reduce the demand for Council intervention to deal with the issue of rubbish dumped on publically accessible, but privately owned land. Initially the service was focussed on Harlesden and implemented from NRF time-limited funds.
- 2.2 Council funding for gating in Brent was first provided to Environmental Health in April 2003. Despite increased Council funding, the success of gating has resulted in more demand than funds. The service has adapted, and now the team supplements the gating programme by undertaking additional gating work, funded by Neighbourhood Working.
- 2.3 Gating is one amongst a number of tools used to improve an area and make it less accessible or attractive to those intent on anti-social behaviour. Other initiatives have included:

- Installation of barriers – on the entrance to car parks / disused buildings
- Fencing off areas - to open spaces/parcels of land that are not parks
- Resurfacing roads or passages
- Makeovers – e.g. planting flowers in gated alleyways

2.4 A 'scheme' may include one or more alleyways or interlinking branches of alleyway. A breakdown of schemes since 2003 is provided below:

Year	No. of area improvement schemes completed	No. of pedestrian gates	No. of vehicular gates	Total No. of gates	No. of properties deriving benefit
2003/04	4	8	0	8	Unmeasured
2004/05	10	6	22	28	Unmeasured
2005/06	17	10	36	46	1008
2006/07	15	12	15	27	628
2007/08	16	1	28	29	894
2008/09	17	7	20	27	746
2009/10 est	17	5	31	36	776
Total	96	49	152	201	4052

3. Selection of Schemes

3.1 Prioritisation for gating is based on eligibility criteria which are, in summary:

- practicalities of gating;
- likelihood of success;
- value for money;
- the incidence of environmental crime and anti-social behaviour;
- residents' willingness to effectively manage the land after gates have been installed.

3.2 Prior to 2009/10 these criteria were predominantly based on just the degree of environmental crime i.e. fly-tipping, litter, etc. In the last year this has been broadened out to include the incidence of other forms of anti-social behaviour and we are attempting to extend this to relevant crimes such as burglary where access is gained from alleyways.

3.3 Other Council services undertake their own selection process and then request assistance from Environmental Health on co-ordinating the schemes. This provides an efficient way of providing a centralised service from with Environmental Health who have the expertise and arrangements in place to best undertake this role. A tendering exercise is undertaken annually on gating and rubbish clearance service providers to ensure that the Council obtains value for money. Environmental Health adhere to documented operating

procedures and install gates to a proven specification. This ensures the sustainability of the schemes and reduces the need for future maintenance.

4. The Gating Process

- 4.1 Following initial selection of a gating scheme, residents, ward Councillors and relevant Council officers are invited to a public meeting to discuss the proposal. For the scheme to progress, a Resident's Gating Committee must be formed and 95% of residents must support the scheme. A formal agreement to the scheme arrangements has to be signed by the Gating Committee and the EH Council Officer.
- 4.2 We then arrange manufacture and installation of the gates, attachment of signs and fire brigade boxes and purchase of security keys. Once the gates have been installed, we arrange to support residents on a clean-up day to clear rubbish and overgrown bushes, brambles etc. Clean-up days are organised so as to include residents and our Pay-Back partners. In this way it brings residents together and injects some social responsibility for the scheme and hence, they are more likely to maintain the alleyway in future.
- 4.3 The keys are donated to the Committee to either give them out to residents or to sell to residents to provide a fund for future maintenance for which the Committee is responsible. At this stage a residents support session is organised to reiterate the future responsibilities of the Committee, residents and the Council.
- 4.4 EH often work with Streetcare, the local Safer neighbourhood Scheme and the Council's Neighbourhood Working team. Some schemes have involved external partners such as British Waterways and is an excellent example of mainstream partnership working.

5. The Cost of Gating

- 5.1 A typical gating scheme requiring two gates, protecting 50 properties, requires the following expenditure (excluding officer salaries and Corporate overheads):

Service	Actual expenditure
Planning application fee	£600
Residents meeting (e.g. hall hire)	£300
Manufacture and installation of gates	£2,700
Purchase of keys	£500
Rubbish clearance	£600
TOTAL expenditure	£4,700

6. Measuring the Success of Gating

- 6.1 The success of gating is currently measured by undertaking resident perception surveys for those resident directly affected by each scheme. A pre-gating survey is undertaken followed by a survey three months after completion of each scheme.
- 6.2 An analysis of the residents surveys for the 2008/9 schemes shows that 88% of residents feel that the installation of their gates has had a positive affect on reducing environmental crime and anti-social behaviour. This perception of crime tends to be a larger problem in communities than crime itself and the positive effect of gating will directly contribute towards a better score on the National Indicator 17: *The perception of anti-social behaviour*.

7. The future of environmental improvement

- 7.1 It is estimated that there are over 1400 alleyways in the borough. To date 180 of these have been gated in the seven years since gating began. For this reason it would not be sensible to aim to gate all alleyways. At present the service is aimed at those alleyways that are associated with the highest levels of environmental crime and more recently the highest levels of ASB and property crime.
- 7.2 Gating will not be the solution for all alleyways and we have found that schemes are only successful where residents are fully behind the project and take responsibility for maintaining the gates and ensuring they are kept locked and new residents have access.
- 7.3 In our Service Operational Plan for 2010/11 Environmental Health has committed to start proactively assessing privately owned and publically accessible land to determine need and priority for intervention in future work programmes. In this way we will start to compile a database that will enable us in the future to better draw a line under the high priority alleyways and quantify the expenditure needed to gate them or install alternative methods to reduce ASB.

Stephen Moore
Deputy Head of Service
Environmental Health
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