

Arrest Protocol Targets Fly-tippers

Coventry Council And West Midlands Police

The Fly-Tipping Arrest Protocol is a partnership between Coventry City Council and West Midlands Police aimed at bringing fly-tippers to justice. It sends a strong message to offenders that fly-tipping is a serious offence and is intended to stop them from committing further offences.

The protocol involves police intervention at a stage when sufficient evidence has been gathered and when several other attempts at communication with the suspect have proved fruitless. If the police consider it necessary to do so, they can arrest and interview the suspected offender.

In normal circumstances the local authority will prosecute fly-tippers and if the police are taking action against the persons they will add the fly-tipping case on. Under the protocol the police take the prosecution along with other offences if they have sufficient evidence to do so.

This has helped foster good relations, as the police not only assist with fly-tipping but now have a stronger understanding of environmental crime. The protocol has also supported their Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

In view of the new legislation and its effect on powers of arrest, police intervention is a valuable asset in the detection and apprehension of offenders for the offences of fly-tipping. The Fly-tipping Arrest Protocol involves a regular case review with the police, allowing officers to trace the background history of the offender. This reduces health and safety risks to council officers, and allows the police and local authority to work together if offenders are wanted for other offences.

The team has the ability to target the offenders who evade prosecution by ignoring invites to interview from local authority officers. The protocol sends out a message that fly-tipping is not acceptable and people invited for interview are always told they will be arrested if they do not attend.

A Successful Start

The threat of being arrested by the police is proving to be a good incentive; since using the protocol 90% of alleged offenders have attended interviews at the local authority offices. So far the protocol has gathered sufficient evidence for three successful prosecutions.

The police rarely need to get involved with the cases and Coventry City Council has only had to involve them on three occasions. This is good news for other local authorities as it makes it easier to persuade the police to sign up to the scheme. It also benefits the police as it is generally the serious offenders who get referred to them and quite often they are wanted in connection with other offences.

Encouraging Enforcement

Thanks to the partnership, the team has been able to interview more people regarding the offences and through the long-term implementation of the project it is hoped that fly-tipping in Coventry will be reduced.

By developing the relationship with the police they have been able to gain support on other initiatives. The team has provided training to the Police Community Support Officers to issue fixed penalty tickets for littering. Coventry City Council has also enabled the team to circulate information through street-based staff regarding environmental crime such as suspect vehicles.

Expanding The Scheme

The results of the pilot have been very positive and in April 2007 the protocol was extended to include all environmental crime. Coventry City Council is now hoping to encourage other local authorities in the West Midlands and throughout the country to adopt similar working relationships with the police.

The Council can provide case study material and workshops to explain the benefits of partnership working with the local police, as well as offering an insight into other working practices with the police such as their street-based personal/police tasking programme.

See below to see the Environmental Crime Working Protocol that was agreed between West Midlands Police and Coventry City Council.

For further information, please contact:

Joy Adams
Principal Environmental Health Officer
Environmental Crime Unit

T: 02476831806

E: joy.adams@coventry.gov.uk