

18th February 2014

Anti-Social Behaviour Trial

Ward(s) All

Portfolios Cllr Z Ali - Public Health and Protection

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline proposals for a more coordinated way of working across all agencies to collectively to deal with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) within a specified geographic locality.
- 1.2 Partners have expressed a collective desire to improve the way in which they work collaboratively to tackle ASB building on existing strong practice and procedure. Subsequently representatives from the Council, Police and Registered Providers met to look at ways in which this could be achieved. This included work to identify how this is approached in other areas of the region/country.
- 1.3 As a result a working group was formed to progress this key piece of work and identify where existing practice could be improved/strengthened. This included consideration of the way in which we collectively share, analyse and map ASB data, the way in which ASB is dealt with through existing governance structures and the actual policies and procedures that partners follow when implementing the various ASB Tools and Powers available to them. It also recognised the need for this work to reflect the forthcoming new tools and powers contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Bill 2013-14.
- 1.4 It was agreed that based on the outcome of the above an ASB trial would be undertaken to test this “improved” approach in a defined geographic location before rolling this out on a borough wide basis. With partner support this work has progressed and is moving toward a planned trial in the Walsall South and Aldridge, Streetly, Pheasey & Walsall Wood Area Partnerships.
- 1.5 The overriding purpose of this process is to provide a more consistent approach to the way in which agencies work together to tackle ASB across the borough, building on existing good practice to ultimately improve the service collectively provided to the communities of Walsall. In this way, the process will also explore opportunities for savings/efficiencies in order to provide the best service at least cost.

2.0 Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1** To provide Elected Members with an on overview of work underway to improve the way we work collectively tackle this community priority. To give members an opportunity to comment upon the proposals to date and make suggestions around the future direction of this work.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1** The Panel is asked to note and comment upon the contents of this report.

4.0 Background papers

- 4.1** Draft Terms of Reference for the proposed ASB Trial are attached to this report.

5.0 Resource and legal considerations

- 5.1** Walsall Council has a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) to bring responsible authorities together to tackle crime and disorder. The community safety partnership (CSP) in Walsall is the Safer Walsall Partnership. This consists of the Local Authority, Police, Probation Services, Public Health, Fire and Rescue Service and NHS, as well as representation from whg and the voluntary sector. The work of the Partnership is overseen by Walsall's Policing and Crime Board which consists of the responsible authorities and representatives from the area partnerships, voluntary and business sector.
- 5.2** The Partnership has a statutory responsibility to produce a strategy detailing how it will reduce crime and disorder in its area based on the findings of a comprehensive Strategic Assessment which uses data from across the partnership to provide a detailed analysis of crime and disorder issues in the borough. The Safer Walsall Partnership is about to author its three year Community Safety Plan based on the 14/15 Strategic Assessment. The current (2011-14) Community Safety Plan identifies Tackling Anti Social Behaviour as one of the boroughs Strategic Priorities and it is anticipated that this will remain a priority in the updated plan. Tackling ASB will therefore remain at the forefront of partner activity to build a safer Walsall for all who live and work in the borough.
- 5.3** By seeking to provide a more consistent approach to the way in which agencies work together to tackle ASB across the borough and improve the service collectively provided to the communities of Walsall the process will also explore opportunities for savings/efficiencies in order to provide the best service at least cost.

6.0 Citizen impact:

- 6.1** Crime and anti- social behaviour have a huge impact on every aspect of our communities from the health and well-being of our residents to the boroughs economy. Strong, cohesive communities where people get along and take responsibility for themselves and each other are less likely to be the location for crime and disorder. The 'broken window' effect can quickly lead to areas becoming targets for crime, where residents live in fear and isolation. Such areas can negatively impact upon perceptions and may ultimately affect economic confidence and potential investment.

7.0 Environmental impact:

- 7.1** Anti-social behaviour includes a wide range of behaviours, many of which will impact upon the environment. Any mechanism or process which reduces the incidents or prevalence of ASB will reduce this negative environmental impact.

8.0 Performance management:

- 8.1** The proposed trial recognises the need for effective monitoring and evaluation which is being built into the project plan from the outset. Progress toward the delivery of the trial and the subsequent outcomes will be reported to the Safer Walsall Local Policing and Crime Board. Operational progress/performance is monitored through the multi agency working group.

9.0 Equality Implications:

- 9.1** An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out. However, equality implications are considered across Partnership activity. Any improvements in the way in which we collectively tackle ASB will benefit all communities within Walsall.

10.0 Consultation:

- 10.1** The trial and associated activity is being progressed by a working group comprising of representatives from the Council, West Midlands Police and key Registered Providers within the borough

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REPORT

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour remains a priority for both the communities of and partners within Walsall. With this in mind partners expressed a collective desire to improve the way in which they work collaboratively to tackle ASB building on existing strong practice and procedure. Subsequently representatives from the Council, Police and Registered Providers met and have formed a working group to look at ways in which this could be achieved. This included work to identify how this is approached in other areas of the region/country. This horizon scanning revealed that there are many different systems in place, the ownership/status of what was once “council housing” varies significantly and there is certainly not a one size fits all approach. The process also highlighted that all partners categorise and record ASB slightly differently making a clear understanding of the exact nature and scale of the problem difficult.
- 1.2 Subsequently the working group initiated two but related pieces of work to progress this collective desire to improve the way in which we work. The first was to improve the way in which ASB data is reported to the Walsall Intelligence Network (WIN) and to attempt to look to introduce across the borough standard categories for recording ASB. The second to take place after this work was underway will be to select an area of the borough to trial and develop a new more joined up and consistent approach to tackling ASB. It is important to note that from the outset it was recognised that this process should build on and refine existing good practice recognising the strong partnership working already taking place.
- 1.3 An update will now be provided on each of these areas.

2.0 ASB Data

- 2.1 Initial work on ASB categories highlighted a need to improve and standardise the way in which data is reported into the WIN. This would allow all data to be collectively mapped and reduce the need for extensive data cleansing each month. It was recognised that if we are to improve the way in which ASB is tackled we need first to ensure that we are clear on the nature and scale of the problem. It was also clear that different partners used different categories to describe the ASB that was reported to them and as such that it was difficult to gain a clear understanding of the exact nature of reports.
- 2.2 At the outset real progress was made in agreeing a common set of ASB categories that would mean all partners recording ASB would in effect describe it in the same way, categories which were to be based on the RESPECT categories broadly adopted by Registered Providers across the borough. All partners reported that they were able to utilise these categories either by changing their electronic recording systems or by undertaking a manual conversion at the time the data was reported to the WIN. Unfortunately however the ability of one of the key partners to manually recode their data has due to resource issues been significantly reduced. This likely means that they will be unable to adopt the new categories as initially agreed. A second partner has now also said that whilst they can adopt the categories a longer than anticipated

lead in time will be required. This has to a certain extent raised questions about the validity of the partial adoption of the new categories and the benefits this will bring. It has been suggested however that they should be adopted by those agencies that are able to do so.

- 2.3 Although logistics have prevented the adoption of a common coding framework referred to above, considerable work has been done by the WIN with the support of the working group to fundamentally shift the way in which we share data around ASB. The WIN through the adoption and use of an agreed data template and following extensive work to resolve geographic and other data cleansing issues can now map ASB data from a single data source which results in an overall richer and more detailed picture. As such rather than writing separately about each individual data set that has been submitted, the analyst can analyse and consider this in its entirety.
- 2.4 Effectively they are now writing up issues at addresses regardless of the agency where issues have been reported to, and will be more readily able to identify a list of challenging localities. We will see write ups by street i.e. 'during this tasking period these are the key streets where ASB is occurring in a particular Area Partnership, these are the kind of issues being experienced and these agencies are receiving the demand'. The WIN have set a threshold for what is reported based on number of incidences per tasking period, which may differ by Area Partnership and they will also look to consider if issues are ongoing or newly presented.
- 2.5 This significant change in the way in which, as a partnership, we collect and map ASB data and the subsequent analysis this supports is fundamental to adoption of a standardised approach based around evidence based problem solving. It will allow increasingly scarce resources to be directed where they are most needed and will have the greatest potential impact for our communities.

3.0 ASB Trial – More Coordinated Way of Working

- 3.1 To progress the second piece of work relating to trialling an approach that will lead to a more coordinated way of working to tackle ASB a proposal was prepared and subsequently agreed by the working group when in met in late November 2013. The proposal reflected the fact we are attempting to build on existing good practice that has seen year on year reductions in reported ASB and that we also did not want to duplicate existing partner tasking processes.
- 3.2 The proposal was discussed at the meeting and it was recommended that the trial take the following format.
 - Trial to be undertaken on an Area Partnership basis to utilise and avoid duplication of existing structures. It is suggested that one or two neighbouring areas be selected in the first instance. Existing good practice will be taken and further developed where appropriate to do so.
 - An existing protocol between whg and the Council that determines which agency will lead on a specific issue dependant on tenure of perpetrator and complainant will be developed to cover all Registered Providers. This will include the referral process between agencies and an agreement that which ever agency receives the call for service will take ownership for making the referral and giving

appropriate advice. This should provide consistency of service to the customer at initial point of contact and ensure they are not passed between agencies.

- Agreed protocol(s) will be developed to give level of consistency at a borough level to our approach to warning letters, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's) and other forms of intervention. This for example will include a consistent way of recording this activity and the pro active monitoring of ABC's. These protocols will be incorporated into a borough ASB Guidance Manual and will include links to the Vulnerability Forum and Troubled Families agenda.
- Improved ASB data reported through and analysed by the WIN to be used to support on going activity and identify entrenched/emerging ASB issues to be targeted by the process.
- The trial will incorporate a range of measure to proactively and reactively deal with issues that emerge, taking best practice from across the respective Area Partnerships and applying this more uniformly across the borough.
- The development of a borough wide ASB Service Standard that sets out to our communities what they can expect when reporting ASB. It has been suggested that this could at the appropriate time include the forthcoming "Community Trigger"
- The development of a clear communication plan to support the work.

3.4 It is recognised from the outset that partners all have their own internal procedures and protocols for dealing with ASB complaints and that this process will require the support of all parties involved. This process is designed to build on and further improve existing good practice and ultimately improve the service provided collectively to the communities of Walsall. The aim will be to provide a consistent level of service to a customer regardless of the point at which a referral is initially made and to improve the way agencies work collectively to deal with this community priority.

3.5 Since the above proposal was agreed the working group have met a number of times to progress the work. At the time of writing we are able to report the following progress.

- A Terms of Reference for the trial has been developed and is awaiting final sign off.
- Work to extend the previously agreed referral protocol with whg is well under way with similar provisions to be accepted by key Registered Providers. This will mean that regardless of the partner a customer initially contacts they will receive consistent advice and the call taker will take ownership of the report. The referral will then be made in a standard format to the appropriate agency either by the initial call taker or in the case of the police (where initial calls are taken centrally) when it is picked up by the neighbourhood team. Discussions are already taking place about the training and call taker script development that will be required to embed this within partner organisations to ensure a consistent approach.
- To the support the above drive towards consistency a borough Manual of Guidance around ASB is being developed and an initial draft has been prepared. This sets out a framework of common practices and procedures around the various forms of intervention that can be implemented to tackle ASB. It is intended that this will guide any practitioner on the approach adopted in Walsall for example around Warning Letters, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and issues relating to vulnerability and the Troubled Families agenda. In essence the

protocol referred to above determines the agency which will lead on a specific issue and the Manual of Guidance will ensure consistency in the approach taken. This will be a live document that will be updated as the new ASB Tools and Powers become available and will identify best practice to be shared across the borough. The working group have commented on the draft and it is in the process of being amended to more accurately reflect the procedures followed by Registered Providers.

- Whilst the above are practitioner based an ASB Service Standard for the borough is to be developed and publicised. This will be a public facing document that will detail what a customer reporting ASB in Walsall can expect and outline the service they receive. All partners have agreed this approach and a number of examples are under consideration. This will be further developed when the protocols and procedures that support this work are nearer completion. As outlined Consideration is also being given to including forthcoming Community Trigger in this document as a means of publicising this openly transparent approach.
 - The approach referred to above with the agreement of Area Manager colleagues is to be trialled in two identified Area Partnerships through a structure of regular confidential meetings. These meetings will utilise the improved tasking data to identify locations and cases that require either a proactive or reactive partner response. The protocols and procedures will then be used as the basis for a consistent and evidence based approach with identified leads and agreed actions that are tracked and updated. The Area Partnerships identified are Walsall South and Aldridge, Streetly, Pheasey & Walsall Wood.
 - When the project is nearer to full implementation a communication plan will be developed, albeit targeted communication has already taken place.
- 3.6 It is also recognised that the process will need to remain live to reflect the forthcoming new tools and powers contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Bill 2013-14 which are expected to become law in late summer 2014. The bill is designed to ensure that professionals have effective tools and powers that are quick, practical and easy to use, act as real deterrents to perpetrators of ASB and provide better protection for victims and communities. In order to do so the bill replaces the 19 current and often complex powers with six simpler and more flexible ones.
- 3.7 In addition by seeking to provide a more consistent approach to the way in which agencies work together to tackle ASB across the borough and improve the service collectively provided to the communities of Walsall the process will also explore opportunities for savings/efficiencies in order to provide the best service at least cost. Furthermore any resulting reduction in demand for service as the result of a more effective approach will reduce the collective cost across all partners who work to tackle and reduce ASB.

4.0 Evaluation and Monitoring

- 4.1 Clearly for any trial to be deemed a success its design needs to include mechanisms for effective monitoring and evaluation. Whilst it is recognised that like crime figures reported ASB can be impacted upon by a wide range of factors it is anticipated that monitoring and evaluation of the project will be undertaken by the following:

- The use of data collected by the WIN to record and monitor the level of ASB reported, prior to and during the trial. This to include the use of control charts and an analysis of repeat calls for service in order to pick up entrenched/long standing issues.
 - Customer surveys/interaction to determine the level of satisfaction they feel in respect of the service they received.
 - Improved recording, sharing and mapping of ASB Data
- 4.2** Following evaluation and any appropriate amendments it is anticipated the approach will be rolled out on a borough wide basis.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1** There is still considerable work to be done around the finalisation of protocols/procedures and the development of scripts/training for front line officers. The suggested timeline is as follows.

February – Protocols/procedures to be finalised (subject to comments made at the working group meeting) and agreed.

March – procedures to be embedded within partner working practices, scripts developed and staff trained accordingly.

April – Anticipated trial to begin.

- 5.2** It is worth noting that progress has already been made and some of the proposals are being implemented by way of what is in effect a phased approach. These include the fundamental shift in the way in which ASB data is now shared and analysed and the regular scheduling of Confidential Meetings in Aldridge, Streetly, Pheasey & Walsall Wood.

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