

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL
DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2009

RE: ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Purpose

To inform Members of progress to date with the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group.

Background

The Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel appointed an Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group (ASBWG) at its meeting on 10 June 2008 and approved terms of reference for the working group on 29 July 2008. Since then progress with the working group has continued.

The purpose of this report is to summarise all working group activity to date for the Panel's information.

Report

At the time of writing this report the working group has held twelve separate meetings, and has two further meetings in the diary, to consider a wide range of anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues. The following is a meeting by meeting commentary of each of the working groups meetings.

22 July 2008 – First Meeting

The first meeting of the working group where Members discussed the ASB topics and drafted their terms of reference for reporting to the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 29 July 2008. The working group recognised early on that expert input would be required to advise them on complex issues. Therefore the working group decided to seek co-opted advisors from West Midlands Police, Local Registered Social Landlord, Children's Services and Health.

28 August 2008 – Community Representatives

Members recognised that they needed to gain an understanding of ASB in the borough to assist their understanding of the problems that were taking place in the borough. To this end a meeting took place with a range of grass roots community representatives at Blakenall Village Centre. The working group not only learnt a lot about the range of problems experienced in Walsall but also about good work that was taking place across the borough that was tackling ASB, for example, the Young Persons Information Centre at Blakenall.

2 September 2008 – Young Persons Information Centre, Blakenall

Following the meeting with community representatives and hearing about the Young Advisor programme Members followed up an interesting area and visited the Young

Persons Information Centre (YPIC) in Blakenall to find out more about the valuable work undertaken by this popular service. The working group were really impressed with all the work undertaken by the YPIC, in particular the Young Advisors scheme which engages and trains local young people. The YPIC its services and the Young Advisor scheme were considered to be an example of best practice that should be considered for the whole of Walsall.

15 September – Neighbourhood Watch Chairs, Green Lane Police Station

Members heard about a large range of preventive and community based work that the Police were involved in at the current time and held a discussion with Neighbourhood Watch Chairs which highlighted the following issues: problems with respect, responsibility and community; issues and campaigns needed to be targeted at whole families rather than just young people/adults; 'Me, myself and I' programme by Crimestoppers; people were reluctant to intervene in minor problems due to provoking a violent response; housing associations did not enforce their tenancy agreements consistently.

18 September – ASB Member Training Event

From the outset of the working group's investigations Member's had identified a potential knowledge gap for themselves and other Members in understanding what ASB actually was and the most appropriate ways of dealing with different types of ASB.

The event was hosted by Safer Walsall Partnership and was well attended by nineteen Members.

6 October 2008 – Meeting with Co-opted Advisors

The working group met with their co-opted advisors for the first time, namely:

Irene Molyneux – Walsall Housing Group
Sergeant Kelvin Rowlands – West Midlands Police
Neeraj Malhotra – NHS Walsall
Wendy Thompson – Youth Offending Service
Andy Grovesnor – Chair, Safer Walsall Partnership/West Midlands Fire Service

The working group discussed the next steps of the investigations with their co-opted advisors and agreed to look further into:

- Registered Social Landlords and how they tackled ASB amongst tenants
- Drugs and needle exchanges
- Alcohol
- Young Peoples Services 5-13 years old
- Communication of ASB issues

The potential for a good practice visit to another Council was discussed and Manchester City Council was identified as having a good reputation for how it addressed ASB.

9 October 2008 – Borough Tasking Group

Members observed a meeting of the Borough Tasking Group which considered a wide range of issues, including ASB, and agreed a multi-agency approach to solving problems.

21 October 2008 – Councillor's Review

The Councillor Members of the working group met and discussed ASB related issues and planned how they wanted to consider them. A key idea from this meeting was the development of a toolkit to assist Councillors in how to report ASB.

4 December 2008 – Walsall Housing Partnership

The Chair of the Working Group met with Walsall Housing Partnership at Beechdale to highlight the that that the working group was undertaking and raise awareness amongst registered social landlords that the working group wanted to consider their approaches to tenant ASB.

7 January 2009 – Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)

Member's met with a wide range of the boroughs RSL's and had a very interesting discussion about a wide range of issues. Of particular interest were the problems that RSL's experienced with trying to identify potential problem tenants before providing individuals with tenancies.

13 January 2009 – Young Persons ASB in Pheasy Park Farm Ward, Collingwood Centre

Following receipt of information at the Member training event that Collingwood Drive had the highest reported levels of ASB in the borough for August 2008, the working group looked into this matter further. It was established that the problem was related to young people. Therefore the working group employed the services of the Young Advisors from the YPIC in an attempt to properly engage the young people from this area. The young advisors were unable to fully engage with the range of young people in the area but were able to report young people smoking cannabis and a lack of youth provision for the area.

26 January 2009 – Good Practice Visit to Manchester City Council

The working group visited Manchester City Council who have a national reputation for their ASB work.

Members heard about a whole host of issues but of particular interest was:

- The common application form and computer database used by all RSL's
- An area based organised approach with identified contacts for all services in each area
- ASB Team 100% funded through fees and grants
- Trailblazers program of concentrated ASB activity

27 January 2009 – Respect Landlords Forum

WHG highlighted the services that they offer and these included mediation, Visual evidence for Victims and Demoted tenancies. Of specific interest here was the impact that mediation could have on solving ASB problems at the outset. Members were impressed with the potential impact this service could have in Walsall. Mediators contact both parties within 2 days and the aim is to have the cases resolved within 14 days.

The cost of obtaining an Anti Social Behaviour Order was discussed with the cost being between £4-6K, the landlords have to absorb this costing themselves.

Policies and procedures for exchange of information was discussed and a draft protocol has been submitted to the RSL's, however, it requires some amendments as some of the legislation is not applicable. Once completed the RSL's will sign it off at a local level.

Next Meetings

9 February 2009 – Young Peoples Services 5-13 years old

During their investigations Members have picked up on a perception that there is a lack of provision for young people aged 5-13 (post-Surestart and pre-Youth Service) and that this could affect levels of ASB. To this end Members met with a range of youth providers to discuss the issue. The outcome of this meeting will be reported verbally at the meeting as this report precedes the meeting.

26 February 2009 – Drugs

Early on in their investigations the working group identified problems with drug abuse and shooting galleries in some parts of the borough. This meeting will consider this area in more detail and help the working group to identify potential improvements to current activity.

Conclusion

The working group has been incredibly active during its short life span and has considered a whole range of interesting issues. There is much good work taking place throughout the borough and there are also areas that could be improved. These areas will be identified and described in the working groups final report.

Following the conclusion of the working group's evidence gathering meetings the working group will begin to draft its final report and recommendations. It is currently anticipated that this report will be presented to the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 2 April 2009.

Recommendations

That progress to date with the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group be noted.

Author

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