

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel
DATE: 10 January 2013
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WARD(S): All
PORTFOLIO: Councillor Munawar – Commissioner for Community and Leisure

PART I

FOR COMMENT

REDUCING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN SLOUGH

1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Panel with information on the work of the Community Safety Team and partners in tackling anti-social behaviour in Slough.

2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Panel scrutinise the work of the Community Safety Team and partners in tackling anti-social behaviour in Slough.

3. **Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities**

- Safer Communities

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications associated with the report.

(b) **Risk Management**

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
That Members scrutinise the work of the Community Safety Team and partners in tackling anti-social behaviour.	No risks	n/a

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Those who are from minority ethnic groups, those with learning and physical disabilities and those with mental health problems are all at a disproportionately greater risk of becoming victims of anti-social behaviour.

(e) Workforce

This report describes changes that have been made to the work-force following the transfer of the local authority's housing stock.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) remains a priority in Slough and is highlighted in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Safer Slough Partnership priorities.

5.2 The Home Office definition of ASB is “any aggressive, intimidating or destructive activity that damages or destroys another person's quality of life”. This is a deliberately broad definition as antisocial behaviour is subjective and may vary from person to person and community to community.

Current legislation – tools and powers

5.3 a) the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and Parenting Orders;

b) the Criminal Justice Act 2001 introduced Fixed Penalty Notices to tackle drinking in certain public places, and made kerb crawling an arrestable offence;

c) the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 reinforced these powers and introduced new provisions including crack house closure powers, ensuring landlords take responsibility for tackling ASB, making Parenting Orders more widely available, and the dispersal of groups;

d) other legislation used to tackle enviro type ASB such as dog fouling, noise nuisance and fly tipping includes the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Housing Act 1996 and the Noise Act 1996.

5.4 The recently published white paper, 'Putting Victims first - more effective responses to antisocial behaviour', sets out the government's plans to introduce more effective measures to tackle antisocial behaviour. These will, when introduced, replace the tools and powers contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. At present, and potentially for the next two years, the existing toolkit remains active – this includes Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), crack house closures and dispersal orders, all of which have been used in Slough.

- 5.5 As the white paper states: “We know what victims of antisocial behaviour want. First and foremost, they want the behaviour to stop, and the perpetrators to be punished for what they’ve done. They want the authorities to take their problem seriously, to understand the impact on their lives and to protect them from further harm. They want the issue dealt with swiftly and they don't want it to happen again.”

Casework

- 5.6 Tackling antisocial behaviour is not just about enforcement activity; it is also about engagement with, and support for, victims, working with perpetrators to support them in changing their behaviour, working with partners on long term problem solving, and adhering to the ASB service standards when dealing with casework (see appendix A). The ASB Service Standards set out the service that residents can expect, which includes timescales for contact.
- 5.7 Risk assessments are carried out for each case and multiagency case conferences are held where required. At these meetings, the case is carefully considered along with the recorded evidence and an action plan is put together. This may include home visits by a housing officer, police officer and/or ASB Victims Champion, and will be followed up with ongoing support along with the offer of mediation. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) or Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) may be considered. There is also an Early Response Hub in Childrens’ Services which works with families where young people are offending or are at risk of offending or are on the Social Services register. Slough holds monthly ASB Case Review meetings to look at all ongoing cases and flag up new ones (please see appendix B for case studies).

Location-based ASB

- 5.8 Cases where a specific location is a problem may be passed to the Community Safety Team to coordinate resolution, for example, gating an alleyway, improving lighting, or relocating benches where groups have been gathering. There are three Community Project Officers who explore and implement these long term solutions as well as the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team comprising Environmental Health Officers, Enforcement Officers and Community Wardens who tackle the immediate ‘envirocrime’ issues including dog fouling, graffiti, flyipping, noise nuisance and rats. Community projects aim to improve the appearance and ‘feel’ of an area and to help instil community confidence and reduce fear of crime. Tools and powers to tackle the immediate problem can be used whilst longer term solutions are implemented, including dispersal orders to alleviate the problem of groups gathering and causing ASB, and Designated Public Place Orders to tackle street drinking.

Gating Projects

- 5.9 The Community Safety team receives funding for gating schemes across the borough. The purpose of these gating schemes is to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour and fear of crime, and to reassure local communities who have been suffering from crime and ASB in their neighbourhoods. The Community Project Officers have been carrying out gating projects since 2008. Areas for gating have been identified by residents, Councillors and resident forums such as the Neighbourhood Action Groups.

- 5.9 Gating continues to be a priority for the Community Project Officers and a new policy is currently being produced to help further streamline the current process.
- 5.10 In brief, if there is evidence of crime and/or anti-social behaviour in an alleyway and residents would like it gated off, the Community Project Officers will undertake further investigation and consultation with a view to the area being gated.
- 5.11 28 gating schemes were completed between April 2008 and March 2012, incorporating 77 gates and offering enhanced security to 627 properties. Residents have reported feeling safer in their homes and neighbourhoods once the gates have been installed.
- 5.12 A further 63 locations are currently under consideration and 14 schemes have been completed since April 2012.

Housing Service and Community Safety

- 5.13 The transfer of the local authority's housing stock in April 2011 resulted in the creation of an ASB Escalation Officer post within the Community Safety Team with specific responsibility for dealing with Council tenants who cause ongoing ASB.
- 5.14 Since April 2011 all low-level ASB caused by Council tenants has been dealt with by Neighbourhood Housing Officers (NHOs) with the more serious and challenging cases being passed to the ASB Escalation Officer for possible court action. The Community Safety Manager is currently looking to carry out a needs assessment to see if this system is working well and fit for purpose or if additional resources are required. An audit of ASB casework has recently been undertaken and will be used to further policies, procedures and working practice.
- 5.15 The NHOs and ASB Escalation Officer are responsible for tackling ASB caused by Council tenants and properties (rather than multi-tenure) because they are funded from the Housing Revenue Account. ASB involving private homeowners and those who rent from private landlords or registered social landlords is dealt with by the Community Safety Team's ASB caseworker and ASB Victims Champion.

The Neighbourhood Enforcement Team

- 5.16 The Neighbourhood Enforcement Team is responsible for enforcing the law in relation to nuisance, pests and enviro-crime including fly tipping, littering, graffiti and dog fouling. The Team also gathers and reports intelligence regarding crime and anti-social behaviour. The Neighbourhood Enforcement Service is provided by Environmental Health, Enforcement Officers and Community Wardens and has a very significant role to play in reducing crime and fear of crime in partnership with the police and the community safety team (Neighbourhood Enforcement Team enforcement statistics are attached as appendix C).

Multi-agency working and repeat victims

- 5.17 In 2007, a mother committed suicide along with her disabled daughter in Leicestershire. They had suffered ongoing targeted anti-social behaviour over a ten-year period and whilst she had reported it constantly to the Police and local authority over the years it had never been satisfactorily dealt with. It emerged that Police had not shared this information with the local authority (and vice versa) and

each call had been treated as an individual incident and not linked with previous ones – thus a pattern was not spotted.

5.18 As a result of the Pilkington case, Police forces including Thames Valley Police introduced a Repeat Victims Matrix which is used for each case to assess the level of risk. It looks at whether the ASB is targeted, how it is making the victim feel, and how often it is taking place. In cases where the case is assessed as medium or high risk, an urgent case conference is called and all relevant partners (for example, Children's Services, Community Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol Action Team) are asked to attend so that information is shared appropriately and an action plan can be put in place. This will include support for the victim via the ASB Victims Champion.

5.19 ASB Service Standards are in place to ensure that residents know what service they can expect when they contact Slough Borough Council to report ASB and these service standards are regularly monitored to ensure they are being met.

ASB surveys

5.20 Officers in the Community Safety and Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams carry out face-to-face interviews with residents across the borough on an on-going basis to find out how they feel about their neighbourhoods, and the council's response to ASB issues. Appendix D attached outlines the survey findings and shows that rubbish, litter, teenagers hanging around on the streets, and people being drunk or rowdy in public places are the issues of greatest concern. The surveys also highlight that people do not always report ASB and therefore it is important that residents are encouraged to report, particularly as any response to tackling ASB needs to be evidence-based.

5.21 Reports of ASB fell by 21% between April 2011 and March 2012.

6. **Conclusion**

6.1 Slough Borough Council, by working in partnership with Thames Valley Police and other agencies, has been successful in reducing the level of anti-social behaviour in Slough. The case studies provided show the partnership working that has been taking place to tackle ASB, victims are provided with the best possible service and perpetrators are dealt with robustly yet fairly. It is important that residents feel able to report ASB, know how to do so, and feel confident that appropriate action will be taken and this is always going to remain the focus of the Community Safety Team.

7. **Appendices attached**

- A - ASB Service Standards
- B - Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) case studies
- C - ASB enforcement action statistics
- D - ASB survey results

8. **Background Papers**

None.