

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 3rd September 2015

CONTACT OFFICERS: John Griffiths, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Ian Blake, Neighbourhood Manager Resilience & Enforcement Team, Neighbourhood Services
Jane Rose, Enforcement & ASB Transition Co-ordinator, Neighbourhood Services

(For all enquiries) 0791 709 2909

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Cllr Sohail Munawar, Commissioner for Social and Economic Inclusion
Cllr James Swindlehurst, Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal

PART I KEY DECISION

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES – ENFORCEMENT OF LITTERING, FLY-TIPPING AND ENVIRO-CRIME:

1 Purpose of Report

To provide the Panel with an update on Neighbourhood Services activities in relation to tackling littering, dog fouling and other related enviro-crime and the use of new measures laid out in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

This report covers the period Jan 2015 to date.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Panel is requested to note and give support to the contents of the report.

3 Contribution to the 5 Year Plan

3a. 5 Year Plan

The work of the team contributes to several of the Outcomes within the 5 Year Plan. These include:

- **Outcome 1:** Slough will be the premier location in the south east for businesses of all sizes to locate, start, grow and stay

- **Key action** - Ensure that all gateways to the town, prominent places and green spaces are clean and well-maintained
- **Outcome 2:** There will be more homes in the borough, with quality improving across all tenures to support our ambition for Slough
 - **Key action** - Ensure that gateways to the town, prominent places and green spaces are clean and well-maintained
- **Outcome 3:** The centre of Slough will be vibrant, providing business, living and cultural opportunities
 - **Key action** - Define and establish the centre of the town as a destination
 - **Key action** - Cultivate a vibrant town centre
 - **Key action** - Expand the evening economy
- **Outcome 4:** Slough will be one of the safest places in the Thames Valley
 - **Key action** - Build on success in tackling anti-social behaviour
- **Outcome 7:** The councils income and the value of its assets will be maximised
 - **Key action** - Ensure a revolutionised approach to household waste collection is in place
 - **Key action** - Invest in technology to enable staff to work smartly wherever they are located.

4 **Other Implications**

This area of work is being resourced from within existing budgets.

Longer term we are considering service models that could income generate or support costings for further service delivery for Slough Borough Council, whilst providing an improved service for the community and a greater positive impact in line with our priorities and the 5 Year Plan.

(a) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	Adaption of working practices to incorporate changes in the new ASB legislation	Greater emphasis on enforcement activity. Additional tools to address issues
Property	Visual improvements to areas, so improving community confidence	Greater community involvement and longer term engagement
Human Rights	The new ASB Act supports human rights	Greater transparency. Allows a more proportionate response in certain areas
Health and Safety	Risk assessments will be carried out for all activities	None

Employment Issues	None	None
Equalities Issues	None	None
Community Support	The new ASB Act puts victims at the heart of the response	Greater community involvement and longer term engagement
Communications	A communications plan will be developed for this area of work	Raise awareness of how Neighbourhood Services operate and tackle this issue Promote community responsibility and engaged enforcement
Community Safety	Project activity will assist with designing out crime and impact positively on the 'broken windows' theory, and so reduce the fear of crime	Increase the speed of response and resolution of litter concerns, including fly-tipping, graffiti removal and other safety hazards. Greater enforcement activity against perpetrators
Financial	It is anticipated that implementation of this work will be resourced from within existing budgets	Longer term we are considering service offers that could income generate for Slough Borough Council, whilst providing an improved service for the community and a greater positive impact against our priorities
Timetable for delivery	Short term focused activity	Defining and promoting our longer term working practices, both internally and externally, in consultation with key community groups and partners, so not presuming to set priorities without consultation
Project Capacity	A Project Team has been pulled together from Neighbourhood Services, Waste & Environment and Communications	Develop and improve working relationships and increased co-ordination of activities
Other	None	None

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications - All of the legislation used gives due consideration to human rights in terms of reinforcing the councils duties and that of its partners to respect and support the rights of individuals to private and family life.

(c) **Equalities Impact Assessment** - Assessments will be completed for all amended and new policies that may result from this project work.

(d) **Workforce** - Training is on-going for officers using elements of the new ASB legislation to tackle their duties under this area of work. Officers are also working flexible hours, so working when demand needs and allowing out-of-hours services when required.

5 **Neighbourhood Services – How we operate**

5.1 **Introduction**

This report details how Neighbourhood Services tackles issues relating to Sloughs street scene and its associated low level crime and anti-social behaviour. It focuses on how we as a department problem solve issues; develop multi-agency responses and long-term sustainable solutions, with a particular focus upon actions that improve the physical appearance and local environment of Slough.

5.2 **Service Model**

The team provides a **tenure blind** neighbourhood service, across 3 geographic areas co-terminus with the police. This approach allows staff to resolve issues without needing to be concerned whether the land is under public or private ownership. Staff carry out **educational and enforcement functions**. This approach gives us the opportunity for efficiencies and enhanced quality of services within neighbourhoods, be these private or council properties.

Neighbourhood Services provides a key central function tackling issues related to anti-social behaviour and enviro-crime, becoming a single point of contact within the council for its customers and partner agencies, and so taking the **operational lead** for all matters relating to ASB.

The Neighbourhood Services concept is about developing new **flexible approaches** to work. The Resilience & Enforcement Team was established to drive forward these changes focusing on tackling the most complex, difficult and long standing issues of crime, ASB and enviro-crime across the borough.

5.3 **Partnership working**

Within our model there is a strong partnership approach to tackle a wide range of issues within a neighbourhood. Poor environmental up keep takes many forms and can involve that within a dwelling, garden and street, so needing a multi-agency approach.

We have therefore developed close working relationships with the police, Waste & Environment, Street cleansing, Amey, Interserve etc. to ensure we can develop effective and sustainable solutions.

The Neighbourhoods' Team also leads on safeguarding issues, the protection of vulnerable people and the development and management of multi-agency tasking and co-ordination.

6. Neighbourhood Services – What we have achieved to date:

6.1 Dogs and Dog Fouling

The issues around dogs are not just fouling; it is a much wider issue and the Neighbourhoods Team has worked hard to address the whole spectrum of issues around dogs and dog ownership. As part of this work the team has built a network of partners including veterinary practices, welfare charities, kennelling providers, rehoming charities and the specialist officers within the police; all work with Neighbourhood Services to tackle the whole sphere of issues involved.

With this in mind, the team has therefore dealt with complaints relating to: Noise, smell, fear of attack, banned breeds, poor animal housing, welfare, breeding, selling, cruelty, suffering, fighting and distress.

Since January 2015, the team has achieved:

- Received and resolved over 80 dog-related complaints
- 34 successful AWA06 sec 20 applications in court for transfer of animal ownership
- 7 convictions with bans from keeping animals in court sentencing
- The Local Environmental Awareness on Dogs (LEAD) initiative has been rolled out working in conjunction with the Police DLO, to tackle ASB incidents with regards to owners and the dogs themselves. CPN Warnings are issued where appropriate and to date over 15 have been issued to problematic dog owners.

6.2 Littering

Our focus has been on:

- Carrying out intelligence led high profile operations with the focus being upon Slough High Street and associated areas
- The review and evaluation of the use of contracted litter enforcement officers
- Development of a preventative litter publicity campaign that can be used borough wide

The Neighbourhoods Team has engaged the services of an external contractor, as agreed at the December 2014 Scrutiny Committee, to deliver the litter enforcement pilot over a 12 month period. The project initially started in Slough High Street, and will shortly be rolled out to other areas of Slough.

This pilot project commenced on 1st June 2015 and has achieved the following results in the first 6 weeks -

- Over 480 FPNs for littering have been issued
- Over £14,000 received in paid FPNs
- FPN recovery rate 70% - above national average
- Issuing Officer issued 320 FPNs in 1st month of operation achieving a company record and an award.

Analysing the results so far, a number of issues have come to light that mean in its current guise the project is not cost neutral. A number of factors and recommendations need to be considered to bring cost neutrality, such as:

- The FPN reduced payment period needs to be withdrawn
- The FPN fines need to be increased to the legal maximum for each offence. For example the FPN for littering needs to be £80, as opposed to the current rate of £75, which is reduced to £50 if paid within the first 10 days of issue
- There needs to be a wider scope of FPN usage for a broader number of offences
- Negotiations need to be carried out with the service provider in regards to an end to end service encompassing the FPN issue, admin support, payment tracking, reminders and recovery

6.3 Enviro-crime

Enviro-crime, in the context of this document, includes all other areas of crime related to waste and anti social behaviour detrimental to the area and its environment.

The focus has been on fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and other related items including trailers and caravans, inappropriate disposal of commercial and domestic waste, accumulations of waste on public and private land, poor upkeep of public and private land, derelict sites and buildings and the unlawful storage, transport, transfer and treatment of waste and any other issue that will result in a serious and longstanding detriment to the local community, local environment and the image of the town.

Since March 2015, the Neighbourhoods Team has dealt with 258 cases, with 40% of those cases being focused on 'waste' and 20% on 'other nuisance & street scene'.

The Neighbourhoods Team has been working specifically to tackle fly-tipping and ASB in the Colnbrook area. This aligns with the risk management of flooding and the associated maintenance and clearance of the drainage ditch network in that area of Slough. This is an on-going piece of work, taking a holistic approach to tackle the problems there, including:

- Community engagement work - relationships developed with community groups, information / evidence gathered
- Door knocking in the area - to encourage the reporting of fly-tipping and raising awareness of the issue, its effect and possible sanctions
- CCTV - acorn cameras have been deployed in the area to assist in gathering further evidence
- Community day held in Morelands Avenue 26/07/15, to build community spirit, encourage reporting of further incidents and to assist with evidence gathering
- Local schools are being engaged with to deliver key educational messages to children in the area

- Waste carrier stop checks have been carried out in the vicinity to gather Intel, identify perpetrators and ensure legal compliance with waste transfer and carriage
- Waste clearance has been arranged at some locations with private land owners and other council departments who have local responsibility.

There is also an on going complex multi offender investigation into serial fly tipping which had been set alight. 8 suspects have been interviewed and upon completion of the case, it is likely that the council will be in a position to take formal legal action against those responsible.

Within the town centre area 12 shops have been served with Community Protection Notice Warning (CPNWs) Letters, including the freeholders and leaseholders. These CPNWs require those responsible to clear the land of waste, litter and refuse and to maintain it to an acceptable standard, within 14 days. All sites have been cleared, with only 1 full notice being served due to non-compliance.

The Neighbourhoods Team has carried out a number of initiatives in these areas, using all the appropriate tools and powers available to them. The team has achieved:

- 2 Prosecutions for fly-tipping
- 2 offenders cautioned for minor fly-tipping offences
- 2 offenders cautioned for Duty of Care offences
- Investigations ongoing into an £8,000 fly-tip involving Hillingdon Council and the Environment Agency
- Fly-posting investigations
- Duty of Care project in Cippenham regarding domestic waste and the correct use of bin stores

The Neighbourhoods Team has also been responsible for the clearing of three Traveller incursions on privately owned sites in the Colnbrook area, within 48 hours of notification. Large accumulations of waste were left at the sites.

More recently four Traveller incursions were also dealt with in council owned parks, with legal action being taken within 24 hours of receiving the report. In all cases the Travellers were successfully removed off council land without incident.

Much of the work in this area is carried out with partners. Such examples of joint initiatives include:

- Target hardening projects e.g. Osborne Street has been gated and fenced due to ASB, street drinkers, drugs paraphernalia and noise. Similar work has been carried out at Salt Hill Mansions
- Multi-agency Days of Action and Community Clean Ups e.g. Crime Reduction Environment Days (CRED's) - held in Chalvey, March 2015, gained extensive publicity.
- The Curve and the rear of The Observatory - waste audits and duty of care have been carried out in these areas on all relevant businesses. The team is identifying where the waste is coming from and warnings will be served to the relevant businesses. A suitable location to install a camera to capture further evidence is also being identified. Effective working relationships are being developed with the sites management.

- The role out of Operation Blue Bottle to tackle the prolific street drinkers, ASB and rough sleeping culture in the town, which is having a negative effect on local business, the environment and the image of the town.

6.4 **Neighbourhood Teams wider ASB work**

The team does not just tackle matters relating to littering and enviro-crime; a key area of focus is wider Anti-social Behaviour and low level crime, particularly focusing on issues most detrimental to our local communities and those cases which are complex and on-going.

The Neighbourhoods Team has been instrumental in:

- Obtaining a Closure Order on a premise in Tintern Rd whose residents caused neighbours years of harassment and intimidation through ASB, drug related activity and prostitution
- The boarding up of a similar property in Shaggy Calf Lane, used by squatters
- Obtaining a Criminal Behaviour Order on a significant member of our Street Drinking / begging population in Slough, leading to a Police Commendation
- Facilitating many case conferences for vulnerable victims and perpetrators of ASB, and ensuring safeguarding duties are upheld
- Serving a number of Community Protection Notices on Street Drinkers, beggars and rough sleepers
- Facilitation and development of multi-agency ASB processes e.g. Tasking and the Sex Workers Action Group.

7. **Neighbourhood Services – Areas for development**

7.1 **Dogs and dog fouling**

- Wider role out of the LEAD Initiative, to align with compulsory dog chipping enforcement in April 2016.
- Use of patrolling enforcement officers in Litter FPN pilot to carryout operations in parks and other dog walking areas at key times.
- Continue the robust approach taken in tackling issues reported that can be taken forward through further investigations and have an outcome of animal ownership bans.

7.2 **Littering**

- Further Community Clean Up days are planned.
- Roll out of the strategic publicity campaign that aligns with the wider concept of waste management and waste strategies in the borough e.g. stopping littering, encouraging recycling and ensuring correct and appropriate disposal of waste.

- Develop the current Littering Enforcement pilot into a cost neutral model and expand its scope both geographically and in relation to enforcement activity.

7.3 Enviro-crime

- On-going work focusing on fly-tipping at Colnbrook, the High Street and other areas.
- Tackle the increasing number of fly posting and fly boarding issues in the town.
- Expand the use of ASBP&CA 2014 powers to tackle the street drinking and associated ASB in the High Street areas of the borough.

7.4 Partnership working

- Development of future CRED's across the borough
- Night patrols for squatting, rough sleeping, immigration offenders and welfare checks
- Traffics check for illegal waste transfer and transport, parking fine avoiders and immigration offenders

8 Challenges

The biggest challenge the Neighbourhoods Team faces is the potential reduction to budget resources, as the council makes year on year savings.

This team works on the most challenging and complex cases that have a significant negative impact on the residents of Slough, in the form of real fear and detriment to well-being. Often those targeted are the most vulnerable in our communities; the team therefore needs to safeguard their well-being.

The Neighbourhoods Team often has an opportunity to make a real difference by acting quickly to resolve the issues in the short term and then move to take legal action for a sustainable outcome and sustainable resolution.

Any further reduction to budgetary resource will seriously diminish the effectiveness and ability of this team to respond to serious issues that ultimately blight the life's of the people of Slough.

9 Conclusion

The Neighbourhoods Team will continue its focus on the delivery of this litter project, as detailed above. The team has been successful in resolving matters in a long-term sustainable manner and will continue with this approach.

However, if the work of the Neighbourhoods team is subject to budget cuts, elements of this litter project will not be delivered.

10 Appendices Attached

Appendix 1 - Copy of presentation recently delivered to Head of Service and Portfolio Holder, on the work of the Neighbourhoods' Team to date

11 Background Papers

None