

**Environment and Housing Scrutiny Panel
Evidence Gathering Session – Strategic Enforcement
3rd December 2013 (Haringey Civic Centre)**

Session 4

Present: Cllr Bloch, Cllr Bull, Cllr McNamara (Chair) and Cllr Weber

Also in attendance: Sharon Morgan (Deputy Director of Housing Operations, Homes for Haringey) Steve Russell (Housing Improvement Manager, Haringey Council)

Key emerging issues (recommendations):

1. There were a number of liaison issues were highlighted in respect of estate policing and local partnerships with SNTs (1.10-1.14). It was recommended that:
 - Further work with the police to help develop staff continuity within local SNTs would improve liaison;
 - A more strategic approach to policing on local estates was needed to ensure that there is policing parity with areas encompassed within street patrols;
 - Reinvigoration of local SNT priority setting with local stakeholders (Councillors, police and local residents).
2. The panel requested an update on the planned estate inspection process changes and how local councillors would be involved. In addition, the panel suggested that there could be some additional developments should be considered:
 - The addition of a pre-post discussion to estate visit/inspection to improve identification and monitoring of estate issues;
 - It was suggested that local SNTs as well as Veolia Village Managers could also be invited (along with local ward Councillors) to promote a more joined up inspection approach.
3. The panel were of the view that local residents associations were a vital link to community engagement and development. It was therefore noted that in areas where local residents associations were not present, an enhanced estate inspection grouping (involving key partners) could represent the 'kernel' to such a community group and help to kick start community engagement and action in the area.

1. Homes for Haringey

- 1.1 Homes for Haringey manages about 18,000 properties in Haringey in various estate and street settings. It carries out a number of enforcement functions on local estates and the critical issue is how this enforcement work links with council run services. There are two key enforcement activities undertaken by Homes for Haringey (HfH):
 - Those conditions relating to individual tenancies
 - Social and environmental nuisance such as waste, fly tipping, ASB.
- 1.2 The panel noted that HfH had good working enforcement partnerships with a number of services including Noise Team (enforcement response) and the ASB Team. The organisation works well with these services to in support of housing management

services. In respect of ASB there are two levels of enforcement, lower orders of ASB (those that do not involve threats, violence etc) are dealt with by HfH tenancy officers. More serious cases are dealt with by the ASBAT which can offer more expertise in handling and managing such cases.

- 1.3 There is also a fraud team within HfH which aims to identify and take action against those committing tenancy fraud, those tenants who are illegally subletting their property and claiming income from this. This work has grown over the past 18 months.
- 1.4 In respect of environmental services, it was felt that there was also positive relationship where waste problems (such as dumping and clear up) were generally dealt with quickly. What was less robust, particularly in the estate setting, was identifying and taking action against those who were causing the environmental nuisance (i.e. those people dumping). Unless there was direct evidence within the rubbish itself, or where CCTV was available or had been witnessed by another resident, the probability of identifying and taking action was low. (It was also noted that whilst CCTV was available in some estates, this was by no means common to all). In respect of rubbish dumping, it was perceived that many of the offenders were not estate residents.
- 1.5 It was noted that there are a number of services involved in waste and other environmental services such as Environmental Enforcement, Veolia as well as the HfH estate services staff. It was acknowledged that perhaps in some circumstances, coordination between these services could be improved.
- 1.6 There are two main routes in for problem notifications these being:
 - Those reported by estate service staff - which can vary from daily visits to weekly visits (depending on the size of the estate). Staff monitor and assess to ensure that estates are clean and tidy etc.
 - Residents also notify of problems.
- 1.7 It was also noted that internal IT systems could also be improved to monitor and identify repeat or common 'offenders'. Could any enforcement data be supplied?
- 1.8 It was noted that incidences of ASB and other enforcement issues (such as noise, environmental dumping) are linked to tenancy rules and could in theory jeopardise this if contravened. However, this is the ultimate sanction and HfH would need to convince a court that the nature of the contravention is so serious to warrant eviction. The degree of severity of the offence will determine whether a repossession order would be granted by the court.
- 1.9 HfH use the legal service team at the Council to support such enforcement action and there is a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for this. There is also a small SLA with the ASBAT team.
- 1.10 The Metropolitan Police are clearly important partners for enforcement activity in HfH and, where priorities coincide, this partnership usually works very well. It can be more challenging to engage police where requests do not link in with local policing priorities.

- 1.11 The panel noted that on the whole, there was a good relationship between SNT and local Tenancy Management Officers. There was however, a high turnover of officers in local SNTs which presented a challenge to ongoing liaison and local partnerships. It was felt that improved staff continuity within SNTs would further encourage and develop reporting among both officers and more so residents.
- 1.12 The police are involved in the local Partnership Tasking Group as well as HfH, and this appears to work well as it helps to bring coordinated action to common problems.
- 1.13 There has also been a reluctance for police to get involved where there is perceived to be no criminality. This is not always straightforward though, a case in point being Love Lane which had major problems with criminal activity and ASB with people not resident in the estate. Local residents were too afraid to report any problems (intimidation) so outwardly to the police there appeared to be few problems. Problems on this estate are now being involved. It was noted that there is a general reluctance for residents to give reports to police which may inhibit enforcement activity.
- 1.14 It was noted that whilst police patrolled neighbouring areas, it was difficult to get police patrols within estates. It was felt that there should be a more strategic approach to policing on estates, to ensure residents were provided with the same police presence and reassurance as those encompassed within street patrols.
- 1.15 It was noted that there had been a change to the estate inspection process at which local ward councillors were invited (walkabout) with the recruitment of more specialised Quality Assurance Officers to ensure that identified work is completed. The new system will:
- Establish four Quality Assurance Officers who will:
 - Monitor client contracts (e.g. Veolia, Wing, caretaking, cleaning)
 - Lead estate walkabouts (greater consistency and more accurate specification of work required and completion)
 - Dedicated estate environmental budget for housing management
 - Increase capital funding from £250k to £500k for small / medium environmental improvements
 - Establish a mobile operative team (2 operatives and vehicle) to undertake small works (e.g. chute clearance, graffiti removal, removal of signage)
 - Estate service officers will be provided with appropriate equipment to undertake minor repairs without recourse to a more formal works order.
- 1.16 The panel requested an update on the planned estate inspection process changes and how local councillors would be involved. In addition, the panel suggested that there could be some additional developments should be considered:
- The addition of a pre-post discussion to estate visit/inspection to improve identification and monitoring of estate issues;
 - It was suggested that local SNTs as well as Veolia Village Managers could also be invited (along with local ward Councillors) to promote a more joined up inspection approach.

1.17 The panel were of the view that local residents associations were a vital link to community engagement and development. It was therefore noted that in areas where local residents associations were not present, an enhanced estate inspection grouping (involving key partners) could represent the 'kernel' to such a community group and help to kick start community engagement and action in the area.

1.18 In relation to enforcement partnerships the following issues were raised:

- Planning Service produce a spreadsheet of planning applications which are routinely sent to HfH, to identify if these affect any properties they manage and if this constitutes any breach. It would be helpful if this was in a more accessible format.
- There were potential opportunities for mutual training of enforcement teams with HfH estate officers (need to specify)

1.19 In relation to IT and enforcement the panel noted that:

- All tenancy data is recorded on OHMS (which is also used by community housing, ASBAT)
- Access to framework-i – (Sharon – I am not sure if you have access to this or not)
 - though there are data protection issues,
 - there is/ or should be a memorandum of understanding to support this use
- No public health flagging at the moment.

2. Private Sector Housing

To be completed.