



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

[No.]

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

On 10 September 2007

Report Title: **Anti Social Behaviour – Feasibility Report on Proposed Scrutiny Review**

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): N/A

Report of: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **N/A**

1. Purpose

1.1 To consider the commissioning of further work on the issue of anti social behaviour

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary)

2.1 N/A

3. Recommendations

That a further update on progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Anti Social Behaviour be submitted to the Committee by the Head of Safer Communities on the terms outlined in the report.

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4. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

4.1 Background Papers:
Haringey Safer Communities Partnership - Anti Social Behaviour Strategy
Scrutiny Review report on Anti Social Behaviour

5. Report

Introduction

- 5.1 Anti-social behaviour is any activity that impacts on other people in a negative way and, as such, its definition is based on consideration of its impact on others. The term refers to a variety of behaviour covering a range of activity that can blight the quality of community life. A legal definition of behaving in an anti-social manner is found in Section 1(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. It defines anti-social behaviour as:

'acting in an anti-social manner as a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the complainant'.

- 5.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a review on Anti Social Behaviour in 2002/3. The findings of the review were fed into the Safer Communities Partnership's Council's Anti Social Behaviour Strategy which was in the process of being developed at the time. The strategy provided the overall framework for action by the Safer Communities Partnership to address anti social behaviour and, in particular, led to the setting up of the Anti Social Behaviour Action Team (ASBAT).

Progress with the ASB Strategy

- 5.3 The ASBAT has been operational since 2003 and is considered to be performing very well by the government's Respect Task Force. In addition, the team have been nominated for team of the year in the Chartered Institute of Housing Public Sector Awards as well as the Guardian Public Sector Team of the Year award. The team deals with more serious, persistent or complex cases of anti social behaviour those which may require some type of legal action. In addition, it has a role in coordinating activity on anti social behaviour with the Police, Primary Care Trust, Mental Health Trust, Crown Prosecution Service, Victim Support, London Fire Brigade and other partners.
- 5.4 The ASBAT was originally part of the Housing Service but, following the setting up of the arms length management organisation (ALMO), is now part of the Safer Communities Unit within the Chief Executives Service. The team consists of dedicated anti social behaviour officers, a police officer and a lawyer. Reports of anti social behaviour are dealt with by the ASBAT in the first instance and since the team was established, it has dealt with a total of 5286 reports. All reporters are contacted by Assessment Officers, who check whether the report is within the scope of Anti-Social Behaviour and, if appropriate, make referrals to other agencies e.g. Noise Team, Housing Associations etc. Incidents of low level nuisance are referred onto appropriate Housing officers rather than being dealt with by the team. Housing Associations have their own mechanisms for addressing cases.
- 5.5 The ASBAT has successfully prosecuted individuals who have been involved in anti social behaviour and, in the more serious cases, have used Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and injunctions to protect residents. Some of these legal applications have banned perpetrators entering the borough for up to 5 years. ASBAT figures since 2003 include:
- 120 Closure Orders (Crack House Closures - working in partnership with the police). This includes 74 in 11 months (the highest number in London).

- 48 ASBOs. The total number currently held includes those applied for by the ASBAT, Police, and Housing Associations, plus those added to criminal justice orders by Magistrates. However, the emphasis is on prevention and ASBOs are only used as a last resort.
- 112 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)
- 114 Injunctions
- 28 Possession Orders/evictions
- 5 Dispersal Orders

5.6 The ASBAT is not the sole organisation within the Borough responsible for dealing with anti social behaviour. Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) have recently become operational in every ward within the Borough. These teams blend a return to traditional community beat policing with a commitment to a more accountable and representative police service, where local people have a say in deciding the policing priorities for their communities. They have a range of functions including a responsibility for addressing “quality of life” issues such as anti social behaviour. In addition, the Council’s Neighbourhood Management Service and Neighbourhood Wardens also have a role in addressing anti social behaviour. For example;

- Area Assemblies now enable local residents to contribute ideas on how they can improve the area where they live, including tackling anti social behaviour. They are also assigned a budget to implement changes.
- Neighbourhood Wardens have also undertaken work with young people, such as arranging diversionary activities.

5.7 Homes for Haringey also have a role and deal with low level anti social behaviour involving Council tenants. Other Registered Social Landlords have their own mechanisms for their tenants.

5.8 Crime continues to be the biggest single concern for residents according to the annual Residents Survey and anti social behaviour is a particular issue. However, the percentage of residents within Haringey that perceive anti social behaviour to be a major issue has seen a significant reduction according to the 2006/7 Local Government User Satisfaction Survey (LGUSS). It has gone down from 49% in 2003/4 to 33%. This is in line with perception levels in other local authority areas which have nearly all seen sizeable reductions.

5.9 There is nevertheless now a greater public awareness of anti social behaviour and residents are actively encouraged to report it. This has generated a higher level of public expectation than previously existed and a steady increase in workload for the ASBAT. During its first full year of operation (2004/5), the ASBAT dealt with 620 calls and had 178 cases assigned to them for action. Last year (2006/7) this had increased to 756 calls, with 217 cases assigned to the team.

5.10 However, its resources have not increased in line with this and have been unchanged since it was set up. The team is almost entirely funded by grants, many of which are due to expire in the near future. It is therefore faced with an ever increasing workload and uncertainty about the future funding of its work.

Further Input from Overview and Scrutiny

- 5.11 The proposal for a further scrutiny review to be undertaken on this issue came from the Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Safer Communities. However, since the suggestion was made, the Safer Communities Partnership has, through its Anti Social Behaviour Partnership Board, commissioned an update of the anti social behaviour strategy. This will revisit the strategy with the aim of ensuring that recent developments are taken fully into account.
- 5.12 In the light of this work being undertaken by the Anti Social Behaviour Partnership Board, commissioning another scrutiny review might entail some duplication of effort. In addition, the original review covered the issue of anti social behaviour in some detail and it may therefore constitute a more economic use of resources to revisit the original review rather than commissioning a fresh one. It is therefore recommended that a further update on progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Anti Social Behaviour be submitted to the Committee once the update of the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy has been undertaken by the Anti Social Behaviour Partnership Board. It is recommended that, in addition to reporting on progress, the report also outlines the outcomes of the updating of the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy as well as issues relating to resources committed to dealing with ASB in the Borough (relative to the increase in case load)