

**COMMUNITY SAFETY
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 19th January, 2012 at 6.00 p.m.
in Committee Room 3, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Kettle (Chairman)
Councillor Cotterill (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Attwood, Burston, Foster, Mrs D Harley, Mrs P Martin, Ryder,
Mrs Westwood, Ms Wood and Zada.

OFFICERS

Assistant Director of Corporate Resources (Customer Services),
(Directorate of Corporate Resources), (Lead Officer to the Committee),
Assistant Director of Policy and Improvement, The Drugs and Alcohol
Team Manager, (All Chief Executive's Directorate), Head of Service
(Children's Services) and Head of Housing Management – North
(Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Principal Solicitor
and Miss K Fellows, (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Superintendent S Johnson and Inspector Christopher Downen (West
Midlands Police).

27. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the
Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at
the meeting.

28. **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of
Councillor Caunt.

29. **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER**

It was reported that Councillor Mrs Westwood had been appointed as
substitute Member for Councillor Caunt for this meeting of the Committee
only.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 3rd November, 2011, be approved as a correct record and signed.

31. PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this Agenda item.

32. CONSIDERATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY) REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE PETITIONS OFFICER.

No Petitions had been referred to the Committee.

33. DUDLEY BOROUGH ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REVIEW

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted updating Members on the review of the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Service and seeking views as part of the consultation process.

In presenting the report submitted the Head of Housing Management – North specifically referred to the driving factors behind the need to carry out a comprehensive review of the service, the Lean Systems thinking methodology that had been utilised when carrying out the review and the objectives set for the review.

The Head of Housing Management – North also referred to the review findings and the work that had commenced on re-designing processes and procedures that were intended to address the findings of the review.

Appendix A to the report submitted was referred to which detailed the outcomes from consultation on the Council's review of anti social behaviour.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted Members asked questions, raised concerns and made suggestions.

In responding to Members' questions the Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager and the Head of Housing – North reported that:-

The Anti Social Behaviour Unit in the Community Safety Team had six members of staff with a proposal that a further member be transferred from the Council's Private Sector Housing section and that each member of staff was responsible for approximately forty cases, however this figure did fluctuate.

It was stated that there was no specific budget for anti social behaviour with the above posts being funded through the Community Safety Team budget.

That the information within the Housing casework system was not as robust as the Head of Housing Management – North would wish it to be and that cases of anti social behaviour often required wider involvement, with the need to build case plans which would require different levels and tiers of involvement and that partnerships with other agencies and service providers, would respond in relation to anti social behaviour issues.

That other tenancy problems would be investigated when dealing with responses to anti social behaviour.

Members also referred to problems with diary sheets and welcomed the report, and the acknowledgment contained therein that diary sheets were the most complained about part of the process.

It was further reported that a training needs analysis would be undertaken in relation to the provision of staff training in order to establish whether additional training was required.

Regarding the development of a case plan which would identify most of the anti social behaviour issues and in relation to service standards for initial complaints, in relation to urgent cases the Council's response would be provided the following working day and that in relation to standard cases a response would be provided within five calendar days.

It was also stated that a wider review of the Council's out of hours service was required.

In responding to further questions from Members, Inspector Downen advised that the Lean Systems methodology had been introduced as a model to identify the smoothest easiest way to resolve a problem. This saved money and time as cases could be tracked as the Lean Systems application also detailed what happened in an area as a result of which a bespoke service could be offered to each individual.

Inspector Downen also advised that in order to solve problems the case plan process would identify issues and the most appropriate resolution.

The Head of Housing Management – North responded to further questions, stating that all remedies in order to resolve a problem as quickly as possible would be examined, as it was important that the correct solution was found for each individual case and that those cases that required legal enforcement action would receive it.

Referring to the case plan process Inspector Downen advised that at the initial investigation stage the type of case would be identified and the relevant partner approached to deal with the problem.

Inspector Downen also stated that victims of anti social behaviour would not always automatically contact the Police.

The Head of Housing Management – North also reported that the impact that anti social behaviour had on an individual may determine the course of action taken advising that there were two routes that could be taken, either on a parallel or alternative basis, should a criminal offence have been committed with action being taken by the Council to address the nuisance caused by the criminal activity and also by the Police to prosecute for the criminal offence itself, with each case being examined on its own merits.

Superintendent Johnson reported that dealing with anti social behaviour was a priority for the police force and that it featured prominently in the Local Policing Strategy Assessment.

He also stated that anti social behaviour was dealt with in exactly the same way as a crime with all calls being recorded, an assessment being made with immediate responses to those cases where a crime was in progress.

He reported that satisfaction rates in relation to anti social behaviour were lower than those in respect of crime, with anti social behaviour cases being more protracted. He referred to the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy Group work whereby a number of actions were worked through in order to try and improve matters. He also referred to the risk matrix that influenced the response to reported cases of anti social behaviour.

He indicated that an anti social behaviour offender often generated multiple offences and all offences would be dealt with at the same time and that the police worked closely with colleagues in the Council, with information and progress reports being shared with them.

Inspector Downen stated that options were being explored by the Police regarding sharing information by way of inputting information onto a shared database with the Council in relation to anti social behaviour.

In responding to a Member's question as to how the police deal with cases of anti social behaviour, Superintendent Johnson advised that police officers had operational discretion, however there were three courses of action available which were arrest, for example should a public order offence be committed or criminal damage had been caused, a community resolution whereby a balance would be struck between criminalising someone or taking a robust approach should the victim agree with the course of action proposed by the police and to take no further action.

The Head of Housing Management – North also stated that those who wished to report incidents of anti social behaviour could do so by telephoning Dudley Council Plus and their cases would be referred to the most appropriate partner to deal with.

The Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager referred to the Council's Joint Activity Group which shared information with partners, stating that actions would be carried out as a result of the meetings.

The Head of Housing Management – North advised that enforcement action was taken on a number of occasions in relation to the breach of tenancy conditions for nuisance and anti social behaviour, stating that early intervention in relation to such cases was essential in order that mediation could be considered as an option, as this had proved successful in resolving disputes nationally.

The Principal Solicitor advised that the Legal Department received approximately thirty five to forty cases from the Housing Division of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services each month. He also outlined the various enforcement actions that were implemented and the approximate numbers of cases in relation to the various enforcement actions.

The Head of Housing Management – North stated that should there be multiple reasons to recover a tenancy enforcement action would be taken in relation to all breaches of tenancy conditions.

He also stated that once a council tenant had been evicted the Council was not under a duty to re-house that tenant however the Council would have no control in relation to where evicted tenants chose to live in the future.

The Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager confirmed that each member of staff within the anti social behaviour unit of the Community Safety Team, were dealing with approximately forty cases and she also advised that the unit was co-located at Brierley Hill Police Station.

The Head of Housing Management – North advised that as part of the case plan it may be appropriate for the Ward Councillors to be invited to attend case conference meetings.

Members requested that a further report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee following the implementation of the actions outlined in the review and that the report contain relevant case studies.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted on the review of the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Service, be noted.
- (2) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the Anti Social Behaviour Service re-design.

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34. TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO REQUEST THE ATTENDANCE OF ANY SAFE AND SOUND BOARD MEMBER OR THE PROVISION OF ANY INFORMATION AT A FUTURE MEETING IN RELATION TO THE COMMUNITY SAFETY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME.

Following discussion on this issue it was:

RESOLVED

That the attendance of any Safe and Sound Board Member or the provision of any information at the next meeting be not pursued.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm.

CHAIRMAN