

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Sustainable Barnsley Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday 10 October 2023
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Barnard, Bellamy, Bowser, Christmas, Clarke, Denton, Hayward, Hunt, McCarthy, Murray, O'Donoghue, Osborne, Sheard, Tattersall and A. Wray

8 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Sheard declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to being a Governor at Barnsley Hospital and Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Communities

Councillor Tattersall declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to being a member of the Barnsley Hospital Charity Trust and a member of the Berneslai Homes Board

Councillor Osborne declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to being a member of the Berneslai Homes Board

9 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 were received.

10 Antisocial Behaviour in Barnsley

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Phil Hollingsworth, Service Director Communities, BMBC
- Paul Brannan, Head of Safer Barnsley, BMBC
- Jane Brannan, Group Leader, Housing & Community Safety, BMBC
- Councillor Wendy Cain, Cabinet Spokesperson Public Health and Communities, BMBC
- Anna Hartley, Executive Director, Public Health and Communities
- Sajeda Khalifa, Litigation Team Leader, BMBC
- Chief Superintendent Simon Wanless, Barnsley District Commander, South Yorkshire Police

Councillor Wendy Cain provided the Committee with a brief introduction to the report, highlighting that Anti-Social Behaviour was an issue and a concern for all elected members in their wards. Barnsley had a good strong partnership strength for a joint drive and commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour in the Communities.

In the ensuing discussion and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following matters were highlighted:-

Concerns around the lack of follow up information being provided to residents and Members following major incidents were raised. In response members were informed that there were numerous engagement opportunities for people to talk to the Service and Police, including PACT Meetings where people could raise local issues. It was acknowledged that some Members felt that issues had not been dealt with as effectively as they could have been and that there could sometimes be a lapse in feeding back what actions and progress had been taken and there was a need to feed this back to representatives from these meetings. It was acknowledged that this was more difficult in more complex and serious cases but that this would be looked into and addressed in order to rectify the issue.

In regard to litter and dog fouling enforcement powers - Members were informed that District were contracted by the Council to carry out a core service of enforcement for litter and dog fouling offences across the Borough. They had received in excess of 3,000 fines so far this financial year which showed a significant amount of action had been taken across the Borough. Wardens dealt with more in-depth investigations such as fly tipping. A quarterly report was circulated to Members detailing enforcement work across the Borough and the possibility of sharing ward specific data would be welcomed by Members and could be considered within a future newsletter. It was acknowledged that future communications of prosecution success stories and work ongoing in the Borough needed to be looked into and improved, but that the team need to balance promotional work with ongoing operational pressures.

The diagrams contained within the report demonstrated the different categories of anti-social behaviour that had been reported to the Council and the South Yorkshire Police. It was reported that they had not changed significantly and there was no particular draw of resources to one main issue or area of complaint.

Berneslai Homes had recently been awarded powers to prepare and serve Community Protection Warnings where tenancy actions fail to sufficiently address anti-social behaviour. As these are a recent addition to Berneslai Homes powers it is important that initial quality checks are conducted by the Council to ensure consistency. An interim 6 month check and balance of quality was taking place to ensure the warnings issued were in line with legislation. This would also ensure that the warnings were not being used disproportionately resulting in the value of them being lost. Anyone issued with a Community Protection Notice are able to appeal to the Magistrates' Court so making the additional quality checks reduces the risk of any surprises.

Parking enforcement is a Core Service operated through the Highways Team. Concerns were raised around the lack of parking enforcement in the outlying areas of the Borough that were once served by contracts procured through some of the Area Councils. It was reported that in some areas of the Borough the parking was becoming out of control with people parking on pavements. It was reported that parking enforcement would remain under Highways control.

In relation to communications to residents around anti-Social behaviour, Members were informed that the Council's social media and online platform and South Yorkshire Police's social media and online platform were utilised to get the messages out to people.

In relation to tackling cannabis use in the Borough, it was recognised that under the Berneslai Homes Tenancy Agreement this was a breach in tenancy. It was acknowledged that to evict someone from a Berneslai Homes property would not solve the problem of cannabis use as they would probably remain living in the Borough but in a sub-standard quality property. In response to the issue of cannabis use, Members were informed that the Police dealt with this issue at both local level as well as commercial sized growth levels as it was well publicised that there were links between cannabis use and poor educational choices that children make. One of the main aims from South Yorkshire Police was to tackle the supply issue from the growers alongside drugs partnerships.

Anti-social behaviour is about the impact and behaviour someone displays and how that affects someone else and if that is in a negative way then the issue has to be addressed. Taking possession back of a council property due to anti-social behaviour was not a straightforward process. It would involve numerous checks and balance tests to ensure that everything had been done to resolve the issue before taking a house away from someone.

South Yorkshire Police welcomed intelligence from members of the public reporting incidents of ASB. It was noted that, whilst it was frustrating to members of the public that nothing seemed to be being done on the back of this information, they were reassured that all intelligence was collated in order to build a case and a bigger picture in order to formulate patrol plans and move forward with prosecutions. It was reported that most of the critical work carried out was preventative in order to stop something getting out of hand and becoming an issue.

Quad and off-road biking was a significant problem and the second highest reported anti-social behaviour issue in the Borough. The South Yorkshire Police Tactical Response Offroad Team were tasked with tackling this crime. Intelligence gathering as to where these people lived and stored these bikes was the key to stopping this behaviour and much safer than trying to chase down and apprehend offenders out in public.

Funding from Home Office Trailblazer monies had created Operation Civitas which had identified a number of hotspot areas of anti-social behaviour in the Borough to be targeted by uniformed foot patrols which had positively impacted on crime and anti-social behaviour. The funding had also enabled partners to become better equipped to identify and detect the more challenging aspect of anti-social behaviour of off-road biking by improving the equipment required to pursue and monitor. Funding was in place to the end of the 2024/25 financial year to continue Operation Civitas.

Reports of anti-social behaviour had shown a consistent downward trajectory over the past few years. The trends of anti-social behaviour issues showing in the report were based on volumes recorded and, for example, one off road bike could generate multiple reports of anti-social behaviour which could skew some of the figures.

Members expressed their frustration at being able to report incidents of anti-social behaviour in a timely manner via the 101 phone line. It was reported that there was often a significant time to wait to get through or the phone call being automatically cut off. Apologies were made as there had been some technical issues with the telephony and also to the length of time being made to wait as the system had seen

recent improvements in wait times. Reporting incidents of anti-social behaviour online was no longer anonymous which was seen as a negative move resulting in people feeling reluctant to report incidents. The Crimestoppers site remained anonymous but was not the place for reporting ASB.

Powers within Anti-Social Behaviour Legislation allows for action to be taken against parents to require them to do certain things and make them accountable in regards to their children's negative behaviours. An early intervention tool often used are Acceptable Behaviour Contracts used prior to more formal enforcement action, which sets out, with the parents present in all discussions and meetings, the consequences if the contract is not adhered to. It was reported that research had shown that fining and criminalising a child was a short-term measure and did not change criminal behaviour. It was better to educate and adjust behaviour by working with parents in order to try and prevent future negative behaviours. The consequences for parents breaching the Contract could potentially result in a Court Order and the Court would then determine the sanctions.

Members queried as to whether there was a direct link to children being put in isolation in schools and anti-social behaviour, they were informed that there was insufficient data to connect the two issues. However, it was acknowledged that following the Covid Pandemic there had been a significant increase in school absences and poor mental health in young people. This was something to be looked into in collaboration with the Early Help Team in order to carry out preventative work or interventions to tackle behaviours before they escalated. It was highlighted that not all anti-social behaviour was from young people, behaviours involving vehicles, offroad bikes and drinking were predominantly from adults.

Dangerous dogs, in particular the XL Bully Breed of dog was raised as a serious concern. It was acknowledged that the XL Bully was not a banned breed at the time of the meeting so there was little that could be done. However, it was noted that any dangerous dog, no matter what breed, would be dealt with accordingly to protect members of the public.

Barnsley has a dedicated Victim and Witness Support Team of 3 officers in operation for the whole Borough in order to provide a wraparound service for individuals to make them feel heard and important. In some instances where anti-social behaviour is serious, persistent or having a detrimental effect on a person's quality of life, regardless of the behaviour types, a Victim Support Officer would be allocated as a single point of contact for a victim or witness. A holistic assessment would be made and the type of support required would be tailored to that person's needs in order to give them the confidence to be a witness going forward to prosecution through court. A Victims Charter had been developed as to how they could expect to be dealt with in Barnsley via customer feedback to learn what could have been done differently, what had been useful and what lessons could have been learned.

The greatest challenge in dealing with anti-social behaviour was reported as being able to stop the next generation of children following in the footsteps of this generation of adults. Parents and teachers were key to educating children in how to behave and not following the same pattern of behaviours.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution, and that the report be noted;
- (ii) that officers ensure that feedback is consistent and conversations take place to keep Elected Members and members of the public updated on progress and actions taken when incidents are reported and intelligence shared;
- (iii) that officers consider publishing data to demonstrate the number of enforcement notices issued by Area Council/Ward in the next quarterly newsletter and if resources allow, publish a newsletter specific to Area Councils;
- (iv) that communication is improved around prosecution success stories and ongoing work using social media to promote work and keep the public informed which local Elected Members can help to share in communities;
- (v) that information is supplied to Members on parking enforcement activity being undertaken across the Borough;
- (vi) that there is consideration of making online reporting anonymous, as those experiencing ASB may not want to be identified;
- (vii) that work is undertaken closely with colleagues in schools, Early Help, the Youth Justice Service, TIAG, and young people themselves to understand the reasons for committing ASB as part of prevention and intervention work.

Chair