
MEETING	ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TASK GROUP
DATE	6 DECEMBER 2011
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS BURTON, DOUGLAS, HEALEY AND ORRELL

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED: That Councillor Healey be appointed as Chair of the Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

4. PRESENTATION FROM SAFER YORK PARTNERSHIP

To assist in the identification of a suitable remit for this review, the task group received a presentation on City of York Council tenancy enforcement/mediation etc. A copy of the presentation is attached to the agenda papers for this meeting.

Discussion took place around the following issues:

- The links between anti-social behaviour and criminality.
- The areas of the city where the most incidents of anti-social behaviour are taking place.
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy.
- The ways in which estate managers work with Police to address issues, and the arrangements in place for the council to meet with Registered Social Landlords. Private landlords tended to refer problems in respect of anti-social behaviour to the police.

- New initiatives that are being put in place to achieve better outcomes with fewer resources, including the Anti-Social Behaviour Respect Charter, improved structures and mediation arrangements. There was a need to demonstrate that the service was achieving value for money. 57% of people were satisfied with the service that they had received but it was not always possible to deliver the outcome that complainants were seeking.
- Some Authorities had more developed arrangements in place to look at addressing underlying problems that were resulting in anti-social behaviour.
- It was not yet clear how the election of a Police Commissioner for North Yorkshire would impact on the arrangements in place to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Details were given of tenancy arrangements, including the differences between an introductory tenancy and a secure tenancy. Members were informed of the level of anti-social behaviour required before eviction could be considered. It was noted that the Courts viewed such action as a very serious sanction.

Members considered a case study. Officers stated that one of the witnesses had offered to meet with the task group to detail their experiences. Residents who had experienced anti-social behaviour in the Rural West ward had also offered to meet with the group.

5. NOISE-RELATED ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Members received a presentation on the work of the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) with regard to noise-related anti-social behaviour. A copy of the presentation is included with the agenda papers for this meeting.

Members noted the following issues:

- Customer surveys highlighted noise as the main factor in anti-social behaviour but this was usually related to other issues.
- Details were given of the weekend noise control service.
- Consideration was given to the statistics that had been provided on the number of noise complaints.
- Details were given of the type of noise that was deemed to be anti-social, including music, parties and dogs barking.

It was noted that noise from people in the street was a police matter as this was deemed to be a breach of the peace.

- Officers explained how issues identified when investigating noise complaints were referred to the Police or council departments as appropriate, for example evidence of drug use, breaches of licensing or child or animal welfare issues.
- Consideration was given to the data on the average annual number of noise complaints by ward.
- It was noted that although there were localised problems in respect of noise from students, students were more likely to be victims than perpetrators. The council had never had to take action to prosecute a student.
- There was a close link between noise nuisance, other crime and social deprivation. There was a considerable overlap between criminal activity and noise.
- Summer was the busiest time of the year in terms of the number of noise complaints. This was because of holidays, BBQ's and outdoor parties and events. People also tended to have their windows open more. The number of complaints was also weather related.
- Legislation was in place in respect of fireworks but it was difficult to identify culprits. It was for the Police to determine whether or not this was a priority.
- Discussion took place regarding the out of hours calls received by EPU between June 2010 and November 2011. Members noted the restrictions in terms of staffing, including the fact that no member of the team dealt solely with noise. There were eight staff in total but three of these were part-time. When officers were investigating a complaint, they attended in pairs for security reasons and to ensure effective working.
- Officers responded to Members' queries regarding training and experience required. It was noted that officers were required to present evidence in court and hence could be challenged as to their level of experience and knowledge.
- Many noise complaints were resolved at an early stage without the need for court action to be taken. The complaints did not always relate to individuals, action was also taken against licensed premises and other businesses.
- The council sought to recover the costs of prosecutions, including officer time, but the courts did not usually order the reimbursement of the full costs. Often those involved

were not in employment and this was reflected in the fines and costs imposed.

- Details were given of the equipment that was available to the team, including five noise monitoring machines which could be installed in properties to record noise levels.

The positives in respect of the Environmental Protection Unit were highlighted as:

- A well respected service – Customer Service Excellence award
- Good customer satisfaction, especially for the Noise Patrol
- Noise Patrol is one of the few out of hours council services
- Noise Patrol resolves many noise complaints on the night
- It provides evidence for police, licensing, tenancy enforcement and others
- The work of the service was currently featuring in a BBC1 documentary entitled Noise Squad

Members gave consideration to the challenges that the service was facing:

- Customers want a 24/7 service
- There is a growing demand/increasing number of complaints
- Changes to licensing and planning laws
- Staffing rota and shift-work
- Access to information and mobile working
- Volume of work at busy times
- Information officer support is limited to the summer
- There is no budget for new equipment
- Some equipment is now 7 years old

Members agreed that the challenges faced by the EPU, as outlined above, could be considered further if the Task Group decided to focus the remit for the review on noise-related ASB.

Members agreed that noise levels had a significant impact on people's well-being and could lead to stress and poor health. Other types of anti-social behaviour such as litter and graffiti, were less detrimental in terms of impact on the quality of life. Officers stated that there were also issues in respect of the public's expectations as to what the service could deliver. It was acknowledged that, because of limited resources, the

feedback to complainants was not always as the team would wish.

Officers sought clarification as to the further information that Members required to assist them in agreeing a remit for the review. They requested further information on the EPU case study that had been presented to the task group, including information as to how the Police had viewed the case.

Councillor Healey, Chair

[The meeting started at 11.00 am and finished at 1.30 pm].