

Housing and Community Safety Policy & Scrutiny Committee

18 January 2022

Report of Director of Place

Safer York Partnership Priority: Tackling High Risk Antisocial Behaviour

Summary

1. At the request of the Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee, this report provides an overview of how Antisocial behaviour (ASB) is tackled in the city, focusing on the work of the joint North Yorkshire Police/City of York Council Community Safety Hub and the plans to develop that approach based on learning from delivery during the challenges of COVID.

2. Legislative Framework

Anti-social behaviour is defined in law (Crime and Disorder Act 1998) as conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to any person. In 2014, the legislation with which to tackle anti-social behaviour was streamlined within the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to enable issues to be dealt with more effectively at the local level. This legislation puts the victim at the heart of the response to anti-social behaviour, making the tools and powers flexible to ensure that local agencies are able to respond to the different forms of anti-social behaviour within their locality. Details of the tools and powers available within the Act are attached at Appendix a.

3. Anti-social behaviour in York 2019-21

Appendix b provides data obtained from North Yorkshire Police. Please note the categories are:

Nuisance: Where a person or group causes trouble, annoyance or suffering to a community

Personal: Where a person targets a specific individual or group

Environmental: When a person's actions affect the wider environment, such as public spaces or buildings

- 3.1 In the Type by Month graph, the spikes in Environmental correlate to periods of lockdown and include the recording of COVID related incidents, otherwise levels have been fairly stable. Spikes in Nuisance correspond with restrictions lifting. It can be seen that levels had returned to normal by the end of 2021.
- 3.2 Alcohol related ASB has remained largely stable. During 2020 it is notable that large increases occurred when lockdown restrictions were lifted and similarly again in 2021 as the hospitality industry reopened after periods of lockdown.
- 3.3 As expected, the highest volume of ASB occurs in Guildhall Ward. This is largely city centre and alcohol related.
- 3.4 Data relating to enforcement activity taken by the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team is shown at Appendix c.

4. **York Community Safety Hub**

In 2014, City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police established a joint Community Safety Hub co-located in West Offices. The remit of the hub was to improve the way in which the police and council officers worked together to tackle the highest risk cases of anti-social behaviour. High risk cases are those cases which are complex, where victims are vulnerable or where the issues have impacted significantly on the quality of life for individuals or a community. Whilst prior to 2014, some excellent joint working had been achieved, the timeliness of dealing with cases was often compromised by duplicated effort, the constraints of organisational work patterns (police working shifts, council staff largely working Monday-Friday 9am-5pm) and communications.

The Hub was designed to bring a team of police officers dedicated to tackling antisocial behaviour together with council anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood enforcement officers and provide them with a case management system to facilitate the sharing of information and the use of their respective powers to address complex cases of anti-social behaviour. The project was initially supported by Police Innovation (Home Office) funding and was shortlisted to the finals of the Princes Trust Finance for the Future Award in 2015. As a result of the success

of the project, North Yorkshire Police rolled out the Community Safety Hub model forcewide, with a hub established in each District.

- 4.1 York's Community Safety Hub is managed by Head of Community Safety supported by two Community Safety Managers and a police sergeant. Community Safety Manager: Neighbourhood Safety manages a team of four Antisocial Behaviour Officers who deal with tenancy related antisocial behaviour. Community Safety Manager: Neighbourhood Enforcement manages a team of nine Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers who deal with environmental antisocial behaviour. The police sergeant manages a team of four warranted police officers who are dedicated to dealing with antisocial behaviour and largely work day shifts to facilitate partnership working with the council staff within the team and wider council services and other key partners. The team is supported by two partnership support officers, fulfilling administrative duties to support the hub.
- 4.2 The team manage cases using a system called Orcuma FIRst. This was procured by North Yorkshire Police as a secure shared case management system to ensure that information from police systems can be uploaded into cases and shared with the council officers in the team. All council staff working within the hub are police vetted. Cases held on Orcuma can be updated by members of the team to enable evidence gathering to support enforcement action and to ensure that all officers are able to see the latest information relating to each case.

5. **Our approach to tackling antisocial behaviour**

The Community Safety Hub deal with the most serious, high risk and high vulnerability cases of antisocial behaviour. These are cases where enforcement action may be the ultimate course of action, requiring the specialist skills of the antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood enforcement officers to build the case for prosecution through a process of rigorous evidence gathering over time. However, enforcement is always regarded as the final option and is only considered once all other actions to address the antisocial behaviour have been exhausted. This approach is important as it ensures that the perpetrator has been given every opportunity to change their behaviour, that any issues that may be influencing the behaviour of the perpetrator can be addressed and that an escalating log of interventions to address the behaviour can be demonstrated to the court.

- 5.1 Antisocial behaviour is identified in a number of ways. Tenants of council properties may report issues to their Housing Management Officer,

residents may report issues to the police on 101/999 or directly to the council. The majority of incidents may be resolved immediately, some require some joint working between police, council and other partners and a minority require a more intensive multi-agency problem solving approach.

- 5.2 The police work closely with housing to address emerging issues of anti-social behaviour using their respective tools and powers. Much of this falls within the informal courses of action outlined in Appendix a eg. Use of acceptable behaviour contracts, mediation and community resolution. Where these interventions are unsuccessful, cases are referred to the community safety hub who will then involve a range of partners to address all of the issues contributing to the antisocial behaviour. This may include health professionals where mental health is a factor, youth justice if the behaviour relates to young people and fire and rescue if there is an added risk from eg hoarding. Once a case is adopted by the hub, a case is established on Orcuma. This allows the police to provide all information relating to their involvement in the case. It also ensures that where there are environmental issues eg noise nuisance, rubbish accumulation or cannabis smell, neighbourhood enforcement officers are contributing to the wider evidence gathering that may be required to take enforcement action.
- 5.3. Not all antisocial behaviour relates to a single property. Hotspots can emerge where multiple reports are made to the police about a location. The majority of issues are dealt with by the police through increased presence and low level intervention, sometimes involving other partners. Where the issues are persistent and the impact on the community significant, a multi agency problem solving group will be established by the community safety hub. This will involve a wider range of partners who can contribute to work to tackle the problems and will often involve ward councillors to provide the direct link back to the community impacted by the behaviour.
- 5.4 In 2019, concerns over increased County Lines activity in the city led to the commissioning of a Locality Review by the Home Office Violence and Vulnerability Unit. A recommendation of this review was closer working between the police and local authority to disrupt serious organised criminal activity and to develop structures to tackle county lines at the local level. A weekly intelligence tactical meeting was established between the community safety hub, neighbourhood policing teams and police Intelligence Unit to share intelligence on county lines activity in the city and agree actions using a range of powers available to the police and local authority to deal with associated criminal and antisocial behaviour

and protect vulnerable victims from being cuckooed by drug dealers from other areas of the country.

6. **Lessons learnt from tackling antisocial behaviour during COVID**

COVID impacted significantly on the way in which antisocial behaviour was tackled from March 2020. With council staff and other partners working from home, courts closed to anything other than the most serious cases and a ban on evictions, the way in which antisocial behaviour cases were managed required a significant review. Multiagency meetings had to take place over virtual platforms and detailed risk assessments and safe ways of working guides had to be drafted to keep staff and members of the public safe. However, revised ways of working opened up some opportunities to explore different ways of tackling antisocial behaviour cases, particularly when the usual delivery channels were no longer available.

6.1 *Virtual Meetings*

Lockdown meant that face to face multi-agency meetings were not an option. However, the opportunity for partners to discuss cases and develop problem solving plans to address antisocial behaviour is a key part of multi-agency working. Although initially a learning curve in setting up and chairing meetings over a virtual platform, it soon proved to be a more effective and efficient way of bringing partners together both quickly (as room booking could previously be an issue) and also practically given that many key partners are not based in York and much time is spent travelling to and from meetings.

6.2 *Closure of the courts*

Whilst enforcement is always the last action taken to address antisocial behaviour, the community safety hub does undertake a number of prosecutions on an annual basis. Courts were closed to all but the most serious cases throughout much of 2020, making enforcement action difficult. Whilst evidence gathering could continue, there was no defined end date to work towards as in addition to the closure of the courts, there would inevitably be a backlog of cases once they resumed business. In order to ensure that this did not impact adversely on victims and communities impacted by antisocial behaviour, the community safety hub were required to look at alternative measures to address issues. This required more partnership working, including utilising support from the voluntary sector to work with victims and perpetrators.

6.4 *Early intervention and prevention*

Addressing problems through a more holistic approach in the absence of enforcement, highlighted the need to be looking at problems earlier and putting in place an early intervention and prevention approach to 'nip things in the bud' before they escalated into difficult to deal with cases.

6.5 *Better Communication between the Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Community Safety Hub*

Prior to COVID, the neighbourhood policing team inspectors had regular contact with the Community Safety Hub, both attending meetings at West Offices and also on an informal basis. With officers working from home, this contact was reduced, leading to concerns that issues may take longer to be brought to the attention of the hub. Daily meetings (initially by telephone conference call and later via Teams) were established involving community safety hub, neighbourhood policing teams and public protection. These were underpinned by analysis of police calls for service for antisocial behaviour over the previous 24 hour period and discussion of emerging issues, repeat locations, victims and nominals of interest. This ensures that issues are brought to the attention of the community safety hub at a much earlier stage, enabling problem solving meetings and plans to be developed.

6.6 *Review of delivery model*

As lockdown restrictions began to lift, concern was raised that this would lead to an escalation of antisocial behaviour as people regained their freedom and social mixing was reinstated. Following the government's roadmap to recovery, two multi-agency strategic meetings were convened to look at the impact of restrictions lifting on antisocial behaviour in the city centre and also in the York outer area. These meetings are attended by Heads of service within the council, key stakeholders and police inspectors to ensure that those attending have the power to allocate their respective resources to joint working. These meetings proved useful both in managing the impact of coming out of lockdown but also in keeping a strategic overview on the levels of antisocial behaviour across the city and facilitating the early intervention and prevention work identified in 6.4 above.

6.7 *Importance of communications*

As the community safety hub tackled emerging antisocial behaviour issues, including whilst the country was in lockdown, it became clear that communication was vital to reassuring communities that services were

still delivering and that partners were working together to address issues. Communications plans were developed to support multiagency problem solving and more emphasis was placed on carrying out joint visits to neighbourhoods to speak with residents to provide information on action being taken and reassurance.

7. Case Studies (anonymised)

7.1 *Tackling antisocial behaviour relating to council tenancies in a residential street*

Antisocial behaviour associated with a number of addresses in a street had been discussed regularly in the weekly intelligence meeting held between the community safety hub, police intelligence unit and neighbourhood policing team. With the closure of the courts, enforcement action was not an option. Whilst a great deal of work had been undertaken by the police and Housing Management Officer, the problems continued to escalate to a point that they were impacting detrimentally on a community who had historically been close.

7.2 An information sharing form was devised and sent out to all services and agencies who potentially had involvement in working with residents in the street. The form asked them for details of their involvement and invited them to a virtual problem solving meeting. The meeting involved representation from the neighbourhood policing team, local area coordinator, housing, community safety, probation and ward councillors. Each address of concern was discussed and actions agreed in relation to the tenant. These included the use of informal antisocial behaviour solutions, support to address wider health and lifestyle issues and opportunities for tenants to move to another property. Participation of ward councillors in the meetings ensured that information could be fed back to residents and residents views conveyed to the group. In addition, a letter was sent to residents. One issue highlighted through this work was a reluctance of residents to report issues to the police. It is the volume of reports made on 101 or 999 that alerts the police and partners (through the daily meetings) that a problem is emerging, enabling action to be taken. A letter was sent to all residents in the street, highlighting the importance of reporting and providing details of how to report using both 101 and anonymous reporting to crime stoppers. As a result of the work of the group, the issues ceased and peace was restored.

7.3 *Tackling youth related antisocial behaviour in an outdoor space*

Lockdown impacted significantly on the mental and physical wellbeing of many young people. Social distancing rules and the lack of social interaction for extensive periods meant that as restrictions lifted, there was an escalation in calls for service to the police relating to groups of youths gathering and causing antisocial behaviour. Through the daily conference calls, one area was consistently being raised as a 'hotspot' with reports of large groups of youths making noise into the night and early hours of the morning, leaving litter and verbally abusing residents. In addition a violent incident in the area created significant fear amongst vulnerable residents and criminal damage to a sports facility added to increased community tensions.

- 7.4 Dealing with antisocial behaviour relating to an open space is not straight forward. Whilst there is legislation to deal with environmental issues such as noise and litter, its application is very specific and difficult to implement. Noise nuisance legislation does not apply to open spaces. Therefore with the absence of a property from which the noise is emanating, it is not possible to take enforcement action under the Environmental Protection Act. Similarly, whilst there is legislation to deal with littering by issuing a fixed penalty notice, it is only applicable if the enforcing authority witnesses the litter being dropped and abandoned. Given that police and neighbourhood enforcement officers are uniformed officers, it is rare that individuals commit littering in their presence making it difficult to identify those responsible.
- 7.5 The issues emerged at Easter and continued throughout the summer, aided by light nights and good weather. The police used dispersal powers to enable officers to require the groups of youths to move when antisocial behaviour was reported. However, it was clear that this approach was failing to resolve the problem as dispersal was being used nearly every weekend and frequently during the week. Reports of littering and noise continued and the community were becoming frustrated by what they saw as an inability by agencies to address their concerns.
- 7.6 Initially, Officers from the community safety hub and neighbourhood policing team met with ward councillors to discuss the problems. This was followed by the establishment of a multiagency problem solving group involving officers from the police, community safety, youth justice, public protection (COVID support marshalls) and public realm services. An action plan was developed which included provision of an additional high volume bin, work with youth justice to engage with the young people and arrange litter picking, work with the sports facility to identify target hardening measures aimed at reducing opportunity for criminal damage

and increased police patrols to the area. In addition, a community engagement event was organised to visit all residents in the street most impacted by the behaviour, to outline the work that was being done, provide an opportunity to discuss the impact of issues and stress the importance of reporting concerns in a timely fashion to the police. This event also provided partners with the opportunity to explain their legislative powers and how these powers are applied.

- 7.7 Following the community engagement event, a survey was carried out of residents. This reported higher levels of confidence in the police and council addressing the only area of concern that remained, was that levels of litter would increase in the following spring. Work is taking place to develop a problem solving plan aimed at ensuring issues do not re-emerge in 2022.

8. **Developing the hub approach**

Based on the lessons learnt delivering services to address antisocial behaviour during the pandemic, a revised model has been developed. Community Safety Hub Police Officers continue to analyse the antisocial behaviour every 24 hours and a daily teams meeting takes place at 8:30am every morning. This meeting is attended by the neighbourhood policing teams and joined by community safety twice weekly and public protection twice weekly. This ensures that emerging issues are highlighted early.

- 8.1 Once an area, address or individual has been identified consistently through the daily meeting, a master case will be set up on the Community Safety Hub case management system Orcuma, immediately allowing evidence gathering to commence and ensuring that all officers in the hub are aware.
- 8.2 The York Outer Antisocial Behaviour Strategic Meeting Chaired by Head of Community Safety will continue on a monthly basis. A decision has been taken by the City Centre group that it is duplicating the work of the BID Safe and Secure Group and that there is no further requirement for a separate group under Safer York Partnership. The Outer group identifies hotspots, commissions the establishment of problem solving groups to address specific issues and oversees the delivery of problem solving plans. Additionally, it agrees resourcing of joint days of action and community engagement events which fall outside the remit of routine service delivery.

- 8.3 A monthly full team meeting of community safety hub team members takes place monthly where all ASB emerging issues are discussed and consideration given to the powers available within the hub to support multi-agency problem solving.
- 8.4 A new service level agreement between Housing and Community Safety has been agreed, underpinned by a joint virtual team day. This included developing the relationship between the two teams, establishing clearer pathways for referring cases earlier in the process from Housing to the Community Safety Hub and using the expertise of Community Safety Hub Officers to support Housing Management Officers dealing with complex cases.
- 8.5 The revisions to the delivery model will be included in the refresh of the Community Safety Strategy 2020=23 under the priority of Tackling High Risk Antisocial behaviour.

9. **Role of Ward Councillors**

In both of the case studies outlined, the Community Safety Hub worked closely with the ward councillors to ensure that they were engaged with the problem solving process and able to reassure the community that issues were being addressed. This approach has continued as other hotspot areas have emerged and ward councillors have been invited to participate in multiagency meetings. This will now be embedded within the problem solving approach delivered through the community safety hub.

10. **Communications**

The importance of communication in relation to community safety was highlighted particularly from March 2020 when COVID restrictions were put in place and communities left unsure whether services were available to them. Safer York Partnership's Twitter account has been used to provide information where problem solving work is taking place, issues are emerging in relation to antisocial behaviour and criminal activity and also to signpost to guidance and advice. This is being developed to ensure that we are engaging better with communities and providing information on the work of the community safety hub. In addition, the Safer York Partnership Website www.saferyorkpartnership.co.uk is being reviewed and updated to ensure that all information relating to community safety is up to date and readily available to the public.

Council Plan

11. The Community Safety Strategy links to the following priorities within the Council Plan 2019-23
 - **Safe communities and culture for all**

Implications

12. In producing this report the following implications have been considered:
 - **Financial** – none identified
 - **Human Resources (HR)** – none identified
 - **Equalities** – none identified
 - **Legal** Safer York Partnership is a statutory partnership identified within the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
 - **Crime and Disorder** - Safer York Partnership supports the Council's discharge of its crime and disorder duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
 - **Information Technology (IT)** - none identified
 - **Property** – none identified
 - **Other**

No other implications identified

Risk Management

13. There are no identified risks relevant to this report.

Conclusions

14. Lessons learnt during COVID facilitated the review of the community safety hub and the approach to tackling antisocial behaviour through a multiagency problem solving approach. This will be reflected in the refresh of the Community Safety Strategy 2020-23.

Recommendation

15. Members are asked to note and contribute their views on the delivery of work to tackle antisocial behaviour and how this is reflected in the refresh of this priority within the Community Safety Strategy

Reason

16. To involve members in the development of service delivery in tackling antisocial behaviour in York.

Contact Details

Author:

Jane Mowat
Head of Community Safety
Tel: 01904 555742
Jane.mowat@york.gov.uk

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Neil Ferris
Director of Economy & Place

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

Community Safety Strategy 2020-23

Abbreviations

CYC- City of York Council
NYP- North Yorkshire Police
BID- Business Improvement District
MIY- Make it York
ASB- Anti-Social Behaviour

MARAC- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
NEO- Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer
NYCC- North Yorkshire County Council
NFU- National Farmers Union
PSPO- Public Space Protection Orders