

Anti Social Behaviour Strategy

Report of Corporate Management Team

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Councillor Lucy Hovvels, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Safer and
Healthier Communities**

Purpose of the Report

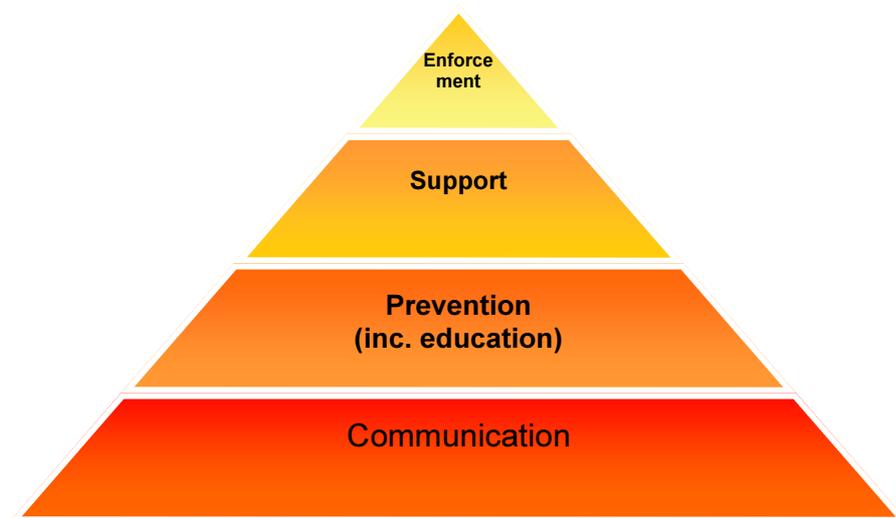
- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval of the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy 2011/14.

Background

- 2 The Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2011-14 identifies Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) as a key priority for the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP).
- 3 The ASB Delivery Group of the SDP provides strategic co-ordination of the anti social behaviour agenda across County Durham. The Delivery Group has developed an ASB Strategy which has been informed by consultation with a wide range of partner agencies.
- 4 The Strategy has been agreed by the Safe Durham Partnership with a
- 5 recommendation that it be presented to the Council's Cabinet. The report has been through Adults, Wellbeing and Health and Neighbourhoods Management teams, as Officers from both service groupings are involved in implementation.

Current Position

- 6 The Strategy outlines the Partnership's approach to tackling Anti Social Behaviour through early intervention, education and preventative measures. Where necessary a rigorous enforcement approach will be adopted to reduce the harmful effects caused to individuals and local communities.
- 7 The chart below illustrates this escalation approach, reflecting the proportion of activity associated with each element. Effective communication is identified as underpinning the prevention, support and enforcement work.



- 8 The majority of ASB involves relatively minor incidents that can be effectively addressed through education and preventative work. A smaller proportion of cases require a level of support work with perpetrators or mediation to find solutions. Where **Prevention** and **Support** do not provide a solution a robust **Enforcement** policy, utilising the full range of tools and powers will be adopted.

What we do now

- 9 The Strategy highlights work that the Partnership currently undertakes to tackle ASB, and showcases a number of case studies where successful interventions have made a difference. Examples of what we do now include:

Communication

- **Not in My Neighbourhood Weeks** – focussed action weeks, looking to deal with ASB and crime problems in an area.
- **Walkabouts** – carried out by partners to identify any environmental and other local issues.
- **Police and Community Together Meetings (PACT)** – local meetings which allow the community to determine priorities in the area, and jointly look at ways to resolve problems.

Prevention

- **ASB Warning Letters** – sent to Adult Perpetrators, or to parents/carers of a person under 18yrs, identifying their involvement in an incident and the consequences of further ASB.
- **Alcohol Seizures** – where alcohol is confiscated from a person under 18yrs, the parents/carers are informed of the incident and where appropriate a referral is made to an Alcohol Brief Intervention Worker.
- **Fire and Rescue Service Diversionary programmes** – carried out particularly around the main school holiday periods and leading up to Bonfire time.
- **Long Term Empty Homes** – the Councils Empty Homes Team proactively work to instigate enforcement action where empty homes have been the focus of ASB or damaged by arson attacks.
- **Private Landlords Support** – a support scheme for private landlords to encourage 'professionalism' in the sector and reduce the incidences of ASB, illegal evictions and housing standards.

Support

- **Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)** – a written agreement between the individual and the SDP, usually lasting 6 months, which provides the individual with a clear understanding of what behaviour is acceptable, the consequences of their behaviour, and the impact it has on others.
- **DISC STEP2** – provides support to tenants at risk of eviction, or other enforcement measures, as a result of their ASB.
- **Family Intervention Project (FIP)** – a twin track approach using intensive tailored action, with supervision and clear sanctions, to improve the behaviour of persistently anti social households.
- **Mediation** – an independent, impartial and confidential community mediation service, open to all residents within County Durham.

Enforcement

- **Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)** – these are Court Orders where conditions are applied seeking the prohibition of certain behaviours. Breach of any of the terms is a Criminal Offence for which an individual can receive a fine or imprisonment.
- **Persistently Possessing Alcohol in a Public Place** – young people under 18yrs will be prosecuted for this offence if they have been found to be in possession of alcohol on 3 or more occasions within a period of 12 consecutive months.
- **Selective Licensing** – a licensing scheme for privately rented accommodation. Once an Area has been declared, an Authority has the power to prosecute landlords who are operating without a License or where a License holder is breaching the conditions, for example poor management practises such as not dealing with ASB.

What we are going to do differently

- 10 Building on these achievements, the Strategy sets out 'what we are going to do differently' to reduce levels of ASB and increase public confidence. Examples include:
- Improve the process of 'Not in My Neighbourhood Weeks' to incorporate environmental action, alcohol enforcement and awareness raising.
 - Expand PACT meetings with improved community participation.
 - Expand the 'Civic Pride' campaign linked to areas experiencing high levels of ASB
 - Develop the links between ASB, Environmental and Housing teams to ensure an effective joint approach to tackling ASB.
 - Utilise Mediation as an early intervention tool to resolve neighbour disputes and certain community ASB related problems.
 - Develop a support package for repeat and vulnerable victims, including a victim and perpetrator risk assessment tool for all practitioners.
 - Roll out Restorative Justice countywide as an alternative to existing criminal justice disposals for ASB.
 - Develop a protocol covering littering and dog fouling issues – including the power to issue fixed penalty notices.
 - Develop joint working procedures between Environmental Health, ASB Teams and other departments of the Council for dealing with noise related ASB.

Where are we now – a changing landscape

- 11 The Coalition Government are currently reviewing how we approach Anti Social Behaviour as partners and within communities. This includes how we define ASB; reforming the Licensing Act to help tackle alcohol related problems; including the community in solving local issues; and, reviewing the tools and powers available to

tackle ASB. Tackling ASB is high on the Government's agenda and the outcome of this review will shape the implementation of this strategy.

Where do we want to be?

- 12 The following outcomes are identified in the Strategy and the Partnership Plan:
- Increase public confidence in the ability of partners to deal with crime and anti social behaviour issues that matter to communities.
 - Reduce police recorded incidents of anti social behaviour and low level crime that affect our communities – including criminal damage.
 - Reduce the number of secondary deliberate fires.
 - Create a high quality clean, green, attractive and accessible environment, recognising the link between a poor quality environment and ASB.
- 13 Progress against the outcomes will be measured by the following high level indicators, and monitored against the identified targets.

Perceptions of anti social behaviour

Baseline 2010/11 - 8.4%

Target 2011/12 - 13.8% reduction

NI21 Dealing with concerns of ASB and crime issues by the local Council and Police

Baseline 2010/11 - 53.7%

Target 2011/12 - 58%

- 14 An Action Plan has been developed to support the implementation of the strategy. Key actions include:
- Development of 'citizen focussed' services tailored to individual needs.
 - More joint working at a local level, including restructuring and co-location where practicable.
 - Development and implementation of an education and enforcement programme in schools, utilising a range of tools to challenge anti social behaviour.
 - To continue with, and improve, our 'Not in My Neighbourhood' weeks of action.
 - Ensuring our staff are properly trained and equipped and understand both the nature and causes of ASB.
 - Developing a greater understanding of what influences different communities perceptions of ASB.

Spending Review

- 15 A number of initiatives outlined in the Strategy are reliant upon external funding and in light of reduced resources following the Comprehensive Spending Review there may be a need to temper our approach in future years. The Safe Durham Partnership meeting in September discussed the Community Safety Fund allocation for 2012/13. Although this grant fund will be reduced by 36% the Board agreed to maintain the current level of Community Safety Fund investment in ASB services for 2012/13.

Recommendations and Reasons

- 15 Cabinet is recommended to:
- Approve the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy.

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Appendix 1: Implications

1. Finance

The Strategy will be delivered within existing resources. £424,000 from the Community Safety Fund has been allocated to support staffing costs for Anti-Social Behaviour and targeted support and intervention projects through to 2013.

2. Staffing

No implications, the strategy will be delivered within existing resources.

3. Risk

No risk implications.

4. Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty

The Strategy has been Equality Impact Assessed.

5. Accommodation

No implications.

6. Crime and Disorder

Main focus of the report. The strategy supports the council's duty to address anti social behaviour as a responsible authority of the Safe Durham Partnership.

7. Human Rights

No implications.

8. Consultation

The draft strategy has been widely circulated as part of the consultation process.

9. Procurement

No implications.

10. Disability Discrimination Act

No implications.

11. Legal Implications

No adverse implications. The County Council, as a responsible authority under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, has a statutory duty to prevent crime and disorder, substance misuse, anti-social behaviour and other behaviour adversely affecting the environment to reduce re-offending.