
REPORT TO NORTHFIELD DISTRICT COMMITTEE

Anti-Social Behaviour:
Neighbourhood
Challenge

Lead Member: Councillor Steve
Booton
18 March, 2016

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Preface

By Peter Griffiths, Executive Member, Northfield District Committee

At its Annual General Meeting in May 2015, Birmingham City Council gave a new role to the District Committee's to undertake a "Neighbourhood Challenge", looking into an issue affecting citizens in the District. Ward Committees and Neighbourhood Forums were consulted and our District chose the topic of Housing (cross-tenure) and Anti-Social Behaviour for our first inquiry.

This report and its recommendations are the result of our work and contributions of all the participants involved in the process.

My thanks go to all our partners in this process who have given so willingly of their time, offered wise advice throughout the inquiry and helped in drafting this report. Our inquiry could only be as good as the contributions made by them and the support they provided.

Special thanks to Cllr Steve Booton (Weoley) and Richard Davies, Head of Northfield District, for making everything happen to time and work so well. I would also like to thank the Birmingham Social Housing Partnership and its members for their positive contribution to this Neighbourhood challenge.

It is my expectation that the report recommendations will lead to improved partnership working locally, stimulate discussion and action across the whole City.

Peter Griffiths

Acknowledgements

Name	Organisation
Ruth Cooke, Chief Executive	Midland Heart Housing Association
Rob James, Service Director, Housing Transformation	Birmingham City Council
Inspector Dean Gordon	West Midlands Police
Alan Moorhouse, Community Safety Co-ordinator	Birmingham Social Housing Partnership

1. Our Inquiry

1a.Introduction and Background

At the District Committee (DC) held on the 18th September, 2015 we agreed our first neighbourhood challenge would be to examine aspects of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Northfield. We set out to investigate how various agencies could co-operate to tackle problems more effectively to improve services and quality of life.

It was agreed that Councillor Steve Booton would head the challenge and report back to the November DC.

At that DC, held on the 20th November, 2015, Councillor Booton presented a 'terms of reference' and a work programme which were discussed and agreed by DC members present to include a timescale to facilitate a full discussion at the forthcoming DC, 22nd January, 2016.

1b.Purpose of the Challenge

ASB is very costly to landlords, time-consuming and troublesome for the Police and can ruin residents' lives.

When undertaking this challenge we did not seek to change the world but rather to improve responses to ASB in Northfield in a practical, deliverable way.

The objectives of this neighbourhood challenge are outlined as follows:

- To improve performance in respect of dealing with ASB across all tenures by sharing information and working together
- To use resources of the Police: social landlords; private landlords and the City Council more effectively
- To share ideas and examples of good practice
- To define what constitutes ASB; what it is and what it is not

1c.Key Questions

The initiative was framed around these five questions:

- What partnership working would be of mutual benefit to all housing providers and help improve ASB performance?
- How can information be shared more effectively to assist with improved performance?
- How can early intervention, prevention and support be maximised across all housing providers?
- What impact does ASB have on neighbourhoods?
- What are the barriers to dealing with ASB effectively?

1d.Expected Outcomes

It was anticipated that collaboration on the challenge would lead to:

- Happier and safer neighbourhoods
- A more co-ordinated and structured approach to resolving ASB issues
- A multi-agency approach to addressing ASB
- The standardisation of protocols and procedures between housing providers and the Police as appropriate

1e.Terms of Reference

Terms of reference as follows were agreed to take the challenge forward:

- The challenge would be enacted from September, 2015 – March, 2016
- Councillor Booton to take the lead on the initiative
- A verbal update report to be given to the November DC to agree the terms of reference and work programme

- The work programme to consist of individual interviews; planning meetings with Northfield Council Officers and a workshop event with an update on progress to the January, 2016 DC
- Councillor Booton to facilitate one-to-one meetings with senior housing association representatives and Superintendent Peter Henrick (West Midlands Police)
- Councillor Booton to plan a workshop with representatives of West Midlands Police; BCC Officers and housing association partners
- A draft report to be circulated to housing association and West Midlands Police partners for consultation prior to completion of the final report
- A written report by Councillor Booton prefaced by Councillor Griffiths to be presented to the March 2016 District Committee

2. Our Approach

We approached the challenge in a spirit of co-operation, information sharing and the promotion of joint ideas.

We are hoping that this initiative will lead to greater involvement in the DC by all partners associated with the challenge.

The individual qualitative interviewing technique enabled us to establish where success was being achieved in ASB strategy; where road blocks were being met and how agencies thought they could be circumvented.

Meeting and speaking to agencies on a one-to-one basis built trust and ensured that the workshop that followed on the 14th January was led by those agencies working together with openness and co-operation. This enabled new initiatives being fully scrutinised and obstacles to further progress being discussed and addressed.

3. Evidence Gathered

3a. Individual Interviews

The interviews were conducted in an open, confidential style so that participants could bring their own ideas and thoughts to the table. Interviewees were:

Superintendent P Henrick – Superintendent Local Policing Birmingham South Local Policing Unit

Annette Homer –Director of Housing & Community Services, Bournville Village Trust

Kate Giles – Community Safety Officer – Bromford Housing

John Downs – Managing Director – Circle Housing

Evidence took the form of professional views based on data, organisation's policies and practice, anecdotes, stories and reflection on new strategies and policy initiatives. While successful new initiatives were working they were not common knowledge across the sector: Insights were gathered that revealed a lack of commonality of approach.

3b. Workshop Event

The workshop was attended by 28 participants drawn from BCC; a variety of housing associations; West Midlands Police and voluntary organisations. It was conducted via four breakout groups with individuals choosing which session they preferred to participate in (see Appendix A).

3b(i).Group 1: Good Practice and Restorative Justice

This session was led by Officers from Midland Heart Housing Association who employ a restorative justice strategy with 'harmed' and 'harmers', whereby a meeting is brokered between the two parties to decide how the 'harmer' can ameliorate the damage that has been done to the 'harmed'.

Officers also explained that they were looking at setting up a 'Place' Team and a 'People' Team. The Place Team would investigate low level ASB incidents such as littering; graffiti and how to manage the neighbourhood more effectively. It may also take on community issues such as debris generated by take-away restaurants for example. In contrast, the People Team would deal with early intervention in ASB cases to avoid escalation and take serious ASB cases through to court.

3b(ii). Group 2: More Effective Ways to use Resources

Bromford Housing Association Officers led this discussion.

A full list of: what worked well, ideas for improvement and blockages that prevent us from using resources more effectively were discussed.

Refer to Appendix A for more information.

3b(iii). Group 3: General ASB

This session was led by Officers from BCC. One interesting point of discussion was to do with public perception that Officers thought was much too high e.g. a simple neighbourhood dispute over parking issues. Officers felt that one of the solutions to this may be the use of video films made available to residents' groups illustrating various scenarios around parking issues together with straight forward solutions to resolving them at neighbour level.

The group also felt reaction from Officers to ASB should be a victim-focussed response rather than a 'one-size fits all' approach. An example was given of loud music being played from a property which may have less impact on a young person living nearby but might affect the quality of life of an elderly person. Approaches therefore needed to be flexible.

Other ideas suggested by the group were the use of triage to define 'vulnerability'; 'good neighbour agreement'; 'the community trigger' and on occasions, mediation.

3b(iv).Group 4: Working Together

Senior West Midlands Police Officers facilitated this group discussion focusing on inter-agency working. The main suggestion was a central contact point as this would be advantageous in many ASB cases.

In addition early intervention was discussed and the group felt that this could minimise more severe problems and additional resources later along the line.

This group felt that the 'Safer Communities Group' should be revitalised and that SEGWEB needs to be regularly update with links being established with Social Services Mental Health Team and the NHS.

3c. January NDC meeting on 22 January 2016: Neighbourhood Challenge

Notes of this meeting are detailed in Appendix B, including questions posed to witnesses and their responses. Introducing the challenge, Councillor Steve Booton, lead member for ASB Neighbourhood Challenge gave a verbal report to the DC from the ASB workshop event held on the 14th January (see Appendix B).

3d. Summary of Witness Evidence

Inspector Dean Gordon from West Midlands Police

Inspector Dean Gordon from West Midlands Police outlined that ASB in Northfield had been a priority for a number of years and that the Police had developed a clear strategy underpinned by partnership which is the key to success. Where criminal offences are taking place the Police will act, however, early intervention by the Police can sometimes prevent escalation.

Re-establishment of the 'Safer Communities Group' is fundamental to ensuring that the Police are aware of the appropriate level of engagement that is necessary to resolve a variety of incidents.

Ruth Cooke, Chief Executive, Midland Heart Housing Association

Ruth Cooke, Chief Executive, Midland Heart Housing Association said that Midland Heart HA is one of the largest social housing providers in the West Midlands, having 35,000 properties in the region. At present they have 200 open ASB cases and over the last few years have evicted 12 tenants on account of ASB. Midland Heart is in the process of introducing two Teams, Place and People to deal with ASB perpetrators living in their properties. In partnership with West Midlands Police they are piloting a 'restorative justice' scheme (please see summary of Group 1 discussion in above section).

Rob James, Service Director, BCC

Rob James, Service Director, BCC told the DC that BCC receives approximately 40,000 calls associated with ASB each year. BCC utilise a risk matrix device in partnership with the Police to ascertain how best each case should be handled and they are working with 500 'troubled families'. The ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced Community Triggers to enable victims to request a review of how their case was handled. Elected members will be advised on how to use this system and it will be more widely publicised.

Rob thought that it was important to encourage and support witnesses of ASB to come forward without fear of reprisals. Again, Rob thought that partnership working was essential to successful resolution of ASB in the City.

4. Findings

4a. What works

- Flexible tenancies
- Police partnerships

- Birmingham Social Housing Partnership
- Safer Communities Group
- BSHP Housing Protocol
- Task and Finish Groups
- Good partnership networks
- Restorative Justice

4b.What does not work

- Not all landlords request references
- Loop holes in ASB procedures i.e. perpetrators keeping off radar for 6 months
- Setting expectations too high – ASB needs to be clearly defined
- Accepting what we can do and what we cannot
- Relationship with ward Councillors – escalation of complaints
- Not knowing who owns what property in Northfield

4c.What could be improved

- References should be taken up by all landlords working in the sector
- The capacity for inter-agency information sharing including WM Police should be developed more fully
- A cross-sector definition and protocol for responses to ASB at all levels needs working up
- Councillor training on ASB procedures and protocols

5.Recommendations and Tracker

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
RO1	That WM Police take the lead in exploring options for the establishment of a multi-agency case management system for the investigation of ASB across all housing providers .	WM Police	December 2016
RO2	Pilot the use of web chat to offer information and advice to tenants and share learning with other housing providers	Head of Landlord Services – BCC Place Managers	June 2016
RO3	Housing policy be reviewed within BCC to consider the benefits of all providers taking up references for new tenants as part of the drive to combat ASB	Cabinet Member Housing	November 2016
RO4	Information on evictees and those on suspended orders is shared across all housing providers	South Birmingham Community Safety Partnership /Safer Communities Group	July 2016

RO5	The 'naming and shaming' of known perpetrators in the public arena as part of a wider communications strategy	WM Police	June 2016
RO6	Improve sharing of good practice and information between partners through the Safer Communities Group	BCC ASB Partnership Manager/WM Police/housing providers	September, 2016
RO7	Training on legislation related to ASB for all elected members in Northfield Training on policy and procedures to be offered by all housing providers to staff and stakeholders	BCC: Head of Landlord Services; Democratic Services (Member Development Programme). Head of Landlord Services – BCC Place Managers; RSLs	tbc tbc
RO8	A 'market place event' in the Council House providing information on ASB and the 'Community Trigger'	BCC Housing Transformation (Safer Places)	October 2016
RO9	That training is provided for all housing providers to enable best use of SEGWEB, including regular updates etc..	BCC ASB Partnership Manager (Birmingham South)	June, 2016
RO10	That Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) website be revised to include all named contacts in the ASB partnership network in Northfield	Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP)	September, 2016
RO11	Establish better links with Neighbourhood Watch to support ASB strategies, such as early intervention	WM Police; BCC Place Managers; local RSLs	September, 2016
RO12	Explore options for the development of trained volunteers to support action to address ASB issues, e.g. Restorative Justice project	Birmingham Social Housing Partnership; local RSLs	September 2016
RO13	The development of a Restorative Justice project in Northfield involving all partners	Birmingham Social Housing Partnership; WM Police	September, 2016
RO14	Programme of quarterly workshop events in Northfield from June,2016 (first one "Improvements across the sector")	South Birmingham Community Safety Partnership	June 2016 ongoing
RO15	Produce information through a variety of media (e.g. videos, twitter, CDs) to raise awareness of residents and stakeholders in respect of ASB issues	Housing Providers; South Birmingham Community Safety Partnership	September 2016
RO16	Submit evidence to relevant Scrutiny Committees and advocate action to deliver improvements	Executive Member, Northfield District Committee	2016+

RO17	To develop strategies to build confidence in witnesses and victims	South Birmingham Community Safety Partnership	tbc
RO18	To explore options around all housing providers adopting a common ASB assessment matrix	Birmingham Social Housing Partnership; South Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (see RO14)	tbc

6.Appendices

6a.Appendix A: Notes from Workshop Event, 14.01.2016

6b.Appendix B: NDC Minutes, 22.01.16