

# **North Somerset Council**

## **Report to the Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel**

**Date of Meeting: 10/11/2022**

**Subject of Report: Anti-Social Behaviour & Community Response**

**Town or Parish: North Somerset**

**Officer/Member Presenting: Howard Pothecary – Safer Communities Service Manager & Harry Mills – Safer Communities Enforcement Manager**

**Key Decision: NO**

### **Recommendations**

That the Panel:

1. Notes the development of anti-social behaviour and environmental crime enforcement.
2. Notes the development and future plans for the Community Response Team
3. Supports the continued focus on addressing anti-social behaviour and environmental crime in North Somerset by Safer Communities Service, including the Community Response team and a range of colleagues and partner organisations.
4. Supports the continued development of the integrated approach to neighbourhood enforcement in addition to ensuring neighbourhood management is well coordinated as set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-2024.
5. Endorses the use of clear and effective communication to enforce the positive messages resulting from the community safety initiatives being implemented, and further consideration of the numerous ways in which this could be developed.

## **1. Summary of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the development of our response to anti-social behaviour and environmental crime enforcement.
- 1.2 This report also provides description of the Community Response work programme and an update on progress to date. The report seeks board members' views on proposed next steps in the development of the work programme.

## **2. Policy**

- 2.1 Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 (subsequently amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006) places a duty on a number of organisations (the Local Authority, Police Force, Probation Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group and Fire Service) to work together in a Community Safety Partnership to prevent and tackle crime and disorder. This includes specific requirements to reduce re-offending, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour.
- 2.2 There is also a requirement for the Community Safety Partnership and Police and Crime Commissioner to have regard for each other's priorities. In April 2022 a new North Somerset Safer Communities Partnership Plan was published in which tackling Anti-Social Behaviour with a focus on key hotspot locations was highlighted as a key priority for the partnership.
- 2.3 The North Somerset Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 identifies the following three priorities:
  - A thriving sustainable place
  - A council which empowers and cares about people
  - An open and enabling organisation
- 2.4 Crime and Disorder impacts on each one of these. Effective partnership working to tackle crime and disorder is crucial in creating vibrant, accessible, and safe places to live and visit. Community safety work programmes contribute to a range of public health outcomes including in relation to substance misuse, domestic abuse, violent crime, and re-offending.

## **3. Details**

### **3.1 Anti-Social Behaviour**

- 3.1.1 Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as 'acting in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household' and can incorporate incidents ranging from those that are personally directed, community directed or those that have a wider environmental impact.

- 3.1.2 ASB incidents surged following the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the number of incidents recorded by police reached two million in the year ending March 2021, an increase of 48% compared to the year before.
- 3.1.3 The Beating Crime Plan was launched by the government, in July 2021, which included a particular focus on tackling ASB through several policies. These included: better cooperation between Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities and other partners; updating statutory guidance on ASB; and improving the use of tools within the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 (ASBCPA Act).
- 3.1.4 The responsibility to tackle ASB and more recently Environmental Crime is led by the council's Safer Communities Service, comprised of the Community Safety & Enforcement Team and the Community Response Team who work jointly together:

#### Community Response Team

The Community Response Team provide the frontline response to anti-social behaviour. They are responsible for:

- Frontline response and investigation of anti-social behaviour reports/incidents
- Engaging with communities and work on educational and preventative measures to help stop the problems from occurring in the first place and how to report anti-social behaviour
- Using the range of tools & powers robustly to resolve anti-social behaviour
- Working with partner-agencies to come up with long-term problem-solving initiatives to reduce ASB and improve Community Safety

#### Community Safety & Enforcement Team

The Community Safety & Enforcement Team lead on anti-social behaviour and environmental crime which includes developing and implementing policies and procedures alongside dealing with the complex and persistent cases. They are responsible for:

- Problem solving complex and/or persistent ASB and Community Safety cases
- Investigating and tackling environmental crime including fly-tipping and commercial waste
- Using higher-level enforcement tools & powers and other remedial interventions to tackle ASB and environmental crime issues.
- Implement initiatives, strategies and plans to problem-solve ASB and Enviro-Crime in North Somerset
- Increasing opportunities for victims to report ASB and increasing levels of information and awareness about the services that are available.
- Coordinating the statutory Community Trigger process, enabling victims of ASB to request a multi-agency case review

3.1.5 A strategic assessment of North Somerset's Crime and Disorder 2022/23 was written by the Council's Safer Communities Service in partnership with the council's Business Intelligence Service. This involved consultation with a range of partners from across the Community Safety Partnership. The findings and recommendations of the strategic assessment were used to inform a new North Somerset Safer Communities Partnership Plan published in April 2022 in which tackling Anti-Social Behaviour with a focus on key hotspot locations was highlighted as a key priority for the partnership.

3.1.6 Work is due to start on a new 'plan on a page' specifically for ASB and Environmental Crime which will be aligned to the priority work areas identified by the strategic needs assessment. These work areas are:

- Anti-Social Behaviour – with focus on hotspot locations
- Environmental Crime e.g., criminal damage, graffiti and fly-tipping

Alongside these local priorities, the plan will also adopt the new national ASB principles which were launched in July 2022 by the Home Office Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board. These principles seek to describe a consistent approach to understanding and addressing ASB. These principles are:

1. Victims should be encouraged to report ASB and expect to be taken seriously. They should have clear ways to report, have access to help and support to recover, and be given the opportunity to choose restorative approaches to tackling ASB.
2. Agencies will have clear and transparent processes to ensure that victims can report ASB concerns, can understand how the matter will be investigated and are kept well informed of progress once a report is made.
3. Agencies and practitioners will work across boundaries to identify, assess and tackle ASB and its underlying causes. Referral pathways should be clearly set out between services and published locally. This includes pathways for the community trigger and health services.
4. The public's ASB concerns should always be considered both nationally and locally in strategic needs assessments for community safety. Best practice should be shared through a network of ASB experts within each community safety partnership, each policing area and nationally.
5. Adults and children who exhibit ASB should have the opportunity to take responsibility for their behaviour and repair the harm caused by it. Agencies should deliver appropriate interventions, which may include criminal justice options, based on the seriousness, risks and vulnerabilities of the case.

## 3.2 Community Safety & Enforcement Team

3.2.1 Our Community Safety & Enforcement Team is a small team who lead on ASB and more recently, environmental crime by developing policies and procedures alongside investigating and resolving the complex and persistent cases.

3.2.2 Following a small restructure in July 2022, environmental and enforcement functions have been consolidated within the council's Environmental and Safer Communities Service. As part of these changes, our Community Safety & Enforcement Team have taken on the responsibility for Environmental Crime including Fly-Tipping and Commercial Waste issues.

3.2.3 Since taking on these new responsibilities, the team have started several fly-tipping investigations, in addition to:

- Issuing 10x Section 34 formal notices requiring businesses to provide evidence of waste transfer notes as part of proactive compliance checks
- Issued 1x Fixed Penalty Notice to a business for breach of Section 47 Notice in relation to overflowing commercial waste bins
- Participated in a multi-agency check-point operation with the Police and Environment Agency to check waste carrier licenses
- Launched 2x problem-solving projects in partnership with the council's Regulatory Services and the Waste Team to resolve significant waste issues within Weston Town Centre which are attracting pests and posing public health issues

3.2.2 Alongside our new Environmental Crime responsibilities, we have also continued to tackle anti-social behaviour in North Somerset:

- Successfully streamlined our FPN process for ASB & Enviro-crime, enabling officers to use powers and FPNs more robustly. In addition, offenders are now able to pay their FPN online which has greatly reduced the admin involved and the time it takes to recover the money, allowing the income to be reinvested into ASB enforcement much more quickly. In the last month, we have issued 5x Fixed Penalty Notices for breach of Public Space Protection Orders in relation to littering and urinating in a public place.
- Facilitated 6 statutory Community Trigger Case Review Panels, enabling victims to have the right to request a case review where they feel not enough is being done to resolve their case.
- Following a rise in graffiti, we initiated a graffiti campaign with the council's Communications Team and Trading Standards to remind businesses of their responsibilities around selling paint aerosols to young people through a 'No proof of age, no sale' campaign. Our ASB & Environmental Crime Officer will be conducting joint visits to businesses with Trading Standards over the next couple of months.

### 3.3 Community Response Team

3.3.1 Our Community Response Team is currently made up of three uniformed officers, who provide a highly visible frontline service across North Somerset. Their role is primarily focused on preventing and resolving anti-social behaviour. This ranges from irresponsible dog ownership to street drinking or begging, youth disorder, neighbour disputes and other problems in the community.

The Community Response Team receive weekly core taskings from our Community Safety & Enforcement Team and CCTV Control Room, in addition to responding to anti-social behaviour reports received from the public.

Officers spend most of their time out in their areas, maintaining a high-profile presence by undertaking regular pre-determined patrols, acting as the 'eyes and ears' in local communities by talking to residents and businesses about local issues.

Community Response Officers have a wide range of tools and powers delegated by both the council but also Avon & Somerset Constabulary under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme granted by the Chief Constable. This allows Community Response Officers to resolve anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood issues themselves.

3.3.3 In 2019, the council's Safer Communities Service took on the management of the Community Response Team who were previously managed by another department. Since then, a programme of work has been undertaken by the Safer Communities Service to develop and improve the Community Response Team. To date, this work has included:

- Embedding Community Response into the Safer Communities Service who already had full overview of ASB issues and the support structure. E.g., the ASB Officer and Community Safety Manager, CCTV control room, relationships across the council, police and other partners
- Realigning the focus of Community Response through the introduction and implementation of 7 key principles for Community Response:
  - Preventing and resolving anti-social behaviour
  - Proactivity in relation to emerging issues
  - Problem-solving focussed
  - Robust enforcement
  - Intelligence-led
  - Highly visible in communities
  - Community engagement focussed
- Updated high-visibility uniform and vehicle livery to ensure maximum visibility within communities.
- Successfully partnering with Weston Town Council who agreed to provide funding for a full-time officer therefore increasing the size of the team from two officers to three and providing Weston-Super-Mare and the surrounding area with a dedicated resource.

- Moving Community Response onto a trial shift-rota system to ensure resources can be easily flexed to meet demand and operational requirements.
- Introducing a new Community Response Team leader to provide better support and supervision for the CROs to drive efficiencies and maximise service delivery.

3.3.4 Their unique role also enables them to support North Somerset Council in delivering improvements to neighbourhoods by:

- Ensuring ownership and resolution of community issues at the first point of contact
- Reducing repeat calls
- Improved information sharing between agencies such as the Police and Housing Associations
- Improving the visibility of the council within communities, particularly in rural areas where council visibility is minimal

3.3.5 Recent case studies:

***Ellenborough Park, Weston:*** Community Response working alongside Weston Town council and the YMCA Outreach Team have spent the last month tackling a large rough sleeper encampment containing 9 individuals who were rough sleeping in tents within Ellenborough Park, Weston-super-Mare.

Through partnership working between Community Response and the Police, it was identified that a few of the individuals were wanted by Police. Community Response arranged a joint visit with the Police where several individuals were arrested by Police. Community Response used their Anti-Social Behaviour tools and powers to deal with the remaining individuals who were causing ASB at the encampment. As a result, the individuals were removed from the park and the encampment was cleared. To date, the park remains clear and the Community Response Team continue to patrol the park for the public to enjoy. The Community Response Team received positive feedback from Weston Town Council and Councillors who were grateful for their efforts.

***Youth ASB, Portishead:*** Over the past three months there has been a significant ongoing problem involving groups of young people in Portishead who have been causing significant issues impacting local businesses and the local community. Issues have been mainly around rowdy and disruptive behaviour in businesses and at public spaces and vandalism to local public toilets at a cost to Portishead Town Council.

Community Response has been engaging with local businesses gathering intelligence and offering reassurance. They have also done joint high-visibility patrols in collaboration with the local police neighbourhood team.

***Youth ASB, Worle:*** Over the summer, Queensway Retail Park in Worle was an area of focus for the team due to regular youth ASB. Community Response increased patrols in the area and engaged with the local retailers to ensure that themselves and the local police neighbourhood team were aware of all incidents that had taken place.

Alongside this, the Community Response Team worked with local schools to identify perpetrators and then worked with the police to follow-up with ASB interventions.

3.5.6 We continue to develop the Community Response Team through a renewed programme of work which is aligned to our 7 principles for Community Response. This includes:

- Building greater links with Town and Parish Councils who are an important link into our communities.
- Moving the Community Response Team onto a permanent shift-rota system to ensure resources will continue to meet demand and operational requirements for both the service and the wider council.
- Further increasing visibility of the Community Response Team across North Somerset by increasing engagement events and patrols. Particularly in rural areas to provide these communities with a point of contact for both the service and the council.
- Maximising opportunities to use enforcement powers to tackle anti-social behaviour. This includes the Public Space Protection Orders and renewing our Community Safety Accreditation Scheme powers.
- Exploring further opportunities for investment in the Community Response Team from Town and Parish Council's and increasing income by use of enforcement powers.

#### **4. Consultation**

4.1 Addressing anti-social behaviour is a priority for the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner and the North Somerset People and Communities Board. These priorities have been identified through analysis of partner agency data and through feedback from communities.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The activities referred to within the report are accommodated within existing approved budgets and resources.

#### **6. Legal Powers and Implications**

6.1 The Council's duties under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) and the Police and Justice Act (2006) are set out in Paragraph 2.1 of this report.

#### **7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

7.1 There are no negative implications on climate change or the environment arising directly from this report.



7.2 The work areas described in this report contribute significantly towards the council's efforts to make our environment safer and cleaner for residents, businesses and visitors.

## **8. Risk Management**

8.1 Joint working will improve information sharing and resilience which will reduce risk.

8.2 The Community Response approach will reduce duplication of effort and ensure that issues are dealt with at first point of contact with NSC, ASC (and potentially other partners). This approach will reduce reputational risk by better meeting community needs.

## **9. Equality Implications**

9.1 The Community Response programme will work across communities in North Somerset. There will be a focus on anti-social behaviour issues which present a greater risk to some vulnerable individuals.

## **10. Corporate Implications**

10.1 This report sets out key work areas in relation to tackling anti-social behaviour which contribute to corporate priorities.

## **11. Options Considered**

Not applicable

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### **Background Papers:**

[Beating Crime Plan – Gov.UK](#)

[Home Office Anti-Social Behaviour Principles – Gov.UK](#)