

Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Minutes

6.00pm, Tuesday 11 February 2003
Committee Room 1, The Council House
Salisbury

Present

C & H Panel Members

Councillor P J Leo (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs M I Evans (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Miss F M P Howard
Councillor M J Osment
Councillor Mrs V M O'Sullivan
Councillor P V H Paisey
Councillor L Randall
Councillor B M Rycroft
Councillor Mrs O V Tanner
Councillor Mrs I M Welsh

Councillor J M Cole-Morgan
(Portfolio Holder, Community and Housing)

In Attendance

Debbie Dixon (Policy Director)
Derek Streek (Head of Housing Management)
Arabella Davies (Democratic Services Officer)
Kirsty Dudin (Tenant's Participation Officer)
Alison Egarr (Community Safety Projects Manager)
Julie Leng (Accountancy Services Manager)
Robin Townsend (Principal Leisure & Community Officer)
Lesley Waller (Head of Community Initiatives)

Apologies

Councillors D Bond and Mrs S L Dennis

Tenants Panel

Councillor F D Bissington, Councillor M J Hewitt, Mr J Curedon, Mrs J Fazackerley, Mr R Goodchild, Mr A Hardiman, Mr J Hinnis, Mrs D Jewell, Mr A Southey and Mr Watkins

Minutes

- 83. PUBLIC QUESTION/STATEMENT TIME** – There were no public questions or statements.
- 84. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** – That the minutes of the last ordinary meeting held on 14th January 2003 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- 85. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.
- 86. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND RENT SETTING 2003/2004**
The Panel considered the attached report of the Chief Accountant and the Head of Housing Management, as considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 5th February 2003.

The Head of Housing Management informed Members that Full Council would consider this item on 19th February and the Chairman reminded Councillors that their comments could be put to this meeting.
- 87. UPDATE ON MAXIMISING EXTERNAL FUNDING TO MEET THE COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**
The Panel noted the previously circulated report of the Principal Leisure and Community Officer. The Chairman added that a full report would be brought back to the next meeting of the Panel on 11th March 2003.

88. IMPROVING THE COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION TO TACKLING ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Crime Concern and its Work

Rob George of Crime Concern was in attendance and explained that Crime Concern was a not for profit organisation. Crime Concern had worked with the four community safety partnerships throughout Wiltshire over the past year and a half and had focussed on antisocial behaviour and how this could be managed. He added that Salisbury District has its own specific problems, different from those experienced in other parts of Wiltshire. Crime Concerns final report detailing its findings would be published in mid-March and this would tie in with the Panel's Review of improving the Council's contribution to tackling anti-social behaviour.

Background to antisocial behaviour

Mr. George went on to set the scene as follows. In the past four/five years antisocial behaviour has come to represent a significant factor in determining people's quality of life, especially where they live. In the past burglary and vehicle crime has received a lot of attention, but antisocial behaviour such as vandalism has not received so much publicity. In reality antisocial behaviour can occur on a day to day basis and it can be more damaging than isolated incidents of crime. Furthermore, tackling antisocial behaviour has been less organised than tackling other crime types.

An Antisocial Behaviour Bill is anticipated in the spring of this year, which in turn is expected to result in an Act that will increase the powers of Local Authorities and the Police in tackling antisocial behaviour.

Consequently, the picture is changing rapidly. Crime and antisocial behaviour represents a key concern for local neighbourhoods and therefore it does need to be tackled in an organised way.

Definition of antisocial behaviour

The actual definition of antisocial behaviour is difficult to pinpoint and much lies "in the eye of the beholder". Some antisocial behaviour borders on the definition of criminality, for example, vandalism. The Crime and Disorder Act 2002 goes some way to providing a definition for antisocial behaviour and includes key words such as alarm, harassment and distress.

Examples of antisocial behaviour could include the following:-

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|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Abandoned Vehicles | Noisy Neighbours |
| Bicycles/Cycles being ridden in a dangerous manner | Playing football |
| Dropping litter/rubbish | Swearing / spitting |
| Graffiti | Underage drinking/solvent abuse |
| Intimidation including racism | Unruly dogs |

Currently there is no reliable information in relation to antisocial behaviour and the effect this has on local people. Local Authorities do have information relating to specific incidents e.g. neighbour disputes, but this is not collected and organised in a systematic way.

As a result one recommendation that could be included in this Review is that information collection should be tightened up for all agencies e.g. the Police, Local Authorities, so that accurate pictures can be drawn such as crime "hotspots". From this, a range of actions can then be targeted according to problems in specific areas.

In recent years there has been a strong emphasis on enforcement, for example Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBO). These have not been used much but do represent an important power that Local Authorities can use. Breach of an ASBO results in a serious penalty for the offender –

two years detention for a young person and 5 years imprisonment for an adult. ASBO's are severe and other approaches may be more appropriate.

Suggested Methods for Tackling Antisocial Behaviour

- Designing out crime – in planning for example stipulating specific conditions e.g. lighting
- Tenancy Agreements
- Mediation Service for neighbours in dispute
- How Environmental Health Officers collect information e.g. noise nuisance
- Use of licences to minimise antisocial behaviour associated with nightclubs
- Use of Leisure and recreation facilities as a way of diverting young people away from antisocial behaviour.

As part of this Review, Members may also like to consider approaches taken by other authorities in dealing with antisocial behaviour. For example Mendip has introduced Parish Wardens and these have been hugely successful in reducing the fear of crime. These are partly funded by neighbourhood warden funds and 50% by the Local Authority itself.

Youth Offending Teams can be useful in identifying troublemakers – focussing on individual families where antisocial behaviour may be building up.

Clearly the District Council has an important role to play in minimising antisocial behaviour and intervening at an early stage. Furthermore, the Council can work in conjunction with other partners in tackling antisocial behaviour.

In conjunction with the presentation from Mr. George, the Panel considered the joint paper of the Head of Housing Management and the Community Safety Projects Manager, circulated under separate cover from the main agenda setting out the scope of the Review on improving the Council's contribution to tackling antisocial behaviour.

AGREED –

- (1) That the proposals contained in the previously circulated paper be agreed, together with the incorporation of the following points:-
 1. Focus on quicker processes (Housing Associations currently tackle issues quicker than the Council)
 2. Witness Protection – investigate what other authorities do.
 3. Parish Wardens- investigate the scheme operated by Mendip.
 4. Look at the effectiveness of SDC's current practice
 5. Methods for "Designing Out" Crime
 6. Look at SDC's response to antisocial behaviour issues
- (2) Include Councillors Miss Howard and Mrs Welsh on the Review Panel.

(NOTE: Members recommend to the New Council that provision be made so that those Members of the C & H Panel who are not District Councillors in the next Municipal Year, be permitted to continue with their involvement if they and the New Council wish).

The meeting closed at 7.50 p.m.