

# Working Group on Anti-Social Behaviour

## Final Report

### 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 This Scrutiny Working Group set out to assess the implementation of the recently approved ASB Strategy. It is common currency that ASB is a major concern on our estates and residents feel not enough is being done to get to grips with a perceived worsening situation. The reality is that there are many keen and conscientious people in various agencies doing very good work, which is rarely appreciated. The reason for the gap between perception and reality is not addressed here but is the subject of a recently commissioned report "Fear and Safety in Bracknell Forest" (see bibliography).
- 5.2 Whilst it is unlikely that we will ever satisfy all demands of all people in relation to ASB we believe that the good work being done needs to be recognised by Members and the Public. This is not to say that more could not be done, if funding was available, or that there are some shortfalls in our current procedures and practices.
- 5.3 It is immediately apparent that partnership working is essential in combating ASB. The offenders are invariably known to many of the agencies involved in the partnership arrangements. This pooling of knowledge and resources has provided many benefits and the case studies above bear testimony to this joint working. There are however constraints and shortfalls which need further work and scrutiny from this or a future Working Group.
- 5.4 Partnership working is a key aspect of the Council's implementation of the ASB Strategy, but it brings with it some potential conflicts and difficulties. Each agency works to its own performance indices and this colours their judgments when working with their partners. We have not detected any fault lines in the working relationships, so hopefully the current mature approach and consensus will ensure that partnership wins over partisanship.
- 5.5 Much of the work within this area involves working with individuals and necessarily demands suitable confidentiality measures. This has resulted in many of the arrangements being restricted to officers of BFBC or our partners. Member input is generally limited to Executive Members. We believe there is scope for Overview & Scrutiny representation on some of the partnerships, which in due course will themselves come under formal scrutiny by the Local Authority. The Crime and Disorder Act review includes a provision for a "Scrutiny Plus" by Overview & Scrutiny Committees so hopefully back bench Councillors will have a greater involvement in the Council's partnership working. Members have first hand experience of the issues in their Wards and can best represent the views of residents.
- 5.6 Naturally the Police will have a major input into any ASB Strategy. Apart from any partnership working they have their own operational strategies. The Police do not have any targets relating to ASB because it is not in itself a criminal activity. The Working Group consider there would be merit in having such a target in this particularly important area of addressing the fear of

crime. The efforts made by TVP and the PCSO's in countering ASB should be recognised in their published outputs; and this is an important crime prevention activity. 'Neighbourhood Policing has been generally welcomed by residents with one caveat – **Abstraction**. Residents do not welcome regular loss of the neighbourhood officer to other duties. This needs to be closely monitored to ensure public confidence in local Policing at Neighbourhood level remains high.

- 5.7 Partnership working and early intervention have proved to be of great value, and this is seen in the case studies above. The role of Police SLO has only recently been filled following the loss of the previous incumbent. This role provides a vital link between the schools, who are often the best source of indicators for early intervention, and the Police who can act before criminal activity commences. The SLO has already established good working relationships with some of the schools and this area of partnership working has encouraging prospects for the future.
- 5.8 It is not surprising that many of the offenders caught up in ASB have personality or mental health issues. The criteria for referral by YOT and DAAT to CAMHS have limitations, specifically for 16 and 17 year old offenders who are no longer in full time education. They no longer qualify as children as far as CAMHS are concerned nor do they qualify as adults for services from Berkshire Healthcare Trust. This will hopefully be reconciled as part of the Children's and Young People's Plan as it is a stated aim within the Plan. Also when the national report in to CAMHS is published it will include good practice criteria which will hopefully inform the relevant partners of BFBC. There is also an issue over funding and service provision for young people with personality disorders as opposed to mental health issues.
- 5.9 To date the PCT partnership has been with the Bracknell Forest PCT. This has been consolidated within the East Berkshire PCT. Whilst there is no reason to assume that this will disrupt this working relationship, any change needs to be carefully managed and this aspect is referred to in the Healthcare Commission Report. Indeed the DAAT's from the three East Berkshire local authorities have been working in combination with the PCT's so the change is already being managed.
- 5.10 The Supporting People programme has a responsibility to assist ex-offenders in finding suitable accommodation. The consequence of any shortfall is that offenders "sofa surf" with previous associates on release from prison. This puts an additional burden on DAAT and the offender in ensuring a successful rehabilitation. As there is a working group looking at Supporting People, this Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Working Group will not progress this issue. It is however worth noting that although much of the ASB experienced by our residents tends to be associated with adolescents this problem will exacerbate the level of ASB and other criminal behaviour perpetrated by more mature ex-offenders.
- 5.11 Much of the anti-social behaviour we have to address is alcohol fuelled. There is a need for a more robust policy in this area as all indications are that underage drinking and binge drinking continues to present challenges for the Police and local authorities. However at this early stage of the new licensing regime it appears that the new opening hours in use by pubs and bars have generally had a beneficial effect. Where there have been concerns the new regime has facilitated a more robust response to premises which are not

fulfilling their obligations. An Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy is currently being progressed by DAAT and the PCT. The O & S Panel should be involved at an early stage and prior to finalisation.

- 5.12 Many of the issues around ASB appear to stem from poor parenting. This has been recognised and parenting contracts and mediation are provided by Solutions Together UK through a one year contract with the YOT. Most of the cases, 16 currently, are voluntary contracts with one case as part of a statutory order. A Scrutiny Working Group should look at this area in more detail as the implementation of the ASB Strategy progresses.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 1. There is a need for greater input and involvement from non-Executive Councillors with the various partnerships dealing with ASB.**
- 2. Abstraction rates need to be carefully monitored to ensure maximum presence of Neighbourhood Officers on the residential estates they have been assigned to serve. The O & S Panel should request a presentation from TVP to ensure Members are fully appraised of how this impacts on the policy of Neighbourhood Policing.**
- 3. Early intervention is a key element in the strategy of combating ASB and the role of Schools and the TVP through the SLO needs to be reviewed to ensure we are capitalising on the potential of intervention in this area.**
- 4. The CAMHS criteria needs to be reviewed to ensure those 16 and 17 year old offenders, no longer in full time education, and excluded from the services provided by CAMHS are guaranteed the support they need.**
- 5. The Supporting People programme should address the shortage of suitable accommodation for ex-prisoners on their return to the community to ensure they are less likely to be drawn into another cycle of re-offending.**
- 6. The current and proposed policies to tackle alcohol abuse, particularly by young people, should be brought to the O & S Panel so that Members can be fully involved in progressing useful initiatives in this area.**
- 7. The Health O & S Panel should review the performance of the local health providers in relation to the recently published Healthcare Commission Report and the soon to be published report on CAMHS, to ensure they are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities.**
- 8. There is evidence that agencies working within partnerships continue to follow their own agendas which leads to confusion. This issue should be fully explored to produce a workable solution.**
- 9. The Council should ask TVP to adopt a target for their ASB work in Bracknell Forest, based on CADIS and their other information.**
- 10. The Adult Social Care and Housing O & S Panel should review and update this report in November 2007.**