

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Tuesday, 12th March, 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Lee Anderson in the Chair;

Councillors Amanda Brown, John Knight,
Lachlan Morrison, Christine Quinn-Wilcox,
Matthew Relf and Mike Smith (as substitute for
Jackie James).

Apology for Absence: Councillor Jackie James.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Richard Crossland, Katherine Green,
Mike Joy, Nicky Moss, Antonio Taylor,
Rebecca Whitehead and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Inspector Craig Hall (Nottinghamshire Police)
Minesh Patel (Change, Grow, Live)
Councillor Cheryl Butler, Councillor
Lauren Mitchell and Councillor Jason Zadrozny.

OS.21 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.22 Overview and Scrutiny: Crime and Disorder (Anti-social Behaviour)

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Craig Hall (Nottinghamshire Police), Minesh Patel (Change, Grow, Live), Rebecca Whitehead and Antonio Taylor (Community Safety Team) and Nicky Moss (Housing Services) to the meeting and advised that the evening's events would be streamed live through the Council's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Those following the meeting would be able to submit questions which representatives would then seek to answer during the meeting if time permitted. The Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Forum had also submitted questions for consideration in advance and had indicated that they would be watching the live stream.

In accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function had powers to consider crime and disorder issues and the meeting had been arranged to enable Members and members of the public to engage, discuss and focus on anti-social behaviour within the Ashfield District.

Community Protection Team Presentation

The Committee firstly heard from the Council's Community Protection Manager, Rebecca Whitehead, who outlined the general classifications for anti-social behaviour and the Council's priorities for tackling ASB along with its partner agencies.

The Community Protection Team were currently made up of the following:-

2 Community Protection Team Leaders
10 Community Protection Officers
1 Community Safety and Strategic Partnerships Officer
1 Domestic Violence and Vulnerability Officer
1 Drug and Alcohol Outreach Worker.

Other Council teams also contributed towards the reduction in ASB with assistance from Housing Options, Licensing, Environmental Health, Environmental Protection and Private Sector Enforcement as and when required.

The Community Protection service had now been running for over 10 years with uniformed Community Protection Officers (CPO's) patrolling the streets of Ashfield. Officers were on duty 7 days a week over a variety of shift patterns. Their duties included patrolling the Council's parks, estates and town centre and much of their interaction with the public involved offering support and guidance to many vulnerable people within Ashfield's communities.

Their duties included:-

- Confiscating Alcohol
- Managing Public Space Protection Orders
- Removing Abandoned Vehicles
- Issuing Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts
- Facilitating Community Litter Picks.

The Community Protection Team also included a smaller Complex Case Team that managed multiple support needs for vulnerable adults often made known to the Council through initial incidences of ASB or following a particular crisis.

The Council's Complex Case Team Leader addressed the Committee and gave a brief overview of the work of the Complex Case Team. A holistic approach to an individual's needs was always the priority and positive action was paramount to ensure that a variety of support mechanisms were utilised, as required, to reduce the person's level of need. Mental health issues were often at the centre of the problems being experienced and partner organisations offered valuable support and expertise to intervene as necessary.

The Complex Case Team used various tools to find solutions including:-

- Early Intervention
- Mediation
- Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts
- Youth Diversion Events i.e. Litter Picks.

More formal enforcement action included:-

- Community Protection Notices
- Injunctions
- Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's)
- Closure Orders
- Possessions.

Having recently carried out a Case Audit, data had revealed that 16% of cases were resolved via enforcement action but 84% had been successfully remedied through the use of early intervention methods.

The Community Protection Manager continued by detailing a particular case study from Sutton Town Centre. Problems associated with substance misuse (Mamba) had been increasing and a rise in homelessness was intrinsically linked. Many people were beginning to feeling unsafe within the town centre and incidences had been reported that vulnerable people were also becoming victims of attacks.

To endeavour to address the situation, the Police and Community Protection Team worked tirelessly with the outreach workers from Change, Grow, Live who were invaluable in supporting the needs of the individuals struggling with substance abuse and homelessness. The problem was compounded by an individual who was offering free food on a daily basis which, over time, caused the town centre to become a gathering place for many people in need.

Following an increase in patrols, support worker intervention and the use of targeted enforcement action the situation was resolved by all partners working together to address multiple issues as required.

Nottinghamshire Police Presentation

To follow, the Committee were addressed by Inspector Craig Hall from Nottinghamshire Police who wished to take the opportunity to give a perspective on the most recent crime and anti-social behaviour figures.

To clarify the meaning of ASB from a policing perspective, ASB covered a wide range of unacceptable activity that could cause harm to individuals, the community or the environment with examples as follows:-

- nuisance, rowdy or inconsiderate neighbours
- vandalism, graffiti and fly-posting
- street drinking
- environmental damage including littering, dumping of rubbish and abandonment of cars
- prostitution related activity
- begging and vagrancy
- fireworks misuse
- inconsiderate or inappropriate use of vehicles.

The latest crime figures in Ashfield were slightly below average compared against a similar demographic area but in relation to Nottinghamshire figures, Ashfield was showing at slightly above average. Committee acknowledged

that a rise in crime figures was not always a negative and on many occasions it was only due to an increase in crime reporting which could be viewed as a positive step being taken by the public.

ASB crime figures across Ashfield were currently the fourth highest in Nottinghamshire with the noticeable increase coming from Kirkby. Coxmoor Estate was a current priority for the Police where ASB continued to be an escalating problem. The summer months always brought about a rise in ASB and this inevitable increase due to the warmer weather and lighter nights was already being planned for in relation to officer working patterns and patrols etc.

Questioner:	Question:	Response (and Responder):
Councillor Mike Smith	Do Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) contribute to ASB?	Too wide a question; many factors contribute to ASB although acknowledgement that HMO's can be difficult to monitor at times (<i>Police</i>)
Facebook Viewer	Police are dealing with moped nuisance at Coxmoor, when will they deal with the issues at Huthwaite and Brierley?	Bike nuisance is rife in most areas. Sutton is the biggest area and Police have to prioritise issues accordingly. Try and balance assistance but currently dealing with an increase in child exploitation (<i>Police</i>)
Councillor Matthew Relf	Applauded preventative work and referred to the Community Protection Manager's speech about Complex Case Team work and how £1 spent unlocks £12 more.	Cost benefit analysis undertaken by Nottingham Trent University revealed that prevention and early intervention reduced individuals needs in the longer term. Council had 1700 new cases to manage with 9 officers in 2018/19. Continually try to do more (<i>Community Protection Manager</i>)

Brookhill Court, Sutton in Ashfield – Incidences of ASB

The Chairman introduced a Care Worker to the Committee and advised that she was in attendance at the meeting to speak about the difficulties being experienced by Care Workers visiting patients at Brookhill Court, Sutton in Ashfield.

Having visited an elderly patient at Brookhill Court for some time, she was experiencing real problems accessing homes due to people using drugs and causing nuisance at the entrance to the Court and on the stairwells leading to flats. She felt unsafe and had heard many anecdotes of Court residents having to be escorted to and from their homes due to the worry of being confronted by people causing trouble and displaying the effects of substance

misuse. She had contacted the Council many times to report the issues but had felt that no real action had been taken for over six months.

The Council's Tenancy Manager, Nicky Moss, responded and explained that many of the tenant age designations for the Courts had been in place since the 1970's. The Council were trying to resolve the issues being experienced at Brookhill Court but reiterated the fact that anti-social and nuisance behaviour was not exclusively the remit of younger people; the Council had dealt with these issues from tenants of all ages.

The Council was required to abide by strict guidance in relation to offering tenancies and were unable, at this point in time, to actively vet any potential tenants. However, they carried out all the appropriate checks available to them and their Tenancy Sustainment Service assisted new tenants through their introductory tenancies and advised tenants on expected standards of behaviour within Council owned properties.

Once tenants had taken possession of their properties, the Council carried out regular tenancy checks and were committed to applying various preventative measure to ensure tenants had the opportunity to put things right prior to any enforcement action being taken to evict them if ultimately required. The Council currently had over 7,000 owned-properties to manage and this was an ongoing challenge in itself.

Members debated the concerns regarding ASB offenders being stereotyped as youngsters. Many different people of all ages committed incidences of ASB and presented with a range of issues, sometimes extremely complex. The Police usually dealt with them in the first instance from a crime perspective with the Council taking over to support them with their ongoing needs as required in the longer term

It was mooted that the Council's processes for designating its courts and sheltered accommodation schemes (based on age range) was perhaps out of date but the Council faced ongoing pressures to house people without having any real powers to vet them prior to any allocation of accommodation.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Councillor Christian Chapman was of the opinion that data sharing between partner organisations was key and he remained committed to pushing for better sharing opportunities between partner organisations as required.

Members discussed the Council's investment in their Community Protection Officers and whilst laudable, it was questioned as to whether they were undertaking the work of the Police that Ashfield residents continually paid a hefty precept for. The Police were obviously prioritising the high level crime within the area but this was sometimes at the expense of residents who were experiencing ongoing problems with incidences of low level crime and ASB that never seemed to be resolved.

Inspector Craig Hall accepted that ASB incidences were at a fairly high level in the District but reiterated that the Police continued to worked closely with the CPO's and other partner organisations to share information and co-ordinate a targeted approach to addressing the issues as they arose.

Questioner:	Question:	Response (and Responder):
Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Forum	What has been implemented to tackle drugs and alcohol related crimes in Ashfield?	Partnership working is effective at tackling drug and alcohol related crime. A recent check proved shops are vigilant in refusing to sell alcohol to underage customers. Patrols are increased for the night-time economy and street pastors do an invaluable job of assisting inebriated individuals in getting home safely and without incident. The Licensing Team support alcohol use with robust and effective licensing conditions and patrols are carried out in hotspot areas by both the Police and CPO's <i>(Police)</i>
Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Forum	What has been implemented to tackle knife crime in Ashfield?	Ashfield doesn't tend to have a gang culture so knife crime is more related to isolated incidents and domestic violence. Domestic Violence Co-ordinators assist with safeguarding issues for victims and Nottinghamshire Police have their own dedicated unit to deal with knife crime. A knife amnesty is ongoing at present which had had a positive response thus far <i>(Police)</i>
Facebook Viewer	What are the Police doing to tackle street robbery on the Leamington Estate?	Leamington Estate currently has two Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) allocated to the area that undertaken patrols on a regular basis. It is not designated as a hotspot at present <i>(Police)</i>
Councillor Amanda Brown	Concerns that the previous New Cross Team and Broomhill Team are being spread District-wide as the newly fashioned Complex Case Team. Have any additional staff been recruited?	The service was mainstreamed in April 2018 as a District-wide Complex Case Team. A Domestic Abuse Caseworker and Substance Misuse Worker (externally funded) have been added to the team of 4 Complex Case Workers. All the links established through the

		work of the previous teams are still there and expertise has increased (<i>Complex Case Team Leader</i>)
Councillor Amanda Brown	Can reassurances be given that misogyny (hate crimes against women) will be taken seriously in Ashfield?	Nottinghamshire Police were the first force to introduce misogyny as a hate crime and are committed to tackling the issue. Ashfield does experience incidences of misogyny (<i>Police</i>)
Facebook Viewer	How can residents set up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme?	Unfortunately, Neighbourhood Watch Schemes are on the decline. They rely on external funding that is hard to raise and developments in communication methods (i.e. social media) have established different, more effective ways of gathering and reporting evidence (<i>Police</i>)
Councillor Lachlan Morrison	Do you agree that mental health problems are often the root cause of and contribute towards anti-social behaviour in offenders?	Anti-social behaviour happens for many reasons, often complex, and yes, the Police do see many offenders suffering from complex mental health problems. This is where partnership working is invaluable to ensure that support is available to individuals as required. Custody suites are now equipped to deal with and support offenders with mental health needs (<i>Police</i>)
Facebook Viewer	What are the Police doing to tackle muggings by gangs of kids on mopeds?	Mugging is classed as robbery. The Police off road motorcycle team (shared with Mansfield Police) will tackle offenders but do not undertake any chases as they are deemed as too dangerous. Dangerous riding on estates is a real problem and Police rely on evidence from the public who can give evidence as witnesses (<i>Police</i>)

Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Forum	Do the Police believe that ASB offenders are usually from a certain age group and do they carry out any preventative work in schools?	ASB can be carried out by offenders of all ages but the Police do make educational visits to schools and have a designated School Intervention Officer. Visits include discussions around being safe from exploitation and knife crime awareness (<i>Police</i>)
Facebook User	Do you think the Nottinghamshire Police Force is better with the appointment of the Police and Crime Commissioner?	<p>On the whole the appointment of the Police and Crime Commissioner has had a positive effect on the Nottinghamshire Police Force. Cannot comment from a political perspective (<i>Police</i>)</p> <p>Concerns that the Police and Crime Commissioners Office has no tangible checks in place regarding contribution or value for money. No mechanisms seem to be available for performance challenge or accountability (<i>Leader of the Council</i>)</p>
Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Forum	How are community concerns regarding anti-social behaviour expressed? Are these communication channels effective and two way?	The Integrated Hub works very hard to share information received from the public (received from varying sources) between its partners including the Police and Council's Community Protection Team. However, more can always be done to improve effective communications between teams and the Council is always looking to improve its services wherever possible.

On conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman thanked Inspector Craig Hall Minesh Patel, Rebecca Whitehead, Antonio Taylor and Nicky Moss for attending the meeting and contributing to the debate. He also thanked Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Forum for their excellent questions and those submitted by members of the public through its Facebook Live and Twitter pages.

It had been recognised that the collaborative work being undertaken by the Police and the Council's Community Protection Team (and contributing partners) continued to tackle problems associated with anti-social behaviour

through a variety of initiatives, integrated support and working practices. The comments made and responses given during the meeting had been gratefully received and would assist with any potential solutions for improving the service going forward.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Community Protection Manager be requested to consider the possibility of engaging a dedicated Mental Health Worker within the Complex Case Team should any additional funding become available;
- b) having acknowledged the benefits of restorative justice, the Council to consider its application on a wider basis and to focus on the rehabilitation of ASB offenders through reconciliation with victims and local communities via positive impact events i.e. litter picks and environmental improvement days;
- c) as a result of the statement given by the Care Worker regarding difficulties in accessing patient's homes (within Council-owned sheltered courts) due to drug use and ASB within the communal areas, the Community Protection Team be requested to endeavour to capture additional anecdotal evidence from Care Workers, staff and regular visitors to the courts to enable any ASB issues to be addressed more efficiently via a targeted multi-partnership approach.

The meeting closed at 8.57 pm

Chairman.