

Meeting:	Scrutiny Review – Complex ASB
Meeting Date:	28 th November
Publication:	Open
Council Priority:	A safe place to call home
Wards:	All
Report of:	Executive Member for Community Safety
Report No.	

Subject: Response to the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - Multi-agency response to complex Anti-Social Behaviour Report

1.1. **Synopsis**

- 1.2. Between March 2023 and June 2024, the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of the local arrangements for managing anti-social behaviour (ASB), particularly in relation to complex cases that involved joint working between council services such as police, housing providers, social care, mental health services, and other agencies. The review was undertaken to assess the strengths of our current approach and to consider how this can be developed further to understand and address the challenges faced in managing complex cases to the benefit of our residents.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1. To approve the findings of the multi-agency response to complex anti-social behaviour report.
- 2.2. To agree the Executive responses to the recommendations of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 4 of this report.

- 2.3. To agree that officers report back on progress made to the Homes and Communities Scrutiny Committee at an agreed future date.

3. Background

- 3.1. This review was carried out with reference to the council's mission to provide 'a safe place to call home', in particular the vision that: "Residents feel safer in their neighbourhoods, parks and town centre and appreciate that the root causes of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in public spaces are routinely and actively tackled and managed by landlords, the council and police. They are also empowered and confident enough to contribute to resolving ASB issues".
- 3.2. The Committee considered a wide range of evidence in carrying out its review. Members held a focus group with local residents and also held a survey to understand residents' views and perspectives of anti-social behaviour. The Committee met with a wide range of council officers from the Community Safety and Housing Operations teams. Evidence was received from key partner organisations, including the Metropolitan Police, and Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, who provide mental health and drug and alcohol addiction support services in the borough. The Committee also considered evidence from Public Health on how the council could take a 'public health' approach to anti-social behaviour.
- 3.3. Committee Members led a discussion on anti-social behaviour at a Housing Association Liaison Group meeting, which is attended by major social landlords in the borough. Members also attended a meeting of the Safeguarding Adults Board, to hear how agencies work together to protect vulnerable people who may be both victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. A visit was held with the Street Outreach Team, to see first-hand how officers engage with the street homeless population and the support that is provided to both safeguard their welfare and reduce ASB.

4. Response to the Scrutiny Committee recommendations

- 4.1. **Recommendation One: Housing Operations should complete the review of the officer structure. The intended outcome being a service that promotes and facilitates early intervention in anti-social behaviour issues. Housing officers having smaller caseloads, and a more localised focus will help to build trust with residents, and allowing residents direct access to their Housing Officer will help to improve outcomes and empower our residents.**

All services involved in preventing and responding to ASB should review their capacity for carrying out early intervention work and consider if resources are deployed effectively to deliver this aim.

- 4.2. **Response:** The Executive notes that a key ambition for the council has been to ensure that it delivers the best housing management service in the country by embedding a strong resident focus. It is our objective to build residents' resilience and in focusing on early up stream intervention and prevention. In order to deliver this objective, a restructure to the housing teams was launched in September 2024, following consultation with 36,000 tenants and leaseholders. The new housing management service will reduce the patch sizes by over 50% to 600 residents per officer from the 1,400 homes currently managed per officer. It is anticipated that the restructure will be implemented by the end of the year to ensure the service has the capacity to carry out early intervention work and tackle anti-social behaviour more effectively.
- 4.3. Over the last year Community Safety, Adult Social Care, Housing and Mental Health services have had quarterly round table meetings to understand and enhance joint working around residents with complex needs to ensure they receive the right support at the right time in the right place delivered by the right team. The meetings are driving new governance arrangements, use of data within the partnership and communicating action to staff, colleagues and members.
- 4.4. **Recommendation Two: The Council should review if Islington has the right mix and supply of supported living options in the borough. If needed, pathways and resources should be put in place to best to support those with complex needs.**
- 4.5. **Response:** The Executive welcomes the recommendation and notes that there have been significant strides taken to identify the need of supported living options in the borough. We can confirm that additional funding has already been obtained from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Greater London Authority, which will provide additional accommodation for our residents. A comprehensive review is also being conducted with Adult Social Care and Health to help shape the future provision of support in Islington.
- 4.6. **The Council should consider offering enhanced wrap-around housing support to new tenants, particularly in the early months of their tenancy, and in cases where tenants are already known to other services, or where ASB has been a factor in previous tenancies. This early intervention approach should help tenants to embed into their local community, live independently, and help them navigate local services as required. This would allow any tenancy and ASB issues to be identified and addressed at an early stage.**
- 4.7. **Response:** The Executive can advise that this recommendation will be addressed through the introduction of the new Housing Needs and Housing Management

restructures both launched during September 2024. The Housing Management service will now be locality based focussed around North, South and Central teams with each Housing Officer managing less than 600 homes each; a reduction from the current 1.400 homes managed. This will enable all residents to receive a service meeting everyone's specific needs. The service will also promote tenant empowerment and conduct regular monthly drop-in surgeries for each of the 600 residents in each officer's geographical patch. The Housing Officer will also focus on community empowerment working by working in partnership with Tenants and Resident Associations and community and faith-based agencies to address the specific needs of our residents.

- 4.8. **Recommendation Three: The Council should investigate if additional funding should be made available to estates, in the same way as the Thriving Neighbourhoods programme, to not only improve the built environment on estates, but to develop community initiatives. This may be particularly helpful in bringing communities together as part of the response to long-standing ASB issues on estates.**
- 4.9. **Response:** The Executive notes that work on this recommendation is currently underway with relevant council teams in Homes and Communities liaising with central government to identify funding streams that will support the Housing Revenue Account to provide enhanced services to our residents. Additionally, the Thriving Neighbourhoods programme continues to be an effective method of engaging closely with our residents to improve our estates for their benefit and we continue to ensure that lessons learned from the delivery of the programme are implemented accordingly into future approaches.
- 4.10. **Recommendation Four: The Council should develop information sharing and partnership working agreements with housing associations around ASB issues. This will enable housing providers and other services to target additional support to tenants at an early stage, working to prevent ASB where possible, and allow for cases of ASB to be dealt with more holistically.**
- 4.11. **Response:** The Executive acknowledges the need to work closely with the numerous range of Registered Social Landlords that provide over 18,000 homes in Islington to ensure the safety and consistency of quality for all of our residents. This activity is currently being developed through the existing Housing Association partnership liaison meetings that are co-ordinated through the Director of Housing Operations. Furthermore, arrangements have been made to ensure that resident facing staff have a regular space to share information, best practice and to seek

joint solutions to housing specific issues affecting Islington residents with a Housing Association and Islington Council partnership agreement having been launched covering this work.

- 4.12. **Recommendation Five: The Council should invest in improving the systems used to report, manage and monitor ASB issues. This will allow officer resources to be deployed more efficiently in responding to ASB issues. The Committee would like to see a clear scope and timeline for this improvement work.**
- 4.13. **Response:** The Executive is aware that having effective systems in place to report and action ASB issues is of paramount importance for the officers on the ground to ensure that resources are dedicated at the right place and at the right time. The ASB programme highlighted that we also needed an intelligent system that funnelled issues to the teams, gave an automated response to manage expectations of service response and delivered continuous updates until the case is resolved. The programme also discovered the need for the reporting form to be the single data source for reported ASB across the Council to ensure the single version of the truth.
- 4.14. The ASB reporting form (Granicus) had a soft launch at the end of May 2024 and is a web-based form used by residents online and if residents do not have access to the internet, they can call our contact centre where agents use the same form to record the issue. A full launch of the system is due in September 2024 and to date we have had over 3,000 reports with the majority resolved.
- 4.15. **Recommendation Six: The Council should produce and distribute information to all residents with clear definitions of ASB; how to report ASB; why it is important to report ASB; which agency will respond; and to set expectations around communications and response times. This could also include advice on how to engage with neighbours, how the council supports residents with mental health and substance misuse issues, and advice on how residents experiencing ASB can access help to support their own wellbeing. This information should be available in a variety of formats and a clear communications plan should be developed, with regular ongoing communications and dedicated resources.**
- 4.16. **Response:** The Executive welcomes this recommendation and a corporate ASB policy has been recently developed so that residents can be clear on our approach as a council. It sets out what we as a council mean by anti-social behaviour and outlines an agreed set of principles that the council applies when responding to a report of ASB. It details how and when the council will respond when contacted for help by people impacted by ASB. Included is information on what will happen

when reported behaviour is not ASB and will provide information on where else support or guidance can be found where it is not for the council to respond. The policy also explains the roles of our partners, including the police as well as other external organisations.

4.17. As well as an ASB policy, two other important housing policies have been developed by the council that work alongside each other. These are the Good Neighbourhood Management policy and Fair, Inclusive and Accessible Services Commitment. The former sets out the council approach to setting expectations and managing neighbour relationships in our estates, blocks and street properties whilst the latter sets out our approach to adapting our services to meet specific needs of our residents and their households. This is especially important where residents have individual needs or experience specific barriers to accessing services or support. Both documents form an important part of the council's commitment to providing a more equal future for Islington residents by delivering fair, inclusive and accessible services.

4.18. **Recommendation Seven: When responding to ASB issues, the Council should send clear communications to residents to outline what is likely to happen in response, and explain what information can and cannot be shared. This should also explain when further reports should be made, and why it is helpful to continue to report issues.**

The Council should develop training for councillors, TRAs, community groups, and other local organisations to explain definitions of ASB, reporting mechanisms, issues around information disclosure, and expected responses. This will help those in community leadership positions to signpost to relevant services.

4.19. **Response:** The Executive welcomes this recommendation and as mentioned above, we have developed a new corporate ASB policy along with the Good Neighbourhood Management policy and Fair, Inclusive and Accessible Services Commitment. These policies have a communications strategy to ensure that councillors, community leaders and residents are aware of the actions that can be taken by the Council and relevant partners such as the Police. It is envisaged that an online training module will be implemented by the autumn of 2024

4.20. **Recommendation Eight: The Council should develop a process of holding local ward level / early intervention multi-agency ASB boards to review and respond to ASB issues before they escalate and reach the threshold for MARAC. Taking a multi-agency approach at an earlier stage should enable a**

more comprehensive local response. Appropriate resources should be made available in order to deliver this recommendation.

- 4.21. **Response:** The Executive recognises the importance of early intervention in ensuring that the impacts of ASB are minimised upon our communities. Such approaches delivered in our Community Safety team have seen the number of weekly ASB hotspot locations reduce by 40% over the past six months and there is a clear commitment to delivering interventions at the earliest opportunity. As outlined in the response to recommendation 9, funds have been identified to develop a team of staff dedicated to providing early interventions to both victims and perpetrators of ASB in the Autumn. The impacts of this work will be monitored closely with reports on impact to be provided to the Safer Islington Partnership.
- 4.22. **Recommendation Nine: The Council should develop an early intervention pathway for cuckooing cases. This could include a dedicated support worker who can monitor cases and offer support to individuals who have previously been cuckooed. Appropriate resources should be made available in order to deliver this recommendation.**
- 4.23. **Response:** The Executive notes that since the completion of the review, and in recognition of the good work done to date in tackling cuckooing at the earliest possible opportunity, funds have been identified to develop a team of staff dedicated to providing early interventions to residents who are at risk of or have been victims of cuckooing in the borough. This would see a multi-disciplinary team being developed to manage a number of intervention panels across Islington and to build on already recognised best practice. Plans for these changes are currently being developed in conjunction with staff and unions and a proposal to is expected to be consulted on in the autumn.
- 4.24. Whilst changes to staffing levels will build additional capacity to deliver interventions, improved ways of working have already been implemented since this review. The introduction of a case management team has meant closer working with cuckooing leads to take action against repeat offenders who exploit vulnerable residents. This closer working has led to direct enforcement action taken against criminals resulting in a reduction of repeat cuckooing offences.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.1.1. This report addresses many of the points from the scrutiny committee's complex anti-social behaviour report. It responds to the specific recommendations made, without necessarily instructing a policy or funding change at this juncture. As the responses to the report are not commitments or policy changes, but statements of

current actions or proposals being developed it is not possible to quantify this report. Any proposals, if taken forward as a consequence of this report, will require a full set of Financial Implications to be completed.

5.2. Legal Implications

- 5.2.1. As a Local Authority landlord, Islington Council has a responsibility to prevent anti-social behaviour by keeping the neighbourhood and communal areas under its control safe and clean.
- 5.2.2. Government guidance makes clear that Local Authority landlords should make it easy for residents to report anti-social behaviour, should take complaints seriously, and should act professionally. Local Authority landlords should also tell residents about the help available from other agencies, and support residents to approach these agencies if they need help.
- 5.2.3. Under the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, The Regulator of Social Housing requires all registered providers to have a policy on how they work with relevant organisations to deter and to tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing. The proposed policy must include provisions demonstrating compliance with the mandatory tenant satisfaction measures applicable to good neighbourliness that came into effect on 1 April 2023.
- 5.2.4. Local Authorities have powers to tackle ASB under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and should be aware of the rights of residents to make an application for an ASB case review (also known as the Community Trigger) under that Act. Local Authorities also have duties under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to inspect their area to detect any statutory nuisance, and to investigate noise complaints, so as to decide whether the noise is a statutory nuisance.

5.3. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 5.3.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 5.3.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening was completed and a full Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because the findings relate to the improved delivery of services to residents.

5.4. Environmental Implications

- 5.4.1. Whilst this report has no significant Environmental Implications of itself, there will be a requirement to undertake full review of such implications as part of the work contained within the response. For example, the commissioning of services which is mentioned within the report would require a full Environmental Implication Assessment to be carried out should commissioning be above £189k.
- 5.4.2. There will be some Environmental Implications from the delivery of training in pursuance to the aims of this report as well as from the delivery of the work itself. This will primarily be in the form of vehicle use, materials, computer use and from the energy of buildings being utilised. These can be mitigated by the use of buildings with renewable energy supplies, on site renewables and via the shift from gas heating to a low carbon solution.
- 5.4.3. We are confident that in pursuit of dealing with anti-social behaviour in the borough, there will be overall positive environmental benefits. This will include encouraging the use of active travel via safer streets in our borough.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1.1. This report provides the collective response to the recommendations outlined by the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee and the multi-agency response to complex anti-social behaviour report. Progress on the contents of the report will be provided at an agreed future date of the Homes and Communities Scrutiny committee.

Report approval:

Authorised by: Cllr John Woolf

Executive Member for Community Safety

Date: 3rd September 2024

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