

MINUTES

MEETING: Anti Social Behaviour Study Group

DATE: Tuesday 5th September 2006

TIME: 10.30 a.m.

VENUE: Council Chambers, Gateshead Civic Centre

CHAIR: Greg Johnson, South Tyneside Council

Apologies:

Ann Hall – Chester-le Street DC
Dianne Hedley – Sedgfield BC
Stuart Brown – Castle Morpeth BC
Jocelyn Sirs – Housing Hartlepool
Neil McFarlane – York CC
Sue Wharam – Guinness Trust
Gilly Marshall – Erimus Housing

Lee Colclough – Yorkshire Coast Homes
Gavin Brown – Endeavour
Simon Riley – Doncaster MBC
Libby Griffiths – Housing Hartlepool
Sharon Dalton – Coast & Country Housing
Pam Cox – East Durham Homes
Karen McClarence – Chester-le-Street

Present:

Simon Page – NHC
Leah Blacklock – NHC
Michael Cowie – Sunderland Housing Group
Andrea Barker – Gateshead MBC
David Jones – Chester-le- street
Mandy Reed – Gateshead MBC
Amanda Fulcher – East Durham Homes
Malcolm Woodhall – Tynedale DC
Neil Hobson – Sedgfield BC
Philip Shaw – Wear & Tees CSP
Monica Marron – Middlesbrough BC
Kelly-Anne Burton- Cheviot Housing
Ian Johnson – Blyth Valley Housing

Greg Johnson – South Tyneside
Paul Noddings – Tristar Homes
Clare Tierney – Gateshead MBC
David Patterson – Gateshead MBC
Gill Hayton – South Tyneside MBC
Clive Ledner – Accent Group
Garry Scurfield – Castle Morpeth BC
Ron Baker – Sedgfield BC
Graham Carter – Darlington BC
Joanne Russell – Middlesbrough BC
Ray Gage – Erimus Housing
Colin Blackett – Blyth Valley Housing
Phil Tweddle – Richmondshire DC

1.0 Minutes of last meeting

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting of the 31st May 2006 were agreed as an accurate record.

2.0 Matters Arising

- 2.1 There were no matters arising.

3.0 Home Office Update, Alex Rhind

- 3.1 Next round of Respect Academies will run throughout September, focussing primarily on parenting and intensive family support. Nearby venues and dates are:

- Carlisle 26/09
- Sheffield 28/09 & 29/09

- 3.2 The new 'Respect Squad' service has been launched, with Alex heading-up the service as Respect Squad Leader. It consists of 10 expert practitioners:

Feizal Hajat - principal lawyer and team leader of the community safety legal team at Birmingham City Council

Chief Inspector Mark Harrison - Mark leads the partnership and crime reduction department of the Kent police, specialising in rural and environmental anti-social behaviour, as well community engagement and neighbourhood policing

Trevor Kennett - Head of Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Services for the London Borough of Newham. He has worked with government departments and national agencies to develop the use of anti-social behaviour tools and powers

Niamh Noone - solicitor to the Chief Constable of Lancashire, with a special interest in anti-social behaviour order applications, and has been expert advisor to the Home Office on changes to these applications for several years

Gill Strachan - Assistant director of the Respect Task Force and was responsible for setting up and managing the Dundee Families Project. She is working with the task force to establish family intervention projects around the country

Bill Pitt - head of Manchester City Council's Nuisance Strategy Group. He is one of the country's leading expert practitioners on the use of powers in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

Sue Strickland - Anti-social Behaviour Manager for Bristol. She has extensive experience of tackling nuisance and anti-social behaviour, and delivers training on tackling begging, publicity and communication, using housing legislation and partnership working

Ian Walker- heads Camden Council's Anti-social Behaviour Action Group, where he has developed quality services to address anti-social behaviour. His expertise is in the areas of housing, hate crime and youth and drug related anti-social behaviour

Sergeant Mark Wear - manages an anti-social behaviour team in the West Cumbria basic command unit of Cumbria Constabulary. He specialises in forcing people to take action and engaging communities, and has expertise in ASBOs and using Housing Act powers to the benefit of the community and the police

- 3.3 The aim of the service is to help all agencies tackle ASB. Any organisations who are struggling with particularly difficult cases or simply need extra advice on a case should complete an on-line form (www.respect.gov.uk/whats-being-done/squad/submit-your-case.aspx). The case will then be reviewed and if necessary, a site visit arranged. An action plan will then be produced to advise the applicant on ways forward and all results will be published on the website to enable everyone to learn from them.
- 3.4 To date, the majority of submissions have been from the public as agencies seem reluctant to put forward cases and Alex asked the group why this was the case. It was suggested that organisations may feel that they will be perceived as a failure if they submit cases which they were unable to deal with, without outside advice and assistance.
- 3.5 Consultation is about to begin on House Closure Orders (a property would be sealed as with Crack Houses). In England and Wales there is currently only Crack House Closure measures available, however, in Scotland they have the power to close houses without Class A drug misuse being involved. The consultation will include a case study from Montrose on the use of the order and the group suggested to Alex that a number of cases studies be included which cover single households, family households, private properties and rented properties.
- 3.6 In relation to the consultation, discussions are underway with DCLG around homelessness as some of the homes affected by the Order will

contain children and there needs to be clear guidance established on what happens in these cases.

3.7 In Scotland the Order is a police power and it was suggested that for England and Wales it should be a joint power between the police and local authority. However, at present it is leaning towards a police power.

3.8 It was also suggested that the consultation paper make clear which tenures would be affected by the Order and whether it would relate to commercial properties too and how long properties would be closed for.

3.9 The Respect Standard for Housing Management was published in August. It outlines the core components essential to delivering an effective response to anti-social behaviour and building stronger communities, such as accountability, leadership, giving greater resident empowerment, and supporting community efforts at tackling anti-social behaviour. It is a self-assessment document for organisations to complete and everyone is encouraged to sign-up to it (www.communities.gov.uk/standardsignup), however it is voluntary.

4.0 Under the Bridge Project, Greg Johnson

4.1 The project was set-up in South Tyneside with Byker Bridge Housing Association and funding from DCLG. It is run by Byker Bridge and supports people at risk of losing their tenancies due to drug use etc. The aim of the project is to keep people from becoming homeless. It was launched in January and is currently working with 20 families. There is a co-ordinator and five workers. The profile of users of the service is:

- 24% families (60% of these are single parent families)
- 14% couples
- 62% lone adults

People who use the service are involved in neighbourhood disputes, noise problems and criminal activities for example and some suffer from drug, alcohol and solvent abuse.

4.2 There is no residential element to the project and no 24 hour support. There is a commitment to develop 50 intensive family projects. The intensive input does work and is different from social services as it is a whole family approach.

5.0 Safer Estates Update

5.1 Before the next meeting a draft of the agreement will be circulated to the group.

6.0 DVD “Who do you think you are?”

6.1 Paul Kent from Gateshead MBC introduced a DVD which the Council has commissioned, in conjunction with Action for Children. The DVD looks at how different groups in the community see each others' points of view. It is primarily targeted at schools but also tenants' groups, neighbourhood organisations and community workers for example. In addition to the DVD will be a training pack which will help viewers look at different aspects of the DVD and work through different scenarios. The DVD and training package are due to be rolled out in the spring.

6.2 The group watched the first version of the DVD and provided feedback on it and some suggestions for improvement. They also expressed interest in seeing the teaching materials/training pack.

7.0 Respect Standard for Housing Management

7.1 There were discussions around the launch of this document and some felt it was a bit daunting and that a lot of the content was regurgitated. An example of a self-assessment document was requested so that organisations know what to expect and how much work and time is required. Clare Tierney informed the group that GONE have set-up a spreadsheet to focus on the six key points and have asked organisations to mark themselves against it.

7.2 It was felt that it was unclear who should actually sign the document and who should be involved in the assessment as Chief Executives for example may not know about all the work that organisations are doing in this area already. Concerns were also raised about who should co-ordinate the assessment within each organisation – should there be a focus group containing someone from every level of the organisation and each department? Should a Director take the lead or a senior ASB team member?

7.3 Concerns were also raised about actually signing-up to the Standard and clarification is needed. The guidance suggests that if an organisation is not currently doing all the things the Standard identifies then it should not sign-up. However, it was also suggested that organisations should sign-up as long as they had identified and recognised where their gaps/shortfalls are and shown that they were working on these areas.

8.0 Conference update

8.1 An update on speakers secured for the conference and workshop themes was provided.

9.0 Local Action Good Practice (around the table)

9.1 Paul Noddings asked if anyone had any experience of using a professional witness service and whether they knew of any in the Tees Valley area. It was suggested by some that this was not a cost effective method and other IT ideas were put forward such as surveillance cameras.

10.0 Next meeting

10.1 The next meeting will take place on the 12th December, **provisionally at Sedgefield.**