

MINUTES

MEETING: Anti Social Behaviour Study Group

DATE: Tuesday 12th December 2006

TIME: 10.30 a.m.

VENUE: Council Chambers, Sedgefield Borough Council

CHAIR: Greg Johnson, South Tyneside Council

Apologies:

Ian Johnson – Blyth Valley Housing
Natalie Dove – Housing Hartlepool
Sharon Dalton – Coast & Country Housing
Mark Barrow – Harvest Housing
Neil McFarlane – City of York Council
Phil Tweddle – Richmondshire DC
Monica Marron – Middlesbrough BC
Jane Hill - Middlesbrough BC
Sharon Bushby – Enterprise 5

Richard Mitchell – Three Rivers Housing
Libby Griffiths – Housing Hartlepool
Alison Newbould – North Yorkshire Police
Helen Dixon – Stockton BC
Sally Forth – Hartlepool ASBU
Kelly-Anne Burton - Cheviot Housing Association
Mandy Reed – Gateshead MBC
Gavin Brown – Endeavour Housing Association

Present:

Jennifer Stevenson – NHC
Leah Blacklock – NHC
Paul Noddings – Tristar Homes
Clare Tierney – Gateshead MBC
Pam Cox – East Durham Homes
David Jones – Chester-le-Street
Dianne Hedley – Sedgefield BC
Amanda Fulcher – East Durham Homes
Malcolm Woodhall – Tynedale DC

Greg Johnson – South Tyneside
Alex Rhind – Home Office
Paul Nilsen – Cheviot Housing Association
Ray Brown – Byker Bridge Housing Association
Clive Ledner – Accent Group
M Coates – Darlington BC
Ron Baker – Sedgefield BC
Robert Brown – Middlesbrough BC
Karen Townsend – Durham CC

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 Alex reported that Respect Squad cases were still thin on the ground and as a result a cross-party event in the House for MPs will be held in January to increase awareness and hopefully generate more cases.

2.2 A Safer Estates update will be circulated either before or at the next meeting as they are still awaiting feedback from Northumbria Police.

3.0 Home Office Update, Alex Rhind

3.1 January is the first anniversary of the Respect Action Plan and a 'One Year On' event is planned, possibly the third week in January. It will be the same sort of event as the launch with regional visits and a number of announcements made by Ministers.

3.2 The National Audit Office Report on the Home Office Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour was published in December and brought to attention figures on ASBO breaches. There is a need to address the court decisions here (link to Report: www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/06-07/060799.pdf).

3.3 Bristol, Southampton, Liverpool and Birmingham have hosted events where 500 Taking A Stand award winners got together (they were able to bring along three friends) to discuss how to develop Face the People sessions and community calls for action. They also took part in a survey of people who have been victims of extreme ASB.

3.4 By the end of the year there will be 52 Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) up and running across the country (target was 50). The majority are dispersed accommodation and floating support schemes although there are some 24/7 core blocks.

3.5 There has been funding provided by the Home Office for 77 'Supernannies' who are senior parenting professionals, linked to ASB units. The post will be available in certain areas across the country.

3.6 Respect Action Areas – 40 areas have been invited to pitch to become Action Areas and some are currently being investigated to see if they are appropriate. To be an Action Area, they must commit to:

- Developing an FIP
- Establishing Parenting Programmes
- Developing Face the People sessions
- Using all tools and powers
- Signing up to the Respect Housing Standard

These areas may be announced at the One Year On event. Newcastle, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Middlesbrough have all applied.

- 3.7 Selective licensing for private landlords – to date there have been no schemes in England and Wales and it is not compulsory at the moment. Good practice guidance has been developed by Shelter (<http://england.shelter.org.uk/policy/policy-7206.cfm>). Salford, Middlesbrough, Manchester and Blackpool will be first to have selective licensing. Geographical areas can be licensed where concentrations of private landlords are in low demand and/or ASB.
- 3.8 Alex encouraged the Group to sign-up to the RESPECT Housing Standard and stressed that it was important to involve tenants in the process and use the leaflets available.
- 3.8 Concerns were raised by the Group about the usability of the new RESPECT website. Alex will feed these back.

4.0 Consultation paper: Strengthening powers to tackle ASB - discussion

- 4.1 The consultation paper on premises closure orders and other powers has been launched and attendees were invited to give their views:

- Strongly feel that the Police should not be leading on it and that it should be a joint power as housing people have expertise in this area. Premises closures will have the greatest impact on the Local Authority (CT).

- Concerns over homelessness, particularly where families are involved. The re-housing issue needs to be water-tight, there needs to be a step-by-step policy about what happens next to these families (possibly moving into FIPs) or the problem will simply be moved on to another location – usually the private sector (PN).

In light of this concern raised at the previous meeting Alex enquired about examples of the power being used in Scotland where families were involved, however there have been no cases to date.

Alex suggested the new power should be used as a last resort in a long line of powers to tackle the most extreme behaviour and before this for example, ASBOs should be amended to get the households into a FIP and/or exclusion orders used; there should be a holistic approach. She also acknowledged that they are most likely to be used in the private sector in the NE, NW and Y&H.

- Suggestions around also fining a landlord whose property has been closed (CT).

- What is the situation for owner-occupiers? Is there a process around housing benefit payments being docked, what happens with mortgage re-payments; is there a policy? (GJ)

Alex gave an example of a crack house closure in Preston where the owner-occupier fled and the property was re-possessed by the mortgage company.

- Paul Noddings stated that Tristar will be developing a policy framework of how and when to use the new power and would be happy to share with the Group.

- In terms of ABCs with penalty notices attached, concerns were raised around disadvantaging people in these situations further and setting them up to fail (RB). Instead, perhaps there should be incentives/rewards for people to behave themselves (PN).

5.0 Under The Bridge – presentation by Ray Brown (presentation to get and circulate – 0191 483 9637)

Project offers support to those involved in ASB and will become a FIP.

6.0 LAA targets and RESPECT

6.1 Greg asked if anyone had done any work around this and pointed out that there are mandatory outcomes being inserted into the LAA targets and there are four PIs around RESPECT.

7.0 Update on DVD “Who do you think you are?”

7.1 Claire reported that the DVD had been edited in light of the comments provided by the Group at the September meeting and was ready to be rolled out across Gateshead.

8.0 Conference feedback

8.1 There was a mixed response from the Group about the conference with several suggestions put forward for next year’s event:

- Replace sub-plenaries with more shorter workshop options
- Reduce the length of sub-plenaries
- Have two streams of workshops to suit experienced ASB officers and new ASB workers
- Include examples of preventative work going on in schools to tackle ASB

- Include examples of work going on within communities
- Include Taking A Stand examples
- Include court-related workshops/speakers – role of the courts, how to engage with courts, the Court Users Group, CPS ASB prosecutors – what do they do? (Alex to send me information on ASB co-ordinators in County Courts to circulate).

9.0 Local Action Good Practice (around the table)

South Tyneside

Bidding for Supernanny money and is in the process of setting up a FIP – they are happy to share information on both processes. They are also in the process of bidding to achieve Respect Action Area status and are being reviewed before Christmas.

Interested to know if any organisations were having issues around publicising their achievements, it was an issue when trying to publicise a demoted tenancy as the corporate section were opposed and they couldn't get quotes.

- It was suggested a 'Spokesperson' was quoted as opposed to a named individual.
- It was acknowledged that some publicity is good but that some residents would prefer not to have their street names mentioned when incidents are reported in the media as it creates a stigma. Another suggestion is just to publicise it by leaflet drops around the locality.

Gateshead MBC

Producing a RESPECT Action Plan (across all of RESPECT) – is anyone else?

- South Tyneside is and Middlesbrough has done lots around this.

Cheviot Housing Association

Have carried out a diagnostic of where they fall short which highlighted a lack of preventative work and a need to involve the community in tackling ASB. In response they have developed diversionary activities such as the Access 2 Basketball scheme.

Middlesbrough

Have established a Witness Support Group for ASB victims which is linked with Victim Support and provides support to those having to attend court.

- Possible presentation at next meeting.

10.0 Next meeting

The next meeting will take place end of February/beginning of March although no date has been set yet. No one offered to host the meeting.