
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 15 October 2013
Subject: ASB Report
Report of: Cllr Brian Spurr, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
Summary: The report provides information on numbers of incidents of ASB in Central Bedfordshire and an overview of how the Council and key partners address ASB in Central Bedfordshire

Advising Officer: Marcel Coiffait, Community Services Director.
Contact Officer: Jeanette Keyte, Head of Community Safety
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Reducing Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) is a priority in the Medium Term Plan with the aim of decreasing levels of ASB from 2011/2012 recorded incident figures by 10% to 2016.

Financial:

1. There are no direct financial implications from this report.

Legal:

2. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on the Council: without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. Reducing ASB is part of the council's statutory duty.

Risk Management:

3. ASB is a key community safety concern for the residents of Central Bedfordshire. Reducing ASB leads to improved quality of life for communities in our area and also reduces demand on the services responding to victims and complaints of ASB.

Specific risks of not addressing ASB appropriately include:

- Reputational risks, both with communities and partners, including poor public perception
- Failure to meet Corporate objectives/required outcomes
- Failure to discharge statutory responsibilities, and
- Financial risks through increased demand on services to respond to incidents of ASB.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. There are no immediate implications on staffing.

Equalities/Human Rights:

5. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and to foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Young people and vulnerable adults can be subject to more antisocial behaviour and crime than other members of the community. National evidence highlights that there is also an under reporting of antisocial behaviour and that anti social behaviour can sometimes be motivated by a hatred of particular groups such as disabled people, black and minority ethnic communities or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The Community Safety Partnership has set up a Hate Crime Task and Finish Group which is giving further consideration to this issue.

Public Health

6. Reducing ASB leads to improvements in quality of life and facilitates a reduction in fear of crime which in turn can reduce social isolation amongst vulnerable groups, thereby impacting positively upon their health and wellbeing.

Community Safety:

7. Statutory duties are set out in the legal implications. Reducing ASB is a council and Community Safety Partnership priority. Quality of life is significantly affected by high levels of ASB and there are also environmental impacts. By ensuring that ASB is reported and putting measures in place to support victims and take action against perpetrators demand on services is reduced, quality of life is improved, public confidence increases and fear of crime reduces.

Sustainability:

8. Sustainability relies upon improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of our area and the people who live in the area. Being safe and feeling safe in an area supports the economic, social and environmental aspirations for Central Bedfordshire.

Procurement:

9. There are no procurement implications from this report.

Overview and Scrutiny:

10. This matter will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny on 15 October 2013

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is asked to consider and discuss the information set out in the report:

Reason for Recommendation(s): To ensure that the committee has an overview of ASB in Central Bedfordshire

Summary

11. The Committee is being asked to consider and discuss the information set out in the report.

Levels of ASB in Central Bedfordshire

12. In March 2013 Bedfordshire Police introduced a new system for recording incidents. The new system allows for the figures to be broken down by postcode. By using the postcode data it has been possible for the Councils' Community Safety Analyst to break the figures into ward areas, with the exception of 65 incidents where a post code had not been recorded.
13. As such, only the data recorded from April 2013 has been used for the ward breakdown in this report, providing a more detailed picture of ASB incidents in Central Bedfordshire.
14. From April 2013 to August 2013 there were 3336 recorded incidents of ASB in Central Bedfordshire. Appendix A shows the breakdown of these incidents ranked by ward.
15. The highest recorded incidents of ASB are in Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard wards, with the lowest recorded incidents in Houghton Conquest and Haynes and Westoning, Flitton and Greenfield.
16. Of the 3336 incidents recorded, 1268 are classified as 'rowdy or inconsiderate' behaviour and 1168 were for vehicle nuisance or abandoned vehicles. In the main these incidents are one off complaints dealt with at a local level by partners including the police and council
17. The remaining 900 recorded incidents are a mix of issues, including 250 recorded as 'nuisance neighbour' disputes. These types of cases are most likely to be addressed by the specialist ASB Teams at the council and Bedfordshire Police.
18. Appendix B sets out ASB data for the whole of Central Bedfordshire from October 2012 to August 2013. There were a total of 6882 recorded incidents. For the reasons set out in paragraph 12 it is not possible to break this data down any further, and data prior to October 2012 has not been used because recording issues made the data unreliable.

19. The data shows an upward trend in the number of recorded incidents over the last few months. This upward trend is expected as recorded incidents of ASB are affected by
- Weather – summer months see an increase in recorded incidents
 - School holidays – more young people out in the locality during these periods
 - Specific festivities – Christmas, New Year, Halloween and Bonfire Night.

It is anticipated that September figures will show a decrease in the number of recorded incidents.

Under reporting of ASB

20. It is recognised that there will be under reporting of ASB in any area. The reasons for under reporting are varied. Some people feel that if reported ASB will not be dealt with or where they have reported they do not feel that there has been a satisfactory resolution/response. In some cases people are reluctant to report incidents because they are concerned about possible reprisals if they become involved.
21. It must also be recognised that what is perceived as ASB by some people may not be defined as ASB by the agencies that pick up these issues, for example, ball games on open space being reported as ASB. However it also clear that where there is genuine ASB complainants should receive an appropriate response when reported.
22. In the last two years agencies that take the lead on tackling ASB have seen reductions in their available resources, however taking a risk assessment approach to cases of ASB means that those at the most risk of harm receive the support needed using a multi-agency approach. Within the resources that agencies have available to them this also ensures that resources are used as effectively as possible.

Council Response to ASB

23. The councils Medium Term Plan identifies ASB as a priority and has a reduction target to decrease levels of ASB recorded incident figures from 2011/2012 by 10% to 2016.
24. The council has a dedicated ASB Team which is part of the Community Safety Service. The team has 3 officers covering the whole of Central Bedfordshire.
25. The team respond to more complex cases of ASB either by direct referral or by referral through partner agencies. From April 2012 to July 2013 the team has investigated 157 ASB cases as the lead agency. The team have also supported the police Priority ASB Team on 79 cases since January 2013, when the police team were formed, in addition to giving advice and guidance to members of the public, other services and officers and external partners including other Registered Social Landlords.

26. From April 2012 to July 2013 the team has organised and co-ordinated 125 multi-agency Problem Solving Groups (PSG) for cases of ASB. PSG's are different from ASBRAC in that they are used to look at cases where the focus is not a high risk victim of ASB. It may look at a geographic area, or a particular type of ASB e.g. nuisance motorcycles aiming to identify solutions to the problems reported.
27. The team also work on the Troubled Families programme providing support and taking the lead on appropriate cases, and also a lead role in assisting on the payment by results element of the programme.
28. The team manages and co-ordinates the ASBRAC, introduced as part of the 2011 review of ASB in Central Bedfordshire.
29. The Council has commissioned Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service to implement an innovative pilot Restorative Justice programme to work in specific areas to support reductions of ASB. Requests for this approach can be made by a range of partners.
30. The ASB Team provide advice and guidance to other Registered Social Landlords on ASB cases, and works with them on more complex cases, particularly where the issues are cross-tenure
31. The team have introduced on-line reporting of ASB incidents via the council website and are currently finalising a new Triage system which will allow them to easily identify victims that require an in depth risk assessment.
32. The team co-ordinates and manages ASB cases going for prosecution for Anti Social Behaviour Orders and Injunctions as well as early intervention measures such as warning letters, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Restorative Justice.
33. The Council also uses its redeployable CCTV cameras, using an evidence led approach, to gather information and evidence when investigating ASB cases.

Police Response to ASB

34. In 2010 Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) found that forces have the best chance to give ASB victims a good service if they:
 - Identify if a caller is a vulnerable (for instance, elderly or disabled) or repeat victim as soon as they call the police, so they can get extra support;
 - Brief all relevant officers and staff regularly and thoroughly about local ASB issues;
 - Regularly gather and analyse data and information about ASB places, offenders and victims, and allocate resources to tackle specific problems; and
 - Provide their neighbourhood policing teams with the right tools and resources to tackle ASB.
35. In response to the HMIC findings Bedfordshire Police have introduced a number of changes to the way in which they deal with ASB in the force as a whole and in Central Bedfordshire in particular.

36. Since the HMIC report Bedfordshire Police have introduced an assessment process in the control room where the level of risk can be properly assessed at the point of contact.
37. Bedfordshire Police have also set up a dedicated Priority ASB Team to deal with the highest risk cases throughout Central Bedfordshire. This team looks at each case in depth and uses a wide variety of tactics to resolve the issue, working closely with the Council ASB Team.
38. A dedicated ASB computer application – SafetyNet, has also been implemented.
39. The HMIC Inspection Team returned to Bedfordshire Police in May this year and although they have not yet released their full report the early indications to Bedfordshire Police are very positive. During the debrief at the end of their inspection, the inspectors said they found a fundamental change in the culture of the organisation towards ASB, which Bedfordshire Police have successfully brought to the ‘threat, harm and risk’ agenda and truly embedded among the Force priorities.
40. The Inspectors were particularly impressed by the role and contribution of the PCSOs and the three Priority ASB Teams in Luton, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, praising their work. Inspectors found Bedfordshire Police have made good strides in the Force Control Room (FCR) with the use of the Triage System and the introduction of STORM, a command and control system used for call handling and other applications, which now need to be embedded to make the overall service even more effective.
41. However there was still some more work to be done in the FCR to fully capture vulnerability issues, as well as training Enquiry Staff in handling ASB issues

Community Safety Partnership Response to ASB

42. In 2011 the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) commissioned a multi-agency review of Central Bedfordshire’s response to anti-social behaviour, to identify gaps in service, and to develop an action plan to ensure that Central Bedfordshire’s response to anti-social behaviour is effective.
43. The priority recommendations from the review were:
 - CSP to adopt a shared definition of ASB
 - Formalise key contacts for partner agencies and services
 - Consider how to more effectively identify repeat victimisation across agencies
 - Adopt a MARAC style approach for ASB Case Conferences
 - Carry out a gap analysis of prevention and diversionary activities
 - CSP to seek support of LSP to mitigate any negative impact of efficiency savings and restructures
44. Following the review the CSP established a partnership group to progress the recommendations and as a result all of these recommendations have been implemented.

45. The CSP has also provided funding to support the provision of mediation services for victims of ASB and also for security devices to help victims feel safer in their properties.
46. The CSP has commissioned a review of the ASBRAC and the initial findings indicate that the key value of the ASBRAC has been that
- The ASBRAC has demonstrably improved information sharing in order to increase the safety, health, and well being of the victims of anti-social behaviour.
 - The ASBRAC has supported agencies in jointly constructing and implementing risk management plans that provide professional support to all those at risk. However while agencies and services clearly believed that these plans reduced the risk of harm, the evaluation identified the need for a more robust monitoring process to assess impact.
 - No cases have been re-referred to ASBRAC to date and hence it could be said to reduce repeat victimisation. However, again more robust monitoring would enable the ASBRAC to demonstrate this with greater validity.
 - The ASBRAC has clearly improved agency co-ordination and accountability in relation to the most vulnerable ASB victims. In addition Interviewees felt that it had increased understanding of agency roles and promoted the benefits of partnership working.

key areas for further development are:

- The need to secure appropriate representation and input from mental health services
- The need for the CSP to identify a resource to enable the implementation of Victim Care Plans to be monitored and evaluated
- The need for the CSP to agree the most appropriate case management tool for ASBRAC cases.
- The need to adopt a performance management framework that would enable the implementation of Victim Care Plans to be rigorously monitored and their impact to be evaluated.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Central Bedfordshire ASB Incidents reported to Bedfordshire Police ranked by ward 01/04/2013 – 31/08/2013

Appendix B - Central Bedfordshire ASB Incidents reported to Bedfordshire Police between 1st October 2012 to 31 August 2013 inclusive by Month

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

N/A