

These minutes are draft subject to confirmation at the next meeting of Housing Sub-committee on 28 November

Housing Sub-Committee

24 October 2016

Present: Councillor S Cox (Chair)
Councillors A Arkle, K Bolger, L Darke, D
Drummond, John Hunter, M Madden, A
Newman and M Thirlaway

HO21/10/16 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Rankin.

HO22/10/16 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

HO23/10/16 Declarations of Interest

Cllr K Bolger declared a registerable personal interest in relation to Minute HO25/10/16 Community Protection Team, as she worked frontline for partner ENGIE serving customers on housing related issues including anti-social behaviour.

HO24/10/16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

HO25/10/16 Community Protection Team

The sub-committee received a presentation in relation to how the Police and the Council's Community Protection Team work together to combat anti-social behaviour. It was noted that Housing Sub-committee had been designated the Council's crime and disorder committee when it was established in June 2014. During the work programme setting process for 2016/17, anti-social behaviour, in particular nuisance neighbours, was raised as an important issue to focus on, particularly the process and response times to complaints. The Council's Community Protection Manager and Neighbourhood Operations Manager (East of the Borough) were in attendance at the meeting, along with Northumbria Police's Neighbourhood Inspector (Whitley Bay and North Shields).

Members were informed that North Tyneside Council tenants and other residents could report instances of anti-social behaviour to the Council via various methods including visiting a customer first centre, by telephone and an on-line reporting facility. It was noted that reports also come through the members enquiry system. The police could be informed by using the 101 telephone number (or 999 in an emergency). It was explained that following feedback on the volume of irrelevant calls received by the 101 number, some work would be taking place to promote the purpose of the service.

The sub-committee was informed of the number of anti-social behaviour complaints investigated between October 2015 and September 2016, along with the complaint response target times. There were 3 different categories of response depending of the nature and severity of the complaint. These were nationally defined categories which

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helped the authority to benchmark performance. It was clarified that the figures presented were related to the Council's own housing stock; as a landlord the authority needs to ensure that tenants have an acceptable level of peace and quiet. Members questioned what would happen if the response times were not adhered to. It was noted that this would impact on performance indicators and that the computer system used monitored the timescale and flagged up when a case is outstanding.

Members learnt that there were 6 neighbourhood housing teams to investigate initial reports of anti-social behaviour relating to council tenancies. Where further action would be needed to resolve the matter i.e. injunction, community protection notice or eviction, the case would be referred to the community protection team. The community protection team would also investigate reports of anti-social behaviour relating to owner occupiers, private rented properties and environmental anti-social behaviour such as dog fouling, litter and fly tipping. It was noted that there were several service standards that were aspired to when dealing with complaints of anti-social behaviour including an agreement as to how the complaint would be investigated and an indicative timescale for conclusion, respect of confidentiality and updates on the progress of the case.

The representative from Northumbria Police in attendance at the meeting set out for Members how the police deal with instances of anti-social behaviour. Whilst recorded anti-social behaviour had fallen year on year it was still a major concern of local people in Northumbria. The police would ensure victims of anti-social behaviour were contacted and concerns investigated; record repeat complaints and ensure officers were fully informed; provide vulnerable and targeted victims with tailor made support; ensure local agencies worked together and use all appropriate powers to tackle anti-social behaviour. Examples were shared of non-legal actions that could be taken against perpetrators, including written warning and home visits, referrals to drug and alcohol support agencies and acceptable behaviour agreements. Members were informed of Operation Respect, which involved joint visits from the Council and police to nuisance households. These were purposefully high profile visits and discussions with tenants would take place in the street/on the doorstep in order to highlight to communities that action was being taken to address reported problems and nuisances.

The sub-committee was also briefed on the legal remedies that could be taken to combat anti-social behaviour, including civil injunctions, dispersal powers, closure powers and absolute ground for possession. Members commented that they were not aware of some of these powers and they would be useful to refer to when they get queries relating to anti-social behaviour. It was suggested that information be circulated to all Members of the Council in relation to each of these powers, perhaps via the Members newsletter. The evidence needed to obtain anti-social behaviour convictions was discussed, which included police incident logs and good quality incident diaries.

Members were informed of the work of the victim and witness support group, where volunteers work with a victim support officer in the community protection team offering practical, friendly support and advice, emotional support and assistance in completing diary sheets. The sub-committee was also presented with data relating to case closure satisfaction scores. Following the closure of an anti-social behaviour complaint case, the victim is asked to complete a satisfaction survey in relation to how the complaint had been dealt with. This data demonstrated that 92% (2015/16) of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with the way their complaint was dealt with; this marked a 4% increase from the previous year. The average number of days taken to resolve anti-social behaviour cases had reduced by 1 day to 41 days in 2015/16 compared to 42 in 2014/15. Police data provided for all 4 areas of the borough demonstrated that anti-social behaviour was reducing, except for some non-youth related anti-social behaviour in the Killingworth area which had seen some increase.

The Community Protection Manager outlined some service improvements for 2016/17 which included updating procedure in relation to anti-social behaviour, further development of the victim and witness support group, improving the environment of back lanes and producing a process for effectively tackling dog fouling. It was noted that dog fouling was a priority for both residents and the Council. It was highlighted that some local authorities had made it an offence to not carry a bag whilst out walking a dog. The sub-committee was informed that officers were currently looking at various fines issued by the Council and that under a Public Space Protection Order local authorities could enforce the practice of fining for not carrying a bag.

The Chair thanked the officers and police representative for their attendance and for the information that they had provided.

It was **agreed** to note the information provided in relation to tackling anti-social behaviour.