

Notes of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee
Antisocial Behaviour Working Group
25th January 2012

Present: Councillors: Sue Rogers (Chairman)
George Cockman
Roy Cornell
Chris Mason
Godfrey Newman
Tricia Youtan

Apologies: Councillors: David Skipp

Also present: Councillor: Duncan England

Officers in attendance: Natalie Brahma-Peal, Director of Community Services; Greg Charman, Community Safety Manager and Sharon Parker, Chief Inspector, Sussex Police

1. **TO APPROVE AS CORRECT THE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD 6TH DECEMBER 2011**

The notes of the meeting held 6th December 2011 were approved as a correct record.

2. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

4. **TO HEAR FROM THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES REGARDING THE FUTURE AND FUNDING OF THE ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT**

The Chairman of the Working Group provided a recap on the progress of the review so far.

In total, 21 responses to the Antisocial Behaviour Questionnaire had been received from the parish councils. Overall, responses remained consistent; residents felt safe but continued to be concerned about antisocial behaviour in their area.

The Chairman explained that in 2011, 339 individuals had been referred to the Antisocial Behaviour Unit, which demonstrated a ripple effect across the District.

Members noted that funding for the Antisocial Behaviour Team was at risk, an email had been circulated to Members of the Group which

highlighted the funding of the Team and the Director of Corporate Resources had been invited to the meeting to explain what could be done regarding future funding.

The Group noted that there were 56,232 houses in the District; the total salary for the Antisocial Behaviour Unit was £84,531 which it equated to 3 pence per household, per week, or £1.50 per annum.

The Director of Corporate Resources explained that the current funding for the Antisocial Behaviour Unit came from Government via an Area Based Grant, which had been pass ported to the districts and boroughs within West Sussex by the County Council. Over the past five years this pot of money had been reducing.

As of 2012/13 this grant would be diverted to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) who would be elected in November 2012 for a 4 year term. The PCC would decide how the Area Based Grant would be used. The Council was currently unaware of the PCC's plans for the funding and how the Antisocial Behaviour Team would be funded after 2013, as it was mainly afforded by the grant.

Members were concerned about the situation which would affect the whole of West Sussex, especially how key staff working with vulnerable people, to reduce antisocial behaviour, would be funded after 2013

There was concern that Horsham District would be more at risk of reduced funding than other areas such as Brighton and Hove, as crime rates were reasonably low in Horsham in comparison and any funding may be diverted to the areas with higher crime rates.

The Group noted that there would be representation from Horsham District Council on the Police Crime Panel.

The Director of Community Services explained that Councils across West Sussex should be adopting a collective approach; all community safety partnerships should be using a template to identify the key issues in each area, the templates should be consistent across the County.

The Council and the Police would be required to meet the needs of the community, there was some potential funding from the Troubled Family Fund and from the Health and Wellbeing Partnership, for skilled staff within the Antisocial Behaviour Unit, for responsibilities such as family intervention.

Members felt that all the options should be considered in order to identify the funding, including raising the Council Tax.

As the Antisocial Behaviour Team worked to prevent crime through early intervention, there was some concern that Police may be required to react to increased crime levels if funding was cut.

Members agreed that a recommendation should be made by the Group to explore alternative sources of funding and reorganising priorities. Areas of success and improvement should be highlighted including how the Council worked with vulnerable families.

Although the Council would need to wait for the Police and Crime Commissioner to put forward his proposals the Council was anticipating no further funding available after 2013.

The Working Group noted that both Ashington and Steyning parish councils funded their own Neighbourhood Wardens and these would remain outside of the Police and Crime Commissioners powers.

5. **TO CONSIDER THE RESPONSES FROM THE PARISH COUNCILS**

The Working Group noted some of the positives which had been collected from the responses to the Antisocial Behaviour Questionnaire, which the Group issued at the beginning of its review.

These included: good relationships with PCSOs, visible presence, good youth provisions, PCSOs working with the communities, lighting and CCTV and encouragement to report crime.

The Group discussed using opportunities to recruit more Special Constables.

Recently PCSOs had been given some additional powers, including the power to issue fixed penalty notices and the power to detain, this was to help the community feel reassured that the PCSOs had the power to take action.

Members were also asked to consider the unseen costs from reduced funding i.e. vandalism bills.

Approaching local businesses, housing associations and members of the Horsham District Community Safety Partnership, for additional funding in order to keep the streets safe, was considered. The Community Safety Manager would write to the partners for their views.

The Group concluded that the Council should be prepared for no funding for the Antisocial Behaviour Team as of 2013 and the Group agreed to recommend that alternative methods to secure funding be explored. Evidence and success stories should be used to support this recommendation.

Members also wanted to emphasise the timeframe; there was a risk that the current team, who were at risk of losing their jobs, as a result of the cuts, may be inclined to search for alternative secure employment, therefore the Council would lose valuable skills and expertise which was contributing to the low crime rates that the District was enjoying.

The Group recognised the fragile situation.

The Group agreed that it was keen to monitor the situation and would continue to meet.

A draft interim report would be prepared by the Chairman, for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, including a formal recommendation. The draft report would be circulated to Members of the Group and officers for comment and the final version would be presented to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 5th March 2012.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting would be confirmed at a later stage.

The meeting ended at 4.30pm having started at 3.00pm.

CHAIRMAN