

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

30 JANUARY 2012

Present: Councillor K McLeod (Chair)
Councillors K Collett, A Khan, A Lovejoy, H Lynch, R Martins
and M Meerabux

Also present: Councillor Stephen Johnson and Councillor Andrew Mortimer

Officers: Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head
Community Safety Manager
Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

11 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

There were no disclosures of interest.

12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December were submitted and signed.

13 ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN WATFORD

The Chair invited the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator to give an overview of antisocial behaviour in the borough. Members would then have the opportunity to ask questions.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator explained that it was his role to respond to emerging issues in antisocial behaviour. It was an interesting time as the government were looking to bring in changes to antisocial behaviour legislation. The new regime had not yet come in and he offered to return to the Task Group to talk about the changes at a later date.

He explained that there were three main categories of antisocial behaviour-

1. Environmental. This covered offences including graffiti and criminal damage and anything which had a negative impact on the environment.
2. Nuisance. This involved actions which had an effect on other people and could include loud music late at night, noisy DIY and people spilling out from parties. The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator added that the most important aspect of this category in Watford was parking offences.

3. Personal. This category was a high priority and involved protecting vulnerable individuals. Repeat offences were monitored through the logs of complaints. The reporting system was the Police non-emergency telephone number (101). From these logs officers could see the areas or the people most involved in antisocial behaviour.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator referred to the ranking of Albert Road South as the fourth highest street in Britain for crime and antisocial behaviour. He noted that the largest nightclub in the county was located on the road. He also explained that Albert Road South was used as a reference point in Police logs which added to the frequency of its use. Sainsbury's was also located on this road and any thefts, counterfeit banknotes and car offences which took place there were also on Albert Road South. Finally the taxi rank was also in the car park and this added to the location being used for reporting offences.

He referred to the problems in Rosslyn Road. Investigation had shown that antisocial behaviour levels were not as high but concentrated around a type of antisocial behaviour due to the Gade car park. Since the construction of Wilmington Crescent alongside the car park, reporting had increased as there were now residents who could see into the car park.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator noted the impact of the Olympics which was likely to bring additional people into the town.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator reported that antisocial behaviour had decreased by 17 percent this year and this was the fifth successive year of reductions.

He referred to the work of the Antisocial Behaviour Action Group (ASBAG) which was a multi-agency group of up to 32 professionals who met monthly. He invited councillors to come and observe the meeting which took place on the last Monday of each month.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator turned to the specific issues raised by the Task Group at their last meeting. He noted that councillors had expressed concerns about St Albans Road and explained that it was a unique location which crossed seven wards. There had been particular concerns about Longspring where teenagers congregated in the car park. There had also been problems in the car park at Asda but these had now been addressed after an official request from ASBAG.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator reported that the biggest antisocial behaviour problem in Meriden was with mini-mopeds. This was a difficult issue to tackle but some work had been done with the petrol stations to ask them not to sell fuel to offenders.

Councillor Meerabux thanked the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator and Community Safety Manager for fantastic work with the problems in Queen Mary's Avenue.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator added that communication was key in reporting and dealing with antisocial behaviour. The ASBAG worked very well as a multi-agency partnership.

In response to a question from Councillor Collett regarding antisocial behaviour in the car park of a new housing development, the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator said that he was working with the developer to install more CCTV.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator referred to the problems with homelessness and street drinkers. There were up to 12 known rough-sleepers in Watford but the figure varied and Watford New Hope Trust were working with eight of them. One of these was known to be a source of a large amount of ASB in the town and the partnership were considering an ASBO in this case. This was a last resort and the partnership had never sought an ASBO before. He added that there were approximately ten street drinkers in Watford including a number who had returned from other EU countries where they could not find work. The way to approach the problem of street drinkers was to deal with the outlets which sold them alcohol. The closure of DKSR by a Licensing Sub Committee had had an instantaneous effect on Vicarage ward. There was another premises in Market Street which was known to sell to street drinkers and this case could also be referred to the Licensing Committee.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator discussed the homeless man on St Albans Road. He was a street dweller and was in receipt of support from the church. He had been offered further support from Watford New Hope Trust but had not taken it up. He confirmed that if residents were aware of any antisocial behaviour associated with him they should call the Police non-emergency number- 101. Residents can ask the Police to report back to them what has happened after they report a problem.

Councillor Khan raised the issue of people returning from the town centre late at night and causing a disturbance on St Albans Road. The problem was exacerbated by the takeaways.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator said that this was a problem across Watford and asked councillors to ask residents to inform the Police when there were disturbances and this could be dealt with.

The Chair noted that councillors needed to become champions of the Police non-emergency 101 number.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator agreed and added that he could follow up on issues reported to the Police. He noted that problems continued in Foxhill when residents stopped reporting the antisocial behaviour.

In response to a question from Councillor Lynch, the Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head explained that incidents of dog fouling should be reported to Environmental Health. They were able to do patrols of areas where there were known to be problems.

Councillor Lynch asked what effect the Olympics would have on levels of policing. The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator said that this was a Police operational matter and he could not say.

Councillor Khan noted the reputation that Watford had for violence in the town centre.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator said that an application had gone in for the Purple Flag award to demonstrate good management of the night-time economy. It was an issue of perception and negative stories always generated more interest than positive stories.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator said that there were no areas in Watford that were 'no go' areas controlled by a particular group.

Councillor Lynch asked what the effect of the street lights going out at midnight had had on crime and disorder.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator responded that most antisocial behaviour occurred in daylight hours. There had been no evidence of increased problems since the lights had gone out.

The Community Safety Manager added that work was being done on the statistics to demonstrate that crime had not worsened. This good news would be promoted to help people's perceptions of safety. She added that key routes had been identified where the lights should be kept on. She noted that councillors felt Woodford Road, North Western Avenue, Hudson Close, all of Leavesden Road and Queens Road should remain switched on. She asked the Task Group to inform her of the reasons why they felt these roads should stay on and she could feed back to Hertfordshire County Council who made the final decisions.

The Chair felt that this would be useful information for all councillors to have as well as information about 101.

ACTION- Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

In response to a question about fly-tipping, the Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head said that this had not increased since the closure of the depot. She added that if councillors were aware of houses which had rubbish and furniture dumped in the front or back gardens this should be reported to Environmental Health.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator concluded that sharing information was very important and thanked the councillors for their input.

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WORK PROGRAMME

The Task Group discussed the programme for the meeting in March. Key questions for the drug and alcohol treatment topic were; how can the Council feed in to the strategy? How do the different agencies work together?

The Chair suggested that all councillors be emailed to ask their views on the priorities for their neighbourhoods.

Councillor Khan suggested that the new Chief Inspector be invited to the next meeting.

Councillor Martins agreed and noted the Task Group should ask about the Olympics and his priorities.

It was agreed that the drug and alcohol treatment topic be moved to the 2012/13 work programme.

ACTION- The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to invite the Police to the meeting in March

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ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer circulated the extract from the 2010/11 report related to the work of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group.

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DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 6 March 2012 at **6.30 p.m.**

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.15 pm