



**Report of the Convener of the  
Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Panel  
16 May 2023**

**Consultation with SCVS and Local Business**

<b>Purpose</b>	To gain the views of SCVS and Local Business in Swansea in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour
<b>Content</b>	Key questions sent to SCVS and Local Business leaders in advance of a Q&A at the meeting
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	To consider and discuss the issue as part of the scrutiny inquiry into Anti-Social Behaviour
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Terry Hennegan, Convener of the Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Inquiry Panel
<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>	Michelle Roberts, Scrutiny Officer <a href="mailto:Michelle.roberts@swansea.gov.uk">Michelle.roberts@swansea.gov.uk</a>

**1. Context**

The Panel agreed, as part of their inquiry into anti-social behaviour in Swansea, to speak to voluntary sector, equality forum and business community.

**2. Key Issues and Questions**

The following questions/issues were sent to the representatives in advance, in preparation for the scrutiny meeting:

1. How do you feel about Anti-Social Behaviour in Swansea? (your perceptions)
2. Do you believe it is dealt with appropriately and effectively in Swansea?
3. Do you think that the council and its partners work together effectively to both prevent and tackle ASB?
4. How would you like to see Swansea Council and its partners improve how it prevents and tackles ASB in Swansea?

**3. People attending**

An email was sent to a wide number of business networks and individuals in Swansea. A small selection of people/organisations have responded to our invitation to attend the meeting while others have submitted a written submission (see attached).

## Written Submission 1

I answer this as a member of Swansea Against Business Crime and refer to the City Centre and indeed the area covered by Swansea BID.

Regards

Steve Gallagher | Business Crime Reduction



1. **Effectiveness of strategies, policies and procedures in tackling anti-social behaviour and is the council meeting its regulatory obligations in this area.**

It appears there is a lack of effective policies/ procedures etc in place – experience is showing that the Council obligations in this area may not be followed – I do not refer to ASB and Housing. For any policy/strategy to work there has to be effective scrutiny and clear actions as a result of complaints.

2. **The Council's role in tackling and reducing anti-social behaviour.**

The Council has a clear regulatory role in this area (Crime and Disorder Act etc) – however there are other stakeholders in this process. Having said that there also has to be ownership of issues and response in any meetings attended. Some I have attended just appear to be talking shops.

3. **Partner roles in tackling and reducing anti-social behaviour.**

Partners in this process should not be restricted to Statutory Partners. The legislation does allow for third party organisations (should they add value) such as Swansea Against Business Crime (SABC) who represent businesses in Swansea.

4. **How well are the Council and its partners working together to tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour in Swansea.**

From experience it does not work. There are numerous meetings that deal with the same named persons with no one organisation actually taking ownership. I must say that the first PSG (Problem Solving Group) which is chaired by the police was an absolute waste of time. There was no clear and succinct information available. Since this first attended meeting the City Centre NPT Inspector has changed the structure of the meeting (for the better) and it does call for accurate and updated information. However, then there must be scrutiny of this group and clear lines of responsibility. Which do not appear to be in place or if they are then not shared.

5. **Tools available to use to help the Council and its partners tackle ASB.**

Talk and take cognisance of those affected by ASB – I refer this comment to the City Centre Swansea BID area.

6. **How good is the information provided to, and communication with, the public.**

Difficult to comment on this, however as a member of the Public albeit also the Manager of SABC communication is very poor.

**7. Monitoring and managing performance.**

I refer to number 4 above

**8. How are the Council and our partners addressing the causes of anti-social behaviour.**

Very slow and which often is to the detriment of those affected by ASB – I can give examples but this is the wrong forum. There are processes in place e.g. PSPO – which in my view are not working and not adding value.

Documentation to prove breach is patchy and the numbers of FPN are very few. There may be several reasons for this which need to be managed. The process can prove invaluable when moving into areas of CPN/CBO.

There is an increase in ASB in the City Centre from youths, drink/drug users and beggars. It is accepted there are those begging that need diversion routes and strategies to help as against those who do so to feed their drink/drug habits.

CCTV in the City Centre does not help in the cause as either it appears it is not working correctly or indeed issues are not being witnessed and reported upon.

Reliance is being put on the PSPO – but in simple terms this does not work. SABC have in place a system called SentrySIS which allows for our business users to report issues. One may say this is a duplicate and reports should be made direct to the police, however if you talk to business owners, they will say what is the point as issues are not acted upon. I have taken this up with the police as one agency and measures are being put in place to address the issue.

I am sure that our businesses and users of the City Centre want to feel safe and secure and able to go about their business feeling safe. We do need to take a more proactive stance to deal with ASB /Drug/Alcohol abuse.

## **Written Submission 2**

### **Bridal Shop**

- Ban on alcohol on the streets and smoking weed.
- Take benches away from by wilkinsons.
- Ensure rangers remove the persons or get the police too not just walk past and ignore them.
- More police presence in target areas like wilko, bus depot, quadrant car park, gardens.
- Sick of the fowl language and stink of weed entering my premises makes me want to leave the city which I will be when the right premises come up out of town, and so are a lot of other traders I've spoken to thinking the same.

## **Written Submission 3**

### **ASB Scrutiny Inquiry – Victim Support Response**

#### **How do you feel about Anti-Social Behaviour in Swansea?**

It is my belief that there is definitely an issue with ASB. I support many service users within the Swansea area and have heard their personal experiences and how they have been affected. I am often told by service users that there is often little or no support or they are unaware of any help that they may be entitled to. My service users have expressed their frustration at this and often feel that they have nowhere to turn. The anxiety and drip effect can be torture for the person living with it and the victim often adapts their day to accommodate the perpetrator.

The issues are prevalent with neighbours, as well as within the town centre. I feel as though ASB has increased over the last few months, consequently leaving service users feeling intimidated and vulnerable when entering the city centre. Some service users have informed us that they will avoid particular areas of the town centre and have changed their routines to only enter the city at certain times. (This is more so the older and more vulnerable service users)

It is often not seen as a 'priority' amongst the list of crimes that SWP are having to respond to in Swansea. ASB is often very difficult to evidence and can be perceived as an 'invisible' crime as perpetrators are often not caught in the act, nor leave behind a trail of evidence. Although we experience high levels of referrals of ASB for the Swansea area I do feel that there is an equally high proportion of ASB in the city going unreported.

#### **Do you believe it is dealt with appropriately and effectively in Swansea?**

Through experience of supporting service users, I can see that there have at times been support that has often been given to people, this has usually come from the police. Service users have expressed at times that the police have been 'helpful' but everything seems to take so long. I believe that many service users who are in council/social housing accommodation are unaware of their rights and if the council/housing can provide additional advice/ support. I feel that perpetrators are not dealt with a heavy enough deterrent in the first instance leading to ongoing ASB or progressively more violent behaviour.

Having attended various meetings, I was surprised at both the lack of rehabilitation and resources available for those behaving in an "anti-social" manner and the amount of victim blaming that occurs within these meetings. I don't believe the root cause is being addressed and I feel victims' needs are being neglected. Having said that, I have worked with some committed ASB workers who are doing everything they can to tackle the problems.

I think that in the main SWP and the LA are doing their best to combat ASB reports in the City. Our service-users regularly report that these agencies are doing 'nothing' to resolve their issues but looking at the facts it would be very difficult for them to make arrests or bring other resolutions when there is very little or no evidence. I do feel that they do not treat the victims of ASB in an efficient way in

terms of often not keeping them updated on cases or being far too slow to respond to complaints.

The majority of my cases in Swansea involve housing associations so I don't have much experience of working with Swansea Council's ASB team so I don't know how well I can answer this question. I would say that I do think it is very useful that Swansea Council has Local Area Coordinators as I can signpost victims who have become isolated as a result of ASB and the Coordinators have a good local knowledge to help our clients recover.

**Do you think that the council and its partners work together effectively to both prevent and tackle ASB?**

From my current experience I can see that there are steps in place to help prevent/tackle ASB but I do believe there could be greater help for people who are victims of ASB. I believe that more support groups maybe beneficial and more information to help guide people who have been victims of ASB. I believe that working together is crucial to preventing ASB and can be a great way of sharing knowledge through organisations.

I have worked with various council staff and partners over the years and I feel they are doing everything possible in an attempt to tackle the issue. However, they are under-resourced and not able to make enough of an impact. In my experience, the council and partners have a better attitude towards ASB.

However, feedback from service users is that messages are often conflicting between partners, i.e. stating that the ASB is a police matter/ police stating it's a local authority matter. This at times becomes frustrating for the service users who then stops reporting.

My experience of PSG meetings is that the LA and its partners have strong appetite to reduce instances of ASB but may be hindered by a lack of resources to actually put plans into action.

I know in other areas of South Wales the police and local authority regularly attend Problem Solving Group meetings, I find these are useful to tack ASB and ensure that victims are receiving the appropriate support (I'm not sure if these meetings are in Swansea already but if not they would be helpful I believe).

**How would you like to see Swansea Council and its partners improve how it prevents and tackles ASB in Swansea?**

I would like to see more support for victims as well as advice/drop in centres for people who are suffering with the effects of ASB. I would also like to see more training groups/courses available to help with the awareness and understanding of ASB which could be run via the local community. I believe that educating people at a younger age may also be of benefit (courses in schools). I believe that the council have a duty to impose stricter rules for tenants who are ASB perpetrators.

I think there needs to be a review of all services supporting ASB across South Wales. For an issue that is so prevalent, there is a definite lack of support

available. From a SWVF perspective, we are one of few agencies that offer support to victims of ASB.

It would be good to see a more proactive approach to ASB rather than reactive and to give a consistent message to those reporting and being impacted by ASB. Feedback from service users has also highlighted that more CCTV maybe required around the outskirts of the city centre. Some service users have advised they have reported incidents whereby they thought there was a camera but have been told that the CCTV camera is no actually in use.

An improved communication process with victims: One of the big issues reported to us by victims is that they have not been contacted to discuss the issues or that there is no ongoing dialogue.

I (Hate Crime Team) haven't received any referral's from Swansea Council so I would like this to be addressed so that more victims are able to access our service. I think to be able to prevent and tackle ASB in Swansea we all need to improve our partnership working within the area.

If the behaviour doesn't meet the criminal threshold in individual incidents, such as staring to intimidate, taking images of a person's daily life, comments or behaviour that are made to provoke a reaction, relentless commenting, noise making or tampering with property without damage, using animal faeces in letterboxes, on door steps etc. or purposely blocking in cars to create an opportunity for interaction in which to use to be abusive. For these incidents it would be good if there could be more severe first warnings or injunction style reprimands issued to the perpetrator by the council. In my experience the victims of ASB just want to be left alone and to be able to use their gardens freely. I also think that the council should use the tenancy agreement more often to remind people that they may be compromising their accommodation if they continue to attack neighbours.

Cardiff Local Authority fund a specific ASB Champion that works alongside Victim Support and Cardiff Council ASB team to provide tailored support to victims of ASB for Cardiff Council housing tenants. If this could be mirrored in other Local Authorities then it would help with the efforts to support victims of ASB across South Wales.

14 March 2023