



To/

**Councillor Mary Sherwood
Cabinet Member for Better
Communities - People**

*Please ask for:
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Overview & Scrutiny

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30th April 2019

BY EMAIL

Summary: This letter is from the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group. The meeting took place on 15th April 2019.

Dear Councillor Sherwood,

Thank you for attending the meeting of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Working Group. We are grateful to you and the officers for providing information and answering the Panels questions.

Anti-Social Behaviour is a concern for every Councillor in every ward. We were pleased to see that this topic is important to the Council and that work is being undertaken to tackle the issue and help both victims and perpetrators.

We heard how the work under Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is collaborative and holistic and the service has made substantial strides in the last few years. We were told that the co-location of services works very well and allows officers to identify and deal with issues early and prevent escalation. This integrated approach, which creates one front door for ASB issues, has changed how cases are dealt with creating a better partnership approach.

We were told there is a database that records both victims and perpetrators which tracks repeat incidence and allows for effective monitoring of situations and effective information sharing with the appropriate agencies. This means that relevant teams such as Youth Workers, Social Services, Police, Team Around the Family, Schools and Education staff are all involved at the appropriate time. This means a collaborative approach to the situation is taken in the first instance. It prevents duplication and means that the right people are involved at the right time which links in with early intervention and prevention aims.

It was explained that there is a 4 step plan to deal with ASB;

1. Warning Letter
2. Personal Warning Visit
3. ABC – (Acceptable Behaviour Contract)
4. Civil Injunction

We heard that the team issues around 30 warning letters per month and only 2-3% of these escalate to the next step. This shows that the warning letter is acting as a very effective tool. It formalises the situation and brings it to the attention of the person (or their parents/guardians) directly which seems to be working.

We did hear how there are some challenges when civil disputes arise which do not have a criminal aspect as the Council are only in a position to issue injunctions to council house tenants via the housing department. We hope that by working together with the appropriate agencies, these isolated issues can be dealt with.

It was interesting to hear that we are working closely with the University on this issue as there have been some instances involving students. While the Council has little influence over students, the University is better positioned to expect certain standards and be a source of information.

We heard of some interesting projects from other housing providers such as the 'Good Neighbour' initiative. This seeks to introduce new tenants in an area to their neighbours, therefore reducing the disconnect between people and encouraging those neighbourhood links which form communities. We are glad to see that much of this work links in with the 'Stronger Communities' Well-being Objective and the 'Cohesive Communities' Well-being Goal within the Future Generations Act 2015.

There is, in our opinion, a correlation between poverty and anti-social behaviour. Evidence shows that there is more crime in less equal societies. We believe that diminishing resources for young people are severely impacting communities. Cuts to youth services and community based activities for young people creates feelings of boredom, isolation and disconnection. This can lead to ASB and there needs to be innovative ways to tackle this on a wider scale. This also includes the ongoing issues around mental health and the lack of resources (nationally).

One project which really stands out when improving community cohesion that is the Local Area Coordinators, however this role works with adults not young people. We would like to make the point that the Panel recognise that ASB is not restricted to young people, or that is it is more likely where groups of young people congregate. Panel members observe that much of the ASB experienced in wards relates to adults. This shows why working with the whole community is important and this issue should form part of the wider social inclusion agenda. With this in mind, ASB really is the whole Councils business. We hear that a new safeguarding model will soon be in place and this will focus on some of the non-statutory aspects such as social and environmental issues and we look forward to hearing how this develops.

We were pleased to hear that there is both victim and perpetrator support. We are aware of instances (nationally) where ASB has had severe impacts on victims lives and we are glad that the team are anticipating such situations. We also feel that perpetrators need support to deal with the root cause of their ASB, so sharing information with the correct agencies and proper referrals are vital. Linking to this, data protection is paramount and it is encouraging to hear that this of the utmost importance to team who are delivering the work.

We were shown a graph which tracks ASB incidents by ward. It was interesting to see the figures and the way in which the team track these to determine 'hot spots'. This allows the team to focus resources and target intervention work. We were told that ASB trends can be difficult to track as it is very subjective, so we hope that that there continues to be support for this work to deal with issues as they arise.

We were pleased to hear that homelessness is not regarded as an anti-social practice. Whilst we understand that there may be associated issues which need addressing, the Panel all agree that help and support needs to be offered to those who are vulnerable. We are pleased to hear that support is available to those in need if they come to the attention of the team.

We were glad to hear the team will continue to improve their current close working practices including the continuation of crime prevention within development planning such as shopping centres. We are aware that free Wi-Fi can encourage groups of people to congregate which can be off-putting for others. We would be interested to hear what types of solutions and practices develop in this area to tackle the issue of ASB.

We were disappointed to hear about the extent of drug use in some places with Uplands cited as a problem area for drug dealing and drug paraphernalia. We were told that this issue will be taken back to the Area Planning Board for discussion as part of the wider discussion around substance misuse and support.

Panel Observations

- We were impressed to hear of the collaborative work which is being undertaken by the service. This joint working is more efficient and effective and creates better opportunities for prevention and early intervention.
- Poverty and ASB is linked and the economic regeneration of communities combined with better opportunities for everyone will go some way in addressing the issue. We need to continue to make poverty reduction a top priority.
- We appreciate that it is a national issue involving multiple agencies, but support for those with mental health issues needs to be improved and increased. This includes easy access to initial help and ongoing support.
- We were interested that contrary to many people's opinions, ASB is not a 'young persons' issue. It is also carried out by adults so resources and education are needed to address this.
- For those young people who are involved in ASB, we need to look at how resources and activities for young people have been funded and delivered. The loss of money within youth services has had an impact. Young people need support, community activities and a sense of belonging and pride in their local

areas. This will not be achieved if their local areas have zero in the way of young people's resources.

- The success of the Local Area Co-ordinators (LACs) linking people within their communities and encouraging community cohesion needs to be stated. We feel that the LAC role should be rolled out to all wards so everyone in Swansea can access it.
- We did notice that Local Councillors have very little involvement in any of this work as it may be seen as a political move. We are not invited to the ASB meetings which deal with these local issues. Whilst we are aware that there may be data protection issues which prevent attendance at some sessions, we have substantial local knowledge of our wards and should be included to be able to represent our ward members.

Overall, we are very impressed by the scope of work being undertaken and the way in which this is being delivered. We would like to commend you and the team on your efforts. We do hope to follow up on this meeting in due course and will contact you at a future date to see how this may happen.

There is no requirement for you to respond to this letter but any thoughts you may have are most welcome.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terry Hennegan', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Terry Hennegan

Convener, Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group

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