

THE ASSEMBLY

1 MARCH 2006

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

This report is submitted under Agenda Item 3(e). The Chair will be asked to determine whether this report can be considered at the meeting under the provisions of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 as a matter of urgency.

Title: Petition Regarding Anti Social Behaviour in the Valence Ward	For Information
<p>Summary:</p> <p>A petition was received with over 100 signatures asking for the Council to combat anti-social behaviour (ASB) relating to youth nuisance, intimidating behaviour from youths, harassment and vandalism within the Valence Ward but more especially within Valence Park. Specific reference was made to the lack of a Safer Neighbourhood Team.</p> <p>Officers have met with the Lead Petitioner, residents of the area, and Ward Members of both the area in question and the neighbouring Wards and a package of improvements has been put together and in many instances already been delivered.</p> <p>The report details the background, the work that has already been undertaken by various teams working in partnership with one another, and work that is planned for the imminent future for Members' information and in response to the petition.</p> <p>Wards Affected: Valence Ward</p>	
<p>Implications:</p> <p>Financial: None</p> <p>Legal: None</p> <p>Risk Management:</p> <p>Residents in the area are vulnerable to crime and ASB thus affecting their quality of life.</p> <p>Social Inclusion and Diversity:</p> <p>As this report does not concern a new or revised ASB policy there are no specific adverse impacts in so far as this report is concerned.</p> <p>Crime and Disorder:</p> <p>Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a responsibility on local authorities to consider the crime and disorder implications of any proposals. In relation to this report there is a direct link with crime and youth disorder. Local residents currently feel the antics and disorderly behaviour of a group of youths in the area is making the area unsafe. Residents have expressed their desire for a Safer Neighbourhood team to be introduced into their area</p>	

Recommendation / Reason		
<p>The Assembly is asked to note the petition and the current position with regard to the action already taken and the action proposed, in order that the issues raised by the residents of Valence ward are dealt with satisfactorily.</p>		
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1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council has received one petition requiring the council take tough action to stop anti-social behaviour blighting the lives of residents in the Valence Ward.
- 1.2 The petition states that residents in Valence Ward have:
- complained of the lack of community policing,
 - residents are in fear of going out in the evenings
 - “drunken and drugged youths on our streets that roam about in gangs damaging cars, breaking windows and generally wrecking the place”.
- 1.3 Prior to this petition being received the ASB team has had the Valence Park and surrounding area under its investigative radar screen. This resulted in the ASB team conducting a one week intensive covert operation (August 2005) in the area. As a result of our operation a number of positive outcomes have been achieved. Firstly the identification of the main ring leaders known to persistently cause anti-social behaviour in the area. These individuals have and continue to be dealt with through various sanctions such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, and the issuing of fixed penalty notices for those who littered the area with rubbish. In addition one of the main perpetrators was served with an Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) last year, and more recently an individual was arrested for criminal damage. This particular individual is yet to be prosecuted or charged.
- 1.4 Upon receipt of the petition an initial meeting was organised and attended by resident representatives and Councillors on 13 September 2005. Various outcomes were agreed and actioned as detailed below:
- The ASB team was to conduct operations in the area with the full co-operation and assistance of the Police.
 - The Police Disorder Bus was to operate in the area.
 - Parks Police were to ensure Valence Park is closed at 10.30 pm every night
 - To promote and encourage the setting up of diversionary activity in the area. One such example is Give Um A Chance (mothers running a youth club in Marks Gate).

- 1.5 A further meeting was organised for neighbouring Ward Councillors on 14 November 2005. The meeting was called to discuss whether neighbouring Wards suffered similar problems, what had been achieved to date and whether a joint approach between Wards could assist in dealing with the matter.
- 1.6 At the meeting on 14 November it was noted that other neighbouring Wards suffer from similar problems as to those in Valence Ward, therefore a joint approach was required to tackle the problem.
- 1.7 A further meeting was held with residents and councillors on 10 January 2006 to feedback on the current position and to ascertain and agree with all concerned the way forward.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 A great deal of work has already been carried out within the Valence Ward to tackle the issues highlighted in the petition. The work has been undertaken by a number of partners working together to address the issue.
- 2.2 Reports suggest that following an ASBO being successfully obtained against one of the main perpetrators the individual has not re-appeared in the area.
- 2.3 Despite this we have recently tasked one of our ASB Investigators to specifically concentrate on monitoring all cases of ASB within the area to ensure that any potential cases are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- 2.4 A further request has been placed for the Police Disorder Bus to mount regular evening patrols in the area to increase coverage and improve visibility within the area.
- 2.5 The Council in collaboration with the Police continue to monitor the area with a view to ensuring that perpetrators of ASB are dealt with. This is carried out through joint working initiatives including the sharing of intelligence.
- 2.6 Recent joint working has resulted in the collection of intelligence to suggest that youths known to cause ASB elsewhere are congregating in Inskip Road. This matter is already being considered and investigated by the ASB team who aim to take immediate enforcement action to prevent an escalation of the problem.
- 2.7 'Give Um A Chance', a youth club being run by Mothers at Marks Gate, are willing to meet to talk about the problems they have faced, why they set up 'Give Um A Chance', how they did it, and why it seems to be working.
- 2.8 A common problem highlighted at each meeting is Valence Park remaining unlocked after hours. This is due to the building within the Park being used by Social Services; therefore the cleaners of the building need access to and from the Park after hours. To combat this problem and those highlighted in the petition the following steps are being taken to:
 - Liaise where possible with the cleaners of the building
 - Increase the number of visits made by Parks Police to the area (Staff levels and other priorities permitting)

- Stagger patrol times to the Park to utilise the element of surprise approach in the hope of witnessing ASB as it is happening and taking swift preventative action

2.9 Safer Neighbourhood Teams will be introduced to each of the remaining nine Wards before April 2007. A sub group tasked with this implementation will be meeting towards the end of January to discuss the process and agree the order of implementation within the nine Wards. Further information received from the Police suggests that there is a further commitment to ensure that a skeleton Safer Neighbourhood Team will be introduced into each area by April 2006.

2.10 Various other ways of improving the area have been investigated including the method of gating an alley way, which ultimately assists the environmental appearance of an area by restricting access. A number of initiatives have already and are in the process of being completed:

Martins Corner

- Extensive modifications are to be carried out to the access gate on Parsloes Avenue to make user friendly. This has been carried out in partnership with residents and shop-owners. This was due for completion by 20 January 2006
- There are plans to paint other galvanised gates in the area to move away from an industrial look. The works were due to be carried out during January 2006

Robin Hood

- One alleyway running behind 574 Longbridge Road has already been gated (29th March 2005)
- A second alleyway running behind 614 Longbridge Road was due for completion on or around 20th January 2006
- These are the two main service roads at the Longbridge Road / Lodge Avenue junction.

Andrew's Corner

- The alleyway running behind 443 Becontree Avenue was gated on 21 April 2005
- The alleyway running behind 448 Becontree Avenue was gated on 24 November 2005
- The alleyway running behind 445 Becontree Avenue was due to be gated on or around 14th January 2006
- The alleyway running behind 450 Becontree Avenue was due to be gated on or around 14th January 2006
- These are the four main service roads at the Valence Road / Becontree Avenue junction.

Inskip Road

- Ongoing survey to determine what is possible within the area.
- Initial sentiments are that something could be done.

2.11 There are two teams of street-wardens working throughout the Borough. There is a Re-active team which deals with service requests on a daily basis between 9 am – 5 pm, Monday – Friday and a Pro-active team which works 10 am – 9 pm seven days a week concentrating on areas with a high density of enviro-crime and ASB. The pro-active team concentrates in each area for between 4 to 6 weeks, employing a '*blitz it*' approach. Despite the fact that the pro-active team of wardens are not working within the Valence Ward currently they are concentrating in

neighbouring Wards specifically at Martins Corner, taking swift and tough enforcement action to tackle the problems they encounter, collecting intelligence for other partners, building relationships, and making referrals. With their increased presence it is envisaged that a number of problems are targeted successfully with additional patrols being carried out within Valence Ward to ensure the problems are not moved on and perpetrators are identified.

- 2.12 The ASB team, Street-Wardens, and Housing team are working alongside the Police, planning joint educational visits into schools to address the youth.
- 2.13 The CCTV team are working with ASB team, Wardens, Police and Schools to provide cameras and relevant evidence in areas most in need.
- 2.14 The Alleygating team and Street Warden team are working with the youth service to provide an initiative to tackle the Graffiti in specific areas. This initiative tackles the problem with the focus that youths take ownership of graffiti and the area vandalised by removing the graffiti themselves. This theory has worked elsewhere.
- 2.15 The youth service is committed to providing additional activity within the area to address the problem that youths have nothing to do and nowhere to go. The youth service, specifically Brian Lindsay will be reporting to a future meeting on the work and projects anticipated for 2006 / 2007, progress made and the way forward.

3 Report Detail

- 3.1 The petition calls for action to be taken to address the lack of community policing, the fact that residents are in fear of going out in the evenings and the “drunken and drugged youths on our streets that roam about in gangs damaging cars, breaking windows and generally wrecking the place”. As Sections 2.2 – 2.15 of this report details, various work has already been undertaken in this area, with additional work planned for the imminent future.
- 3.2 Paragraph 2.9 specifically addresses the fact that with the imminent introduction of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams planned for all wards in the Borough, combined with measures outlined in Sections 2.2 – 2.8, and 2.10 – 2.15 of the report will help to address the points that residents are in fear of going out at night and criminal damage being caused to property.
- 3.3 Bi-weekly meetings are held to discuss the problems currently being experienced in Valence Ward, improvements to the situation, and areas needing further attention. All partners realise that despite the achievements already been made, there is no quick answer to this problem. It will only be solved with a combination of time, commitment, resources and effort, with the continuation of partnership working proven to be far more successful than attempting to solve the problem in isolation.
- 3.4 At the meeting held of 10 January 2006, residents agreed that the area had improved over recent months, and were happy with the progress made.
- 3.5 A further meeting is to be arranged at the beginning of March to feedback to residents and Councillors on the overall issue but specifically relating to the work to be carried out by the youth service.

4. Consultees

Councillor Mrs J Bruce – Valence Ward
Councillor B Dale – Valence Ward
Councillor Mrs C Osborn – Valence Ward
Darren Henaghan – Head of Service Health & Consumer Services
Michelle Bridge – Envirocrime Manager
Harvey Cohen – Parks Police Inspector
David Greenidge – Alleygating Team
The Metropolitan Police
Brian Lindsay – Youth Development Service

Background Papers

Petition from Valence Residents Association