

THE ASSEMBLY

5 OCTOBER 2005

REPORT OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR SCRUTINY PANEL

FINAL REPORT OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR SCRUTINY PANEL	FOR DECISION
<p>Summary:</p> <p>The main emphasis of the Community Forums Annual Report to the Scrutiny Management Board raised concerns from the community about anti-social behaviour which resulted in the Board agreeing to set up a Scrutiny Panel to review the Council's position.</p> <p>The report gives details from officers who are involved in enforcing and deterring anti-social behaviour. It also provides information from a number of outside bodies who provide services to mediate against anti-social behaviour. In addition, other specific government organisations such as the Police, the Magistrates Court and the Fire Brigade, gave evidence to the Panel. The residents of the Borough played a vital role in giving evidence and providing information of their experiences.</p> <p>Shortly after the Panel began its work to scrutinise their approach to anti-social behaviour, the Executive agreed to form a new Community Protection Unit. Many of the recommendations that the Panel would have made were pre-empted by this reorganisation that has brought together all relevant Teams and Officers previously located in different departments in the Council to provide a cohesive approach to crime and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>The Panel acknowledge the benefits of The New Unit and strongly support the making a single officer, the Head of Health and Consumer Services, responsible for leading the work of the Council and its partners. This would have been the Panel's main recommendation as members felt at the beginning of the process that there was a lack of joined up working in this area.</p> <p>The Panel are aware, however, that The Unit is in its early stages of development and many of the panels recommendations will serve to guide the completion of this unit as well as other conclusions and recommendations that they would like to see implemented.</p> <p>Wards Affected: All Wards</p>	
<p>Implications:</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>The Action and Financial Plan provides details of the estimate of cost for each of the recommendations. Recommendations which cannot be contained within existing estimates will be part of the Council's budget setting process as detailed.</p> <p>Legal:</p> <p>None.</p>	

Risk Management:

As this was not a requirement when the panel undertook and finalised their scrutiny work Officers will be build the risk of not taking or/in taking decisions into the individual recommendations and provide these details when reporting back to the Scrutiny Management Board.

Social Inclusion and Diversity:

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a requirement on local authorities to make an assessment of the impact of new and revised policies in terms of race equality. Existing policies have already been subjected to impact assessments. This Authority has adopted an approach of extending the impact to cover gender, disability, sexuality, faith, age and community cohesion.

As this report does not concern a new or revised policy there are no specific adverse impacts insofar as this report is concerned.

Crime and Disorder:

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. As this report relates to Anti Social Behaviour across the Borough and means by which to reduce its impact, crime and disorder implications have been addressed throughout this report.

Recommendations

The Anti Social Behaviour Scrutiny Panel are proposing the following actions:

1. A media strategy that consistently gives the message that anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated, and the Council and its partners are working together to protect the community;
2. A media campaign that does more to counter the image that our young people are at the centre of all anti-social behaviour;
3. A combination of highly visible Police, Street Wardens and Parks Police taking quick and strong enforcement action at the times of the day and night when anti-social behaviour is most prevalent;
4. A strategy for providing activities and support for our young people, with particular emphasis during the evening, school holidays and when pupils have been excluded;
5. An investigation to see how improvements in communication and response times with the Police can be achieved;
6. Re-launch the Street Warden Service as a Borough wide service with a harder enforcement image and more comprehensive powers;
7. A Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team in every ward;

8. Professional witnesses collecting the evidence needed to protect the victims of anti-social behaviour and take enforcement action;
9. Strong enforcement of the Conditions of Tenancy for both residents in Council and Housing Association homes;
10. Robust enforcement action against environmental crime;
11. More support for victims and scrutinised action against perpetrators in long term cases of anti-social behaviour;
12. More use of techniques such as mediation in neighbour disputes to find longer term solutions;
13. An assertive use of the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team to reduce the abuse of alcohol and illegal drugs that fuel much of the anti-social behaviour in the Borough;
14. Raise the profile of domestic violence and mainstream the domestic violence service;
15. Support the introduction and development of the Safer Schools Partnership initiative; and
16. A strengthened Community Safety Strategic Partnership that deals specifically with anti-social behaviour with high level commitment from Members, Officers and our partners in other public and voluntary agencies that will drive forward these recommendations and learn from experiences of other Boroughs

Reasons

Final Reports of Scrutiny Panels are submitted to the Assembly for adoption of the report, its findings and recommendations

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Combating anti-social behaviour is high on the list of all ward Councillors and Central Government. A number of initiatives have been created by both during the time the Panel have been undertaking their work.
- 1.2 Anti-social behaviour concerns can range from simple clashes of personality to persistent nuisance and abuse and then criminal activity.
- 1.3 To tackle these issues the Scrutiny Management Board agreed at their meeting on 28 April 2004 to set up an Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Panel.

1.4 The membership of the Panel consisted of six Councillors -- Councillor Mrs D Hunt (Lead Member) and Councillors T J Justice, R C Little, Mrs C Osborn, D O'Brien and Mrs M M West and an external representative -- Chief Inspector G Stark. The Panel was supported by an Independent Scrutiny Officer - Mr J Grint, Head of Regeneration, a Lead Services Officer -- Mr D Henaghan, Head of Health and Consumer Services and a Democratic Support Officer -- Mrs P Bonella.

1.5 The terms of reference for the Panel are as follows:

To look at how the Council and its partners can improve their approach to reducing anti-social behaviour focusing on the following aspects:

- Tackling nuisance neighbours
- Tackling environmental crime
- Support to victims and witnesses

In addition ensure that any equalities and diversity issues are considered during the review and that any health related issues are addressed.

1.6 The Panel consulted a number of Stakeholders inviting responses from Departments, the Police, Councillors and Voluntary Organisations to enable them to focus on key issues.

1.7 The Panel held twelve meetings and one site visit commencing 25 May 2004 and completing on 23 March 2005.

1.8 The Panel received presentations from officers, outside bodies and Councillors. They heard from residents who are victims of anti-social behaviour and visited anti-social behaviour hotspots. A best practice visit to Camden was made.

1.9 The Scrutiny Management Board agreed to the Panel's request to extend the deadline due to the large workload.

2. Background

2.1 The Home Office in 1997 published a consultation documents 'Getting to Grips with Crime: A New Framework for Local Action'. It set out a new legislative framework for key partners in crime prevention and community safety.

2.2 A Home Office initiative led to the establishment of a number of Safer Cities projects as part of the Action for Cities programme. These projects were led by a steering group comprising of representatives from local government, the police, probation service, voluntary organisations and local businesses.

2.3 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 gave local authorities in partnership with the police and other agencies the responsibility to produce and implement a crime and disorder strategy. The powers of the act also introduced Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's), for the first time and created Youth Offending and Drug Action Teams. Local Authorities were required to have regard to the prevention of crime and disorder when exercising their functions.

- 2.4 Anti-social behaviour covers a wide range of issues some of which many Members will have knowledge of from their case work.
- 2.5 The Council has an equally wide range of services that combat these issues from the Abandoned Vehicle team, through the Parks Police and Street Wardens to Housing Estates officers and the late night noise team to name just a few
- 2.6 The Mayor of London has introduced a Safer Neighbourhood Scheme which has resulted in a number of police teams consisting of one Sergeant, two constables and three Police Community Support Officers being spread out over the Borough over the next three years. These teams provide highly visible community policing dedicated to an identified ward.
- 2.7 In March 2003 a White Paper was published which proposed strengthening local government and police powers to deal with a range of anti-social behaviour deterrents, relating to drug use, housing, parental responsibility and young people and the environment. The proposals were incorporated into the Anti-Social Behaviour Act and became law in November 2003.
- 2.8 An Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator was appointed in July 2004 and in September 2004, the Community Safety Team moved from the Policy and Review Division, renamed the Community Protection Unit and moved to Housing and Health under the management of the Head of Health & Consumer Services.
- 2.9 During March and April 2005 the majority of the enforcement and problem solving services the Council provides to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and environmental crime were brought together into the new Community Protection Unit. Under the new Crime Disorder and Drugs Strategy this Unit has the clear remit of significantly reducing crime, the fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and the harm caused by illegal drugs.
- 2.10 The services now offered by the Unit dealing in enforcement are
- Abandoned and untaxed vehicles
 - Litter, dog fouling, fly posting, fly tipping and graffiti enforcement
 - Street Wardens
 - Parks Police
 - Licensing, including Liquor Licensing
 - CCTV
 - Anti-social Behaviour Professional Witnesses
 - Late night noise team
 - General nuisance enforcement
 - Community Safety
- 2.11 Enforcement however is only one aspect of reducing anti-social behaviour. The Council provides many other services to prevent and deter criminal and anti-social behaviour and treat the root causes of offending behaviour, using services such as the Youth Offending Team, the Youth Service and the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team.

3. Work Programme undertaken by the Panel

- 3.1 The Panel undertook consultation with key stakeholders, including Councillors, Departments, Partners, School Governors and the Voluntary Sector inviting their views/comments on the work the Panel should undertake as part of their investigation.
- 3.2 At the first three meetings the Panel were provided with a background report and agreed the draft terms of reference. They then received feedback on the consultation and finalised the terms of reference and agreed a selection of case studies, best practice visits and who to consult. (The terms of reference were subsequently agreed by the Scrutiny Management Board).
- 3.3 The Panel wanted to know what was happening on the ground in the borough, what was working, what was required and what needed to be changed. They also undertook a number of visits which focused on areas where the Council and its partners had made efforts to combat anti-social behaviour.
- 3.4 Initially they concluded that where strong enforcement action is tied in to improvements in the living environment and Streetscene real progress can be made. In that respect the views of all local people in the early stages of development can witness the positive impact of high quality public space but also witness the negative impact of a poorly designed or poorly maintained environment.
- 3.5 More needs to be done to bring together the various facilities for our young people and give them a far more positive relationship with the local community and a strong voice in making local decisions.
- 3.6 The external member of the Panel provided information on the success of dispersal orders and other aspects which involved the service the Police provide working in partnership with the Council.
- 3.7 The Panel decided to visit Camden Council primarily because it is well regarded for its innovative and proactive approach to anti-social behaviour, but also because the Lead Member of the Panel had visited the area two years ago and was keen to see the improvements which had been made. The Panel used the opportunity to question the strong enforcement approach used by Camden and the extensive use of anti-social behaviour orders along with assertive drug rehabilitation programmes to significantly reduce the problems associated with street drinkers and prostitution in and around the Kings Cross area. They used regeneration opportunities to design out crime and significantly reduced problems during redevelopment.
- 3.8 The Panel received information from two non-statutory organisations who gave details of programmes they use to deter anti-social behaviour. The LIFE project (Local Intervention Fire Education) programme provides training programmes for young people. Shelter inclusion project deals with supporting households to maintain their tenancy rather than eviction. The Essex and Suffolk Water Company contacted the Council to share their experiences with the Panel of resolving fire hydrants being vandalised.

- 3.9 The uncertainty of the future of the Magistrates' Court at Barking caused concern to the Panel coupled with their lack of ability to be able to provide details of low-level crime and level of fines.
- 3.10 The Drugs and Alcohol Team (DAAT) are working in partnership with the Council to deter and rehabilitate the use of drugs and alcohol through strategies. Alcohol, and particularly drugs, both contribute to crime and anti-social behaviour in the community.
- 3.11 Abbey, Gascoigne and Thames and Wellgate Neighbourhood Team co-ordinators have both been recently appointed to their respective roles. At Abbey, Gascoigne and Thames they have provided drug awareness programmes for parents / carers but are now mainly focusing involving the community in the development of Barking Town Centre. The Wellgate Neighbourhood team have tackled youth disorder effectively and provided extensive information on how to tackle and report anti-social behaviour.
- 3.12 The Panel felt it was essential to talk directly to victims of anti-social behaviour to gain insight into their experiences and the service they received from the Council and its partners. They heard disturbing descriptions of intimidation and targeted abuse often lasting for months. On the whole residents felt powerless to take action and looked to the Police and the Council to intervene. They found that the Police didn't always respond and, with some exceptions, Council services were closed when the problems were occurring.
- 3.13 The residents felt that more needs to be done to take away the reliance on victims standing up in court as understandably they were afraid of the consequences. It was apparent that support through the entire process was essential as often one agency's efforts would have a short term benefit but then the problem would re-emerge.

The residents also felt that the techniques used to combat anti-social behaviour needed to vary given the circumstances, but overall they consistently wanted strong enforcement action, with significant penalties for the perpetrators as being the best way to protect the community.

- 3.14 The attached appendices provides a more detailed account of the work undertaken by the panel

Appendix 1 Consultation
Appendix 2 Panel Activities
Appendix 3 Case Studies
Appendix 4 Best Practice Visit
Appendix 5 Information and Presentations from Officers
Appendix 6 External Organisations
Appendix 7 Neighbourhood Teams
Appendix 8 Residents

4. Equalities and Diversity

- 4.1 In recognising that the Council does record the statistics around all sections of the community regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disabled people and harder to reach groups in relation to incidents of anti-social behaviour, we acknowledge a similar approach needs to be undertaken on those persons subject to anti-social behaviour orders for which the appropriate monitoring forms should be introduced, and reported to the Crime and Safety Partnership

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Anti-social behaviour takes many forms and does not limit itself to normal office hours. The Panel therefore felt that it is essential that the services the Council and its partners provide are comprehensive, in order to address the wider issues of anti-social behaviour and compliment each other to create both a comprehensive enforcement service that could work in the community with victims and perpetrators to find long term solutions.
- 5.2 The Panel concluded to avoid anti-social behaviour they need to support families from the earliest age, for example using Sure Start programmes which provides the development of parenting skills guidance through the early stages of development
- 5.3 The Panel strongly felt that more facilities were needed for our young people, the vast majority who are well behaved but just want somewhere to hang out. For the minority that do cause trouble, the Panel felt far more was needed to be done to stop their anti-social behaviour before it progressed to more significant crime.
- 5.4 Specifically the Panel noted that a Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Unit has been set up within the Housing and Health Department which will bring together all relevant Teams and Officers previously located in different departments in the Council to provide a cohesive approach to crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 5.5 The Barking and Dagenham Crime, Disorder and Drugs Strategy 2005 to 2008 sets out the key issues affecting the Borough and an action plan on how to achieve the priorities to combat anti-social behaviour and work in partnership with the Police and the Drugs, Alcohol Action Team (DAAT).
- 5.6 The Panel then focused on the successes, particularly the details of being highly ranked in the country or unique in their approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour, or the merits of successful partnership working.
- 5.7 Reported incidents of anti-social behaviour is a subject which draws media attention this needs to be overturned by a scheme where residents are made aware of the Council's continuation to made the Borough safer.
- 5.8 Finally though, the Panel concluded that if anti-social behaviour is not tackled properly then what we see today will become the norm, and we will then be dealing with more extreme forms of behaviour.

6. Acknowledgements

- 6.1 The Chair of the Panel would like to thank all Members of the panel for their contribution to the work undertaken in scrutinising the aspects of anti-social behaviour and to officers for the information and presentations provided. Thanks are also given to all outside organisations and residents of the borough who have contributed to the findings of the Panel's final report.

Background Papers:

Minutes of the Anti Social Behaviour Scrutiny Panel Meetings held on:

25 May 2004
6 July 2004
10 August 2004
22 September 2004
27 September 2004
26 October 2004
16 November 2004
15 December 2004
24 January 2005
10 February 2005
23 February 2005
23 March 2005

CONSULTATION

Views and comments from key stakeholders, which included Councillors, Departments, Partners, School Governor and the Voluntary Sector, were sought as follows:

- What specific anti-social behaviour issues do you feel the panel should focus on (in its initial discussion, the panel mentioned a wide range of issues including the contribution of drugs and alcohol, reducing public fear of reporting ASB and the use of Anti Social Behaviour Orders)
- Who do you feel the panel should consult as part of the review
- Any suggestions you have for possible panel visits/case studies
- What key documents you feel that panel should look at
- Any information you may have on best practice locally or nationally
- What do you see as the key challenges in tackling anti-social behaviour
- Any suggestions you have for improvement

PANEL ACTIVITIES**Councillor Mrs Hunt**

Ted Ball Memorial Hall - Local residents requested a meeting to discuss incidents of anti-social behaviour, particularly around the Ted Ball Memorial Hall, surgery and library complex. The concerns raised about anti-social behaviour was football being played in the car park until after 1.00am in the morning, graffiti, broken windows, rubbish and drinking of alcohol in the car park and foyer area.

Marks Gate Estate - The major problem at Marks Gate is the gathering of youths outside the Co-op store where the bollards are in place. The placement of a dispersal order followed by serving Anti-Social Behaviour Orders has helped improve the situation. Generally the impression is that improvements have helped alleviate some of the problems, but some Housing areas could be cleaned up and refurbished outside to meet the Council priorities.

Barking Town Centre – was visited on Market Days. The layout of the stalls gave the perception of intimidation as they were close together, coupled with groups of young people probably aged 14 to 17 years collecting together. Litter was strewn around the market providing an environment that would invite anti-social behaviour. More prominent signs would help to advertise the non-alcohol area of Barking Town Centre.

Councillors Mrs Hunt and Mrs West

Gorsebrook Concierge System - Generally the area looked shabby and in need of repair. The front doors were unsecured. Rubbish was thrown from windows and youths congregate in stair wells and in front of concierge. There are two cameras (CCTV) which sometimes have technical difficulties. There are plans for new cameras to be installed alongside new doors in November. There are issues about charging for dumped black rubbish sacks and a pilot scheme is planned for three months providing half-size bags that fit the rubbish chute. Dogs patrol the area from 6pm to 10pm.

Councillor Justice

Sue Bramley Centre - The Centre is used for a Sure Start programme where a number of support programmes and activities are held for all ages of residents.

There is a sports area with an all weather sports pitch, designed for five-a side and a basketball/netball court. The area was heavily littered which may in part be due to the building work that is taking place in the area. The centre employs twelve staff including midwives, a link worker and core workers covering the Thames View ward. There is much in the complex to occupy the time of both children and adults constructively and this should have a positive effect on the reduction of anti-social behaviour at Thames View and Greatfleet.

Control Centre - There are a number of cameras (CCTV) in operation Borough-wide and there are future plans to increase them in the early part of 2005. Two operators work eight hour shifts and on average six to eight incidents take place per operator each shift. Meetings with police are planned every six weeks. There is a regular maintenance

programme, currently there are eleven cameras awaiting repair and the relocation of one camera to Barking Station. The site of the control room is not a good working environment, although the installation of air conditioning and refurbishment of the building has improved the conditions.

Councillors West & Little

Visits were made to Alleygator schemes, which gates off rear service roads and alleyways with a view to reducing crime, fly tipping and anti-social behaviour. It was reported that at the alley gate at Martins Corner the keys are still awaiting ownership. The service road at the rear of the Matapan is working very well.

Chief Inspector Stark

Abstraction

A significant number of Metropolitan Police officers have been drafted in from all Boroughs, including Barking & Dagenham to support the ongoing security operations to deter terrorist activity, additional security for Royal Palaces, anti-war and pro-hunt demonstrations in London. This obviously has some impact at a local level, although provision has continued to operate a 24 hour response to emergency calls utilising the call prioritisation system to ensure police resources are used to maximum effect. Targets are currently being exceeded for reducing street robbery and residential burglary and on course to see a reduction in recorded vehicle crime.

Contacting the Police

Councillors and the community have raised concerns about contacting the Police. One initiative suggested was the use of pagers, which the police reported would not be an effective means of communication and monitoring or responding to priority calls, such as violent crime, serious road accidents or other high level calls. A number of ways were suggested to contact the Police including the Metropolitan Police web site where a message can be sent by e-mail. There were a number of other options provided but these were for all non-emergency calls.

Truancy

From February until December 2004, Police Officers in partnership with Local Education Authority Enforcement Officers stopped and or intercepted 148 pupils. A School Beat Officer at Warren School has prevented 30 to 40 students truanting during the last three months of 2004. Working in partnership with the school has seen behaviour and attitudes improve.

Safer Schools Partnership

The Safer Schools Partnership initiative resulted from a pilot scheme in Southwark, South London. The Borough introduced School Beat Officers (SBO's) in September 2004 at Sydney Russell School. Following the introduction of Safer Neighbourhood Teams, two additional schools, Warren and Dagenham Park School now benefit from a regular Police presence. In its early stages the role of the SBO is developing and will significantly benefit the community.

APPENDIX 3

CASE STUDIES

Harrow Pub Area / Blake Avenue

A number of incidents of anti-social behaviour are focused in an area stretching across Ripple Road including the John Burns Estate, the Harrow Pub area, Blake Avenue and Eastbury Court. Reports to the Council of anti-social behaviour can be dated back to at least April 1997. The problems in Eastbury Court have ranged from graffiti to damage to the door entry system with fires and vandalism to the bin chamber at John Burns Drive.

A number of initiatives have been introduced, including door entry systems to be installed to a series of low rise blocks at John Burns Drive. An additional fencing scheme is to be installed at the front of Eastbury Court to restrict access to the bungalows on the ground floor. Concierges are to be installed at John Burns Drive, Sebastian Court and then extended to embrace Eastbury Court.

The number of incidents for the Eastbury, Longbridge and Mayesbrook wards from October 2003 until August 2004 totalled 123.

Goresbrook Park

Following the community consultation to proposals and planning of the improvements for Phase I of Goresbrook Park which commenced in January 2002, the park and surrounding areas has been the focus of repeated vandalism and anti-social behaviour. This resulted in a petition of 139 separate addresses raising concerns being reported to the Assembly in February 2004.

Phase 2 of the Goresbrook Park Master plan will not proceed until a revised master plan can be developed for the Park. The Panel were provided with very detailed information about preventative measures against anti-social behaviour being undertaken and the role of all the various Council departments. It was emphasised that neither the Council nor the Police can work in isolation nor provide all the answers which the petitioners in this case are requesting in response to high intensity and determined examples of anti social behaviour in the Goresbrook area. Twenty nine incidents of anti social behaviour were reported in the period July to mid-September 2003.

Changes to the infrastructure of Goresbrook Park are needed and could include 'squeeze barriers' and the extension of hours of Street Wardens. When the original bid took place no budget was set aside for its sustainability. There is only a budget of £40,000 to combat anti-social behaviour for the 26 Borough parks covering 420 hectares.

Councillor Thomas gave details of anti-social behaviour from Goresbrook Park west of Dagenham Avenue to Gale Street inclusive. Increase in anti-social behaviour seemed to escalate soon after Phase I of the park had been completed. The Panel reviewed details of the sort of incidents of anti social behaviour which included motorbike and car racing in residential streets and footpaths and the constant fly tipping. The Panel were shown a Police report covering two months which showed 100 calls, of which 59 calls were from two roads in the area.

The Community Housing Manager for the area also provided information on incidents of anti-social behaviour, including minor criminal damage to motor vehicles, missiles being thrown at passing vehicles on the A13 and targeting a property in Maplestead Road. One of the difficulties in managing this problem is that the area falls at the boundary of two separate Community Housing Partnerships. A number of initiatives have been suggested but have been constrained by lack of funding. These include proposals to extend the street wardens service into the Goresbrook vicinity. Carry out covert surveillance of youths in the Burnham Road area and the installation of an additional CCTV camera that would feedback information to the Goresbrook concierge station.

BEST PRACTICE VISIT

The Anti-Social Behaviour Officer for Camden presented a video showing activities around anti-social behaviour in Camden produced from a Newsnight special. It highlighted the problem areas and how they were actively tackling anti-social behaviour, working in close partnership with the Police and gaining the trust of residents to come forward in reporting anti-social behaviour incidents.

The Panel reflected that the London Borough of Camden had a much wider demographic society to deal with than Barking & Dagenham. The areas include Kings Cross, notorious for drugs and prostitution, the West End of London and deprived areas.

They have achieved 127 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders of these only 15 were young people, of which, over 50% of these have been breached. The London Borough of Camden has 18 Street Wardens, working day times only and 5 Anti-Social Behaviour Officers. The average cost of an order is £750. In addition there are 2 workers from Leisure Services one working with younger people and one with older people. There are 3 dedicated solicitors who have 2 team workers.

In Camden the Police and the Anti-Social Behaviour Officers have focused on crime and not anti-social behaviour which has meant that crime has been dealt with as it is related to the big problem with drugs in the Borough. They have a witness protection statement scheme, use CCTV mini-cameras and hearsay evidence. Evidence is also gained by expert witnesses usually the Police and Housing Officers. They use the Police national database and UK tracking street activities. Anti-social behaviour in Camden is driven by the Head of Service, who is an ex-Chief Inspector of Police.

Camden when dealing with anti-social behaviour is trying to prevent problems reoccurring. To assist with this, they have an organisation funded by Neighbourhood Renewal called Families in Focus and a drug rehabilitation programme. Information was provided on a number of schemes 'Guide to organising activities for young people on your Estate' 'Domestic Violence Guide' and a 'Acceptable Behaviour Agreements & Parental Guidance Agreements.'

Barking & Dagenham Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Unit visited Camden to observe an anti-social behaviour appeal case in March.

INFORMATION AND PRESENTATIONS FROM OFFICERS

Anti-Social Behaviour Unit

The Panel received a presentation from Omejefe Agba, the newly appointed Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator who gave details of The Unit's mission statement, their working in partnerships and the current outcomes and local initiatives being undertaken. Information was received on the current powers that are available to the Council for dealing with anti-social behaviour and how the team are currently processing anti-social behaviour orders.

Legal

Paul Feild, solicitor from Legal Services provided details of the Acts used in processing through the law for children and adults who are subject to anti-social behaviour. British trends in crime show that the number of applications for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders has increased from less than 100 to 500 in 2004. Information was given on injunctions and their definitions and prohibition of alcohol consumption. A number of updates on legislation currently being assessed were detailed.

Libraries

Sylvia Currie, Principal Librarian, Customer and Professional Services provided information on the details and categories that anti-social behaviour incidents fell into and the more serious incidents occurring in Libraries, which included physical assault on a member of staff, attempted arson and damage to Council Property. Library staff were frustrated at the slow response or no show from both the Police and Parks Police.

Corporate Complaints

Angie Martin, Deputy Corporate Complaints Manager gave details on Corporate Complaints reported from February to July 2004 detailing anti-social behaviour which totalled 46 incidents. Although it is likely that less than 1% of incidents went through the Corporate Complaints procedure as most were dealt with at service level.

Nuisance Neighbours

Colin Nash, Team Leader from the Noise Nuisance Team informed the Panel that they had received 6,500 complaints within the last twelve months. 93% were neighbour complaints, mostly about noise but also included rubbish, keeping of animals, bonfires and smells. Action is available for unkempt gardens for all residents and a facility for stray dogs at Frizlands Lane.

The Team have a comprehensive Policy that sets out all procedures of how to deal with noise nuisance. It was evident that from the report that a review of the out of hours team should be undertaken.

Youth Offending Team

Geeta Subramaniam, Strategic ISSP Manager gave details of the Youth Justice Plan, to be revised in June 2005 which sets out information on persistent and serious offenders, education and addressing anti-social behaviour. The plan also gave details of effective quality assurance, prevention strategy and services to young people who are sexually abused.

The Youth Offending Team is highly ranked and is fifth in the country. They work in Partnership with the Community Safety Team with youths who have received Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

Referrals aged 8-13 are made to the Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YIP) to ensure those at risk are being targeted and intervention measures are in place. Only 7 out of 90 have re-offended. This scheme at Gascoigne is to be extended with additional funding received for Marks Gate and Thames View.

Older youths aged 16-18 have been engaged on building their skills through 'Bridge that Gap' scheme.

Youth Support and Development Service

Brian Lindsay, Head of Youth Support and Development provided information on a recent number of changes that encourage the Service to review its contribution and ensure the lives of young people in the Borough is more positive. It will review the national changes reflecting an increased expectation on youth services to deliver targeted youth work programmes.

The new targets measure 4 key areas of performance, and the recently refurbished Beacon Youth Centre, now called the Vibe will help the team to meet these targets. However the main target of engaging 25% age 13-19 youth population means that 75% will not be prioritised therefore other forms of youth work ranging from sports clubs and voluntary youth sector organisations will be used.

The detached work team is currently working in the Marks Gate area engaging young people in the streets and supporting a recently established voluntary youth group.

Housing Evictions

Kathryn Gilcreest, Community Safety officer informed the panel that eviction is used as last resort to deal with anti social behaviour, as the viewpoint is that all evictions are seen as a failure of the system, inevitably there are occasions when all else fails and the tenant refuses to respond to warnings and support given.

There were 2,487 complaints of anti-social behaviour incidents reported in 2003/04 which revealed a significant increase, partly because of greater public awareness of the problem and the encouragement of residents to come forward. 178 complaints resulted in notices of seeking possession from which 22 evictions were carried out, 15 of these cases were for anti-social behaviour.

Legal costs incurred in eviction for anti-social behaviour are generally upto £10,000. These costs are similar to administering Anti Social Behaviour Orders.

The Housing and Health Department also use alternative measures to eviction including notices for seeking possession, Unacceptable Behaviour Contracts and Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts.

School Exclusions

Ann Jones, Head of Education Inclusion Team provided information was received about the trends in fixed term and permanent exclusions together with action to reduce the level of exclusions. In 2003/04 the number of exclusions in secondary schools rose from 18 to 46. To some extent the reason for the increase relates to better levels of attendance at schools, so that in many cases pupils are reluctant to be in the school environment and rebel.

A number of strategies are being piloted at certain schools at the primary level to tackle exclusions with a view to reducing the problems once the pupils get to secondary school. These plans will be rolled out to all schools in the near future.

School exclusions do affect the life chances of young people and once permanently excluded many find it very difficult to get back into mainstream schools to complete their education. The priority for the Local Education Authority staff is to work with schools to prevent exclusions. A resource centre has been set up at Cambell School where young people are put into smaller classes working with trained staff who also support parents with a view to putting in preventative measures to stop pupils getting deeper into anti-social activities by the time they reach secondary school. Resourcing to reduce the number of permanent exclusions and thereby address wider anti-social behaviour issues for the community as a whole could be redirected from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund if given to the Council.

Community Protection & Environmental Crime

Darren Henaghan, Lead Service Officer reported on the background of the Council's agenda to deliver an action plan on crime and anti-social behaviour. He emphasised the use of plans and policies which included the Community Strategy, the Crime and Disorder Strategy, the Enforcement Policy, the Liquor Licensing Policy and the cohesive approach with Education and Social Services.

Details were provided on the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Board with the Portfolio Member leading and senior officers attending. This will support the Executive by overseeing the strategic and policy objectives, assessing new projects and programmes and supporting the Local Strategic Partnership.

Arising from difficulties that occurred in contacting staff in different departments, the Lead Member, all other Members and Residents supported a new Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour unit in the Housing and Health Department and is currently evolving by staff being transferred, which when combined will be a highly visible enforcement service, providing cover from mid-day to midnight seven days a week. They will be joined by a team of plain clothes anti-social behaviour Investigation Officers who will respond to complaints and work up to 4am on Friday and Saturday.

It was accepted that whilst work is currently being undertaken with the Youth Offending Team and the Drugs Action Team, more work needs to be undertaken in this area.

The expanding service will require £370,000, of which £315,000 has been set aside in the 2004/05 budgets.

Education Welfare

Paul Kelly, Principal Access and Attendance Officer in Education, Arts and Libraries provided details of the structure of the Access and attendance service, the work of tackling truancy and data relating to the prosecutions of parents and truancy patrols in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police.

Current trends show that during the last 4 years truancy has increased. Truancy Patrols with the Police are undertaken in marked vehicles usually with 3 police officers and 2 to 3 education officers. Statistics of children stopped were provided from September 2003 to July 2004, which highlighted the vulnerability of primary school pupils not in school.

70 parents have to-date been prosecuted and no cases have been lost, the largest fine has been £1,000 for 2 parents with 2 children, no cases have resulted in imprisonment.

Pupils who have been excluded from school are not included in this procedure.

Arts Service

Tracey McNulty, Head of Arts Service gave a presentation on the activities and projects undertaken by the Arts Service to contribute towards the prevention and elimination of anti-social behaviour.

Particular reference was made to a scheme set up in summer 2003, with funding from the Behaviour Improvement Programme to engage young people in creation of a permanent arts installation. Digitise which is still ongoing is working in partnership with Youth Support and Development Services (YSDS) and is supported by funding from the Arts Council to purchase equipment for long term film production training. Molten the diversity arts festival takes place over a number of weeks with projects, exhibitions and workshops in community venues, schools and public buildings, which culminates in performance evenings.

A number of diversionary arts activities have been planned for 2005. The concern for this Panel is the small Arts team to administer any future projects, which could aim specifically to combat anti-social behaviour.

Sports Development

Teresa Parish, Group Manager, Leisure and Community Services gave details of the Development Team 3 year plan which will run until 2007. They identified a number of action plans which are jointly delivered with partner organisations.

They currently run 37 sessions each week throughout the Borough at a range of venues. 16 of these sessions are aimed at young people, with a further nine open to all ages.

The main area tackling anti-social behaviour, are sessions held on a Monday to Friday based at Wood Lane Sports Centre, with sessions both morning and afternoon, this Focus Group are organised by the Team in partnership with Barking College. Members of the

Focus Group have either been excluded from school or referred from the Education, Arts and Libraries Department.

The costs of attending Sports Development sessions vary between free for the, 'Just Walk Programme' to £2.50 for an after school club, for an hour and a half session.

Sure Start Programme

Christine Pryor, Head of Early Years and Childcare provided information on the background and the rationale of the Sure Start Programme is to provide support for children 0-4 years and their families, by providing help to improve well-being, relationships, parenting skills, self esteem and confidence, with access to training and employment.

There are three established programmes at Abbey, Thames View and Marks Gate with Gascoigne in the early stages of development. In stage one 2004/06 will see the expansion of the original four centres and by building four new centres, which will serve 65% of the eligible population. Stage two will occur in 2006/08 and will provide for the remaining 35% of children.

Gascoigne Centre is not as well developed in part due to turnover of 6 Managers in 2 years, the programme will now be managed by Coram Family a national children's voluntary sector organisation. The new build at Gascoigne Centre now has the go ahead.

Funding is currently from Central Government with intentions over a period of time, currently 10 years based on deprived areas. Although it is acknowledged that funding will not be enough unless all partners contribute.

Whilst Education are leading the programmes, it is multi-agency operation and includes Health and Social Services, co-operation and commitment is needed from all partners for the programme to succeed which will result in the long term value of building stronger communities establishing inclusion, pride and working towards combating anti-social behaviour.

Mediation Housing & Health

Kathryn Gilcreest, Community Safety officer gave details of the types of mediation that has been used in the Borough. The most common reasons that require mediation are family matters, employment issues and neighbour disputes.

The suitability of mediation is when both parties recognise the problem needs to be resolved and are willing to make changes.

The Housing and Health Department, Landlord Services in 2003/04 resolved 10% of neighbour complaints using mediation. Only a few cases involved buying in services of an independent mediation service.

Mediation costs approximately £300 to £400 a case, costs can increase if more than one meeting is required, but it is a much cheaper option than going to Court.

A pilot to roll forward in-house training on mediation is a good way forward coupled with the Community Safety Team working towards inviting tenders for mediation providers, which would be a service available Council-wide.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Unit

Jeff Elsom, Crime and Anti-Social Unit Manager, gave information on the new management structure and transferring of staff to make up the new unit with additional funding being sought from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund for additional posts. Meetings have taken place with the Parks Police, Abandoned Vehicles Team and CCTV operators.

An away day was held in February 2005 for all staff, there were in excess of 60 officers to discuss the formation of the new unit. Ideas were put forward and once analysed will shape the future direction of unit.

Weekly tasking meetings take place to identify hotspots and action plans. 4 focused campaigns on litter and rubbish has resulted in 90 fixed penalty notices.

The Licensing Scheme has been established and 3 Police Licensing Officers will transfer to a base within the unit.

A number of Alleygator schemes have been completed in 21 different locations with about 23 schemes planned totalling 159 gates.

4 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's) have been served, 6 of which are from Marks Gate, and 2 of these have been made formal. A private surveillance company has been used successfully in a targeted operation to gain evidence for Court proceedings.

Information was received of the highly successful joint working of a Police unit established within the same area as Parks Police which has included the Police part funding drugs dog training. This joint unit is unique and should be publicised accordingly.

OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

Domestic Violence Forum

Councillor Mrs Conyard provided background information on the Domestic Violence Forum, which works in partnership with Social Services, Education, voluntary organisations and the police sharing information.

The aim of the Forum is to support the family and thereby try to prevent anti-social behaviour becoming part of a tradition.

A co-ordinator has been seconded to strategically raise the profile of Domestic Violence to meet the demands of the new Domestic Violence Bill, which will mean changes in working practices, including collation of statistics and training for frontline staff.

Essex & Suffolk Water

Neal Warren, Distribution Operations Manager, contacted the Council when his staff were subjected to a number of anti-social behaviour incidents and was referred to this Panel. Details were provided for the period of late spring 2003 to spring 2004 of leaking hydrants that were gushing water. However, no such incidents occurred during the winter season.

As a deterrent the water company in agreement with the Fire Brigade have fitted caps to the hydrants for which only they hold the keys.

LIFE Project

The Local Intervention Fire Education Programme is about engaging and transforming their perceptions on a five day programme for young people who have offended. Barking and Dagenham jointly with Redbridge now have their own co-ordinator and the scheme is currently being planned targeting 100 young people. They intend to work in Partnership with the Princes Trust, Cadet Forces and Connexions.

Since the introduction of this programme there has been 43% reduction in anti-social fire setting behaviour and 80% have not re-offended after attending the course.

Shelter Inclusion Project

Shelter is a scheme that aims to reduce anti-social behaviour, promote social inclusion and community stability, prevent eviction and provide a route back into settled housing. They have just undertaken a pilot project in Rochdale, where they supported 56 households of which 88% maintained their original tenancy beyond 6 months and none have been evicted.

The organisation is currently in negotiation with Redbridge to start up a similar scheme their aim being to offer independent support and early intervention, working together with Council Housing departments, the Police and the community. The expectation is that families will be supported from 9 to 12 months, working with 30 families at one time. The cost is approximately £10,000 for each family with the comparison costs of evictions there is expected to be a net cost saving.

Magistrates' Court

The Clerk to the Magistrates' Court in Barking provided information in relation to dealing with anti-social behaviour principally through the application of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's).

From 1 July 2004 all custody cases (serious offenders) have been referred to Stratford Court. This has had a significant impact on the number and type of cases being dealt with locally, with the emphasis now being around domestic violence, drink driving offences etc.

The Court is due for a major refurbishment from mid-December for 3 months and cases were relocated to either Havering or Redbridge.

At the time of receiving this information it was still unclear whether Barking will retain serious custody cases after the refurbishment which will be dependent on upgrading the cells and clarification around the provision of a new Court House in Barking.

The Home Office is looking at the broader issues of amalgamating both Local and Crown Courts and bringing together 'super courts,' in a number of locations yet to be identified.

Having requested information on the provision of statistics of all cases of low-level crime including anti-social behaviour and the level of fines fixed, the Court agreed to provide a sample of cases and fines over a set period. Having arranged to visit the Court and for an officer from Housing and Health to gather this data, the information was not provided.

Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)

Drugs

DAAT are local partnerships consisting of representatives from Social Services, Housing, Education, Health, Probation and Police charged with responsibility for delivering the National Drugs Strategy in Barking and Dagenham and work towards the four aims at a local level.

The actions taken against anti-social behaviour has included working with the Police to stop overt drug taking and dealing in public places, the closing of crack houses and evicting dealers. They work with Environmental Health to remove needles from public areas and provide disposable containers for 'Sharps' with an exchange service at the Axe Street project.

DAAT have commissioned a Substances Misuse Engagement Team who target areas weekly, some referrals are made through the Youth Offending Team. It is a well known fact that drug users cause most crime. There are estimated to be 500 drug users in this Borough and usually more than 50% are in treatment at one time. Currently there are 35% in treatment all of various age groups.

Alcohol

DAAT have employed a consultant to progress the Alcohol Strategy for the Borough, as a result of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, which was published in March 2004.

The Strategy has 9 key strategic areas and 8 domains, for which an action plan is being developed within a time frame defining the role of DAAT and their Partners. 20 skilled workers will be employed to drive up competency, including early intervention to work towards changing attitudes.

Although DAAT are forming partnership links a closer working relationship should be established between DAAT and the Youth Offending Team.

NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAMS

Abbey, Gascoigne and Thames

The Co-ordinator for this neighbourhood has recently been appointed and as part of the role will be working with the Regeneration Team to involve the community in the proposed development of Barking Town Centre.

A number of initiatives have been delivered through the Neighbourhood Management Partnership Board, particularly working in partnership with DAAT. A grant provided through the Community Development Trust was used to provide a drug awareness programme to parent/carers and year 10 children in all three wards. Other initiatives have included producing a community newsletter 'Focus Three' and introducing other safety prevention measures to vulnerable residents.

Wellgate

Wellgate covers the Whalebone and Chadwell Heath Wards and the Neighbourhood partnership consider tackling anti-social behaviour a key priority, particularly the problem of youth disorder in the Marks Gate area.

They have a ASB sub-group who meet every eight weeks and discuss initiatives in terms of diversion, prevention and enforcement, The membership for this sub-group are the Police, local schools, faith groups, health organisation, Housing, Community Safety, Street Wardens and two main housing providers in the area. Education, Sure Start and the Youth Offending Team also attend.

A comprehensive booklet Tackling ASB on Marks Gate has been published in May 2004. This booklet is issued to all new residents and provides information to assist in solving problems.

RESIDENTS

The Panel heard from residents introduced to the Panel by Councillors Mrs Hunt, Justice and Mrs West.

Residents from Whalebone Ward spoke about being harassed, verbally and physically, including a stone being catapulted through their window. There has been an increase in anti-social behaviour since the dispersal order at Marks Gate Estate which has included a serious assault on the Off Licence Manager. These residents were clearly distressed and victims of anti social behaviour, although they acknowledged it would be difficult to pursue the culprits without being able to identify the perpetrators. The Police did inform the residents that Dog Patrols were now working in the area with additional Police assistance. With the introduction of a Safer Neighbourhood Team working out of Marks Gate Police Station this should go some way towards dealing with the problem

Other residents spoke about nuisance neighbours, causing excessive noise at anti social hours, dogs left and continually barking and breaking through to their garden and leaving mess. They used threatening behaviour and generally making life difficult. Although the perpetrators had been taken to court and fined the level of fines were so low that it still has not deterred them from being a nuisance.

One resident who is a spokesperson for a number of elderly residents highlighted the problem in their area, which seemed to stem from one particular property. Incidents included car tyres being slashed, scratching cars, throwing fizzy drinks, mud and eggs at cars and generally being a nuisance by sitting on walls and breaking fences.

Overall neither the Council nor the Police did very well in responding to the residents, officers of the Council did not always follow up enquiries and the Police were difficult to contact. All felt that greater Police presence would help in tackling anti-social behaviour.