

Report of: Director of Environment and Housing

Report to: Inner North West Community Committee

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To note

Tackling Noise Nuisance in Student Areas – Update on Wellbeing Funded Project 2014/15.

Purpose of report

1. To update members of the Inner North West Community Committee on the well-being funded noise nuisance project in the LS6 area of Leeds.

Background

2. A previous 2014/15 funding bid was submitted to the Community Committee to fund additional out of hours patrols during the fresher's handover period. The bid was successful and £10,000 was awarded. Given the subsequent restructure of the Out of Hours Response Team which was moved under the management of Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team, the funding was passed to Angela Mawdsley, LASBT West Manager to manage.
3. Given the high volume of complaints and the detrimental impact noise nuisance has on the communities within Hyde Park, Headingley and Burley and following consultation with West Yorkshire Police, Unipol and Leeds Universities, a new procedure for tackling noise from student properties was implemented in September 2014.
4. A dedicated Case Officer is the single point of contact for all student-related cases, proactive visits are undertaken for first-time low-level complaints to provide consistent advice and guidance and additional out of hours patrols are carried out by both Out of Hours and LASBT Officers and these patrols are ringfenced to the LS6 area.

Main issues

5. The funding enabled additional proactive Out of Hours Patrols to take place every night in the LS6 area between 15th September and 12th October 2014. Patrols were manned by an Out of Hours Response Officer and a Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team Case Officer and one van was ringfenced to the LS6 area although in reality due to the exceptionally heavy demand on the service, both vans remained in the LS6 area.
6. Using this funding, proactive patrols have also been carried out at other peak times. Recently additional out of hours patrols were carried out on the 22nd January, 29th January and 5th February to try to address increasing numbers of complaints. Patrols are also planned for week commencing 16th March to try to address issues which may occur during St Patricks Day and end of term.
7. During the initial 4 week period, as well as responding to live complaints and patrolling hotspot areas, LASBT Officers completed approximately 120 proactive follow-up home visits to addresses which had been subject of a complaint and provided appropriate advice as well as serving a formal warning letters. Where a statutory nuisance had been identified, Officers would visit the following evening and serve noise abatement notices.
8. In total to date, LASBT has received 400 complaints about separate student properties the majority of which have received proactive home visits. Noise abatement notices have been served on students at 73 addresses following large-scale parties and identified statutory noise nuisance.
9. Since September, the Out of Hours Response Team has received 649 complaints about noise in the LS6 area. 86% of these calls resulted in a visit. In 36% of the calls attended, officers assessed the noise as unreasonable and would cause substantial interference to other residents.
10. Six large student parties were prevented following likely to occur noise abatement notices being served.
11. It should be noted that not all complaints in the LS6 area relate to student properties – the additional patrols did visit and provide evidence for non-student noise problems; three of which have resulted in seizures of noise equipment following breaches of noise abatement notices.

Corporate considerations

- a. Consultation and engagement

Tackling noise nuisance is a partnership approach and LASBT regularly consult and engage with partners such as West Yorkshire Police, Unipol and Leeds Universities.

An update has also been provided at the Inner North West Environmental Sub-Group.

b. Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

Noise nuisance is not an issue exclusive to areas heavily populated by the student community and LASBT investigates complaints of noise in all areas of the city. However evidence does show that significantly more complaints are received in well-known student areas such as Hyde Park, Headingley and Burley. All cases regardless of tenure are assessed on an individual basis and any enforcement action taken is based upon available evidence.

c. Council policies and city priorities

The project fits within the City Priority Plan namely Best City for Communities and Best City to Live. It also meets the Best Council Plan outcome to improve the quality of life for residents.

d. Resources and value for money

As stated above, the funding has been invaluable in increasing the capacity of the existing LASBT service to meet the needs of local residents during an extremely busy period.

e. Legal implications, access to information and call in

Evidence gathered during out of hours patrols could be used to initiate and progress legal cases.

f. Risk management

Out of Hours Response Officers and LASBT Case Officers are at risk from violence and aggression with aggravating factors such as individuals they deal with using drugs and alcohol. Lone working procedures are in place to try to address any such risks.

Conclusion

12. The funding has been invaluable in increasing the capacity of the service which resulted in 100% of calls resulting in a visit in September and October. It has also enabled LASBT Officers to carry out approximately 120 additional proactive home visits to provide advice and guidance to students.

Recommendations

13. Due to the success of the work in 2014/15, a further bid for wellbeing funds for £10,000 in 2015/16 has been submitted, so similar proactive work can be undertaken in the LS6 area. It is proposed that the work will again target the end of term and student changeover times, which are traditionally the periods when complaints increase. It is

recommended that Councillors consider this funding application for the 2015/16 financial year to allow for the continuation of this work.