

Report of Director of Communities and Environment

Report to Executive Board

Date: 26 June 2019

Subject: Review of Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	
Appendix number:	

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out proposals for a re-design of the Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team (LASBT) following a period of review and extensive consultation.
2. The review has sought to address the fact that current levels of demand are unsustainable and that an increasing number of individuals interacting with the service – both perpetrators and victims – have very complex needs and vulnerabilities.
3. It is recommended that processes are revised to ensure future decision making is based on an effective triage system with the identification and assessment of risk embedded in procedures from the first point of contact. In addition partnership working should be extended and strengthened.
4. Organisations including Nacro, Shelter and Centrepoint have demonstrated that ASB is often prevalent where there are wider risk factors such as living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood and/or poor housing, or in a family where there is conflict, social exclusion or poverty.
5. With this in mind, redefining the way in which LASBT operates offers the potential to complement wider corporate ambitions around the Inclusive Growth Strategy and Health and Well-Being Strategy, especially in relation to support for priority neighbourhoods and work within children's services, public health and adult social care to support vulnerable families.
6. The changes proposed in this report reflect the priorities of both the Safer Leeds Community Safety Strategy and the Best Council Plan.

Recommendations

Executive Board members are asked to consider the priorities outlined in the report and to endorse to the implementation of the service changes set out in paragraphs 3.7 – 3.20.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks the approval of Executive Board to take forward proposals to redesign the LASBT service. The aim is to establish a more sustainable service through which officers are increasingly able to focus on early intervention and working with communities to prevent anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2 Doing so will deliver improved outcomes for citizens and communities, and reduce demand on a range of public services. This approach will also provide improved long-term financial management by tackling the causes of ASB before situations escalate into complex scenarios, requiring more costly responses.
- 1.3 The LASBT review is complex due to the different components of the service. The implementation of the program of change will be stepped, and will commence in August 2019 with the creation of the triage process / team.
- 1.4 It is recognised that the proposed program of change within LASBT must be underpinned by a robust delivery plan. The officer responsible for this plan is Harvinder Saimbhi, Head of Operational Delivery Safer Leeds.
- 1.5 The approach reflects the priorities set out in the Safer Leeds Community Safety Strategy, which was approved by Executive Board in October 2018, and supports the ambitions of the Inclusive Growth Strategy, Health and Well-Being Strategy and the Best Council Plan.

2. Background information

Development of Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team (LASBT)

- 2.1 In October 2009 the Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. Alan Johnson MP announced a package of measures to improve the collective response to ASB. This followed an incident in Leicestershire, which had resulted in serious criticism of both the local council and the police for failing to share information and respond appropriately.
- 2.2 In January 2010 it was agreed that a review would take place in Leeds of the local partner agency protocols and processes used to respond to Anti-Social Behaviour. This was completed using the nationally recognised QUEST methodology.
- 2.3 As a result of the recommendations of that review, a multi-agency unit – Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team (LASBT) – was established to deliver a specialist ASB service through locally based teams. Uniform service standard were introduced to ensure consistency of delivery across all teams.
- 2.4 Due to the success of the team, the domestic noise and out-of-hours noise nuisance team was transferred and integrated into LASBT in 2012.

Current Provision

- 2.5 LASBT is part of Safer Leeds. It includes officers from Leeds City Council, West Yorkshire Police, Housing Leeds, Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation, Youth Offending, and Victim Support.

2.6 There are currently three operational teams covering the South and City Centre, East North East, and West North West areas of Leeds. The operational teams are supported by a performance and information team based at Merrion House. The out-of-hours noise nuisance team is co-located within the Leedswatch Service.

Defining Anti-Social Behaviour

2.7 LASBT was designed to deal with behaviour that cannot be reasonably resolved through tenancy management or mediation. This includes, but is not limited to, those listed below:

- **Harm to individuals:** Harassment, threats of violence and/or intimidation, racist behaviour or language and verbal abuse.
- **Harm directed at communities:** Drug dealing and misuse, street drinking, prostitution, kerb crawling, aggressive begging, public drunkenness and disorder and persistent domestic noise nuisance.
- **Environmental harm:** Graffiti and vandalism/damage to public property.

2.8 The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 uses two definitions of ASB depending upon whether anti-social behaviour is related to a housing function.

2.9 Where anti-social behaviour has occurred in a housing context, LASBT will consider whether the conduct is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises or whether the conduct is capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person. It is important to note that LASBT works across all housing tenures.

2.10 Where anti-social behaviour occurs in a non-housing related context the test will be as to whether the behaviour has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person.

Drivers of the LASBT Review

2.11 The challenges facing LASBT have evolved since the service was established. There has been increased demand for the service, which is responding to a far greater number of complex cases and high risk incidents.

2.12 The volume of incoming referrals relating to noise nuisance, in particular, is significantly limiting the team's ability to deliver much needed work around prevention, intervention and community empowerment.

2.13 The breadth of issues being referred has also increased. Arguably the interpretation by many people outside the service of what constitutes 'anti-social behaviour' has expanded, with ASB becoming a 'catch all' for activity ranging from minor instances of noise nuisance to serious criminal activity.

2.14 Furthermore, an increasing number of those interacting with the service – both victims and perpetrators - are displaying complex support needs and vulnerabilities such as mental health issues. Those support needs often require specialist interventions, which LASBT is not best placed to deliver.

- 2.15 A variety of organisations including Nacro, Shelter and Centrepoint have demonstrated that ASB is often prevalent where there are wider risk factors such as living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood and/or poor housing, or in a family where there is conflict, social exclusion or poverty.
- 2.16 With this in mind, redefining the way in which LASBT operates offers the potential to complement wider ambitions around the Council's Inclusive Growth and Health and Well-Being Strategies, especially in the context of support for priority neighbourhoods and also work within children's services, public health and adult social care to support vulnerable families.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders has underlined the strengths of the multi-agency approach to tackling ASB in Leeds, highlighting the positive impact of the service on communities and the value of the knowledge and skills of staff.
- 3.2 It has also reinforced the fact that anti-social behaviour cannot be tackled or prevented by one agency in isolation. In order to address the causes of ASB, a joined up, partnership approach is required. This will involve Leeds City Council colleagues in areas such as public health, adult social care, children's services and housing, as well as external partners and residents.
- 3.3 The consultation also revealed concerns about the sustainability of the current LASBT service in the context of significantly increased and complex demand.
- 3.4 In response it is proposed that working practices are revised to ensure decision making is based upon a thorough assessment of the severity of incoming cases. It is intended that a triage system is introduced to manage this process, and that the identification and assessment of risk is embedded within the system from the first point of contact.
- 3.5 The proposed programme of change within LASBT must be underpinned by staff training to ensure officers are confident using all tools available to them, and to empower them to provide robust advice, deliver successful early intervention and, where necessary, to challenge customer expectations.
- 3.6 It is recommended that a programme of regular training about the role of LASBT is also introduced for Council officers in other services and for partners such as the Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

Areas for Priority Action

- 3.7 **Triage of referrals:** it is recommended that the service designs and implements a triage system for all incoming referrals so that cases are appropriately prioritised.
- 3.8 The identification and assessment of vulnerabilities must be embedded in that process from the first point of contact with service users.

- 3.9 The triage system should be based on clear Terms of Reference, which support the priorities of Safer Leeds as outlined in its Community Safety Strategy. It should be supported by a system of performance monitoring that reflects the different responses required for cases differing in risk and severity.
- 3.10 Where cases are assessed as not being ASB cases but a support need is identified customers will be signposted to appropriate, alternative services. For complex cases it may be appropriate to refer the case for consideration by a community MARAC.
- 3.11 **Community MARAC:** For complex and persistent cases it is recommended that the service establishes the use of community MARACs. This will promote early resolution of cases, joint decision making and more effective problem solving. Officers will therefore be able to assess and manage risk more effectively for both perpetrators and victims.
- 3.12 **Mediation:** Early intervention has the potential to resolve more ASB cases before they escalate and become increasingly entrenched. Not only could this deliver improved outcomes for the individuals involved it also has the potential to reduce costly demands on public services created through having to resolve more complex cases once they have escalated.
- 3.13 It is recommended that a mediation service is commissioned which has the flexibility to work in various localities and at times which suit the needs of residents.
- 3.14 **Noise:** Over 60% of incoming referrals relate to noise nuisance. The existing resources cannot meet the demand and expectation of the service. The provision therefore needs to be revised, joining up day time and out-of-hours services more effectively and ideally delivering increasingly flexible coverage.
- 3.15 **Communication:** External communications need to be revised in order to provide more clarity and advice to those seeking to use the service, particularly in the case of out-of-hours noise nuisance.
- 3.16 In order to manage customer expectations clear information about details such as anticipated response times should be accessible and, with the introduction of a triage system, customers should receive accurate information about how their case will be taken forward.
- 3.17 Advice is being sought from the communications team as to how social media may be used more effectively to strengthen communication with citizens.
- 3.18 **Location of the West Team:** Officers based in the west of Leeds are in accommodation that does not fully meet the needs of the service. Work is underway to identify a suitable alternative, ideally co-located with other services in the same area of the city. Trade Union representatives are involved in these discussions.
- 3.19 **ASB Strategy:** It is proposed that an Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy is developed for the city which sets out a strategic framework for activity moving forward. It is intended that this should be focused around the themes of prevention, intervention, enforcement, community empowerment and integrated intelligence.

- 3.20 A draft strategy is included. If the Executive Board endorse the recommendations of this report it is intended that further consultation will take place with stakeholders with a view to developing a final strategy.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 A wide range of consultation events have taken place with staff, elected members and partners. This has included a multi-agency OBA session and a series of staff workshops.
- 4.1.2 Additional work has been undertaken with West Yorkshire Police Independent Advisory Board and residents have been consulted via TARA the citizen's panel.
- 4.1.3 Members of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board were consulted in December 2018 and then again in February 2019. Community Safety Champions were consulted in January 2019 and further discussion has taken place with Community Committee Chairs.
- 4.1.4 The LASBT review steering group, which is chaired by the Chief Officer for Safer Leeds, includes officers from a range of services including Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Communities and Housing. Two elected members also sit on the board, along with a Trade Union representative and colleagues from partner organisations such as Victim Support, West Yorkshire Police and the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 An equality impact assessment has been carried out as part of the project.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

- 4.3.1 The Best Council Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21 includes Safe, Strong Communities as a Best City Priority and one of the intended outcomes of the plan is for people to 'be safe and feel safe.'
- 4.3.2 The LASBT review aims to enable officers to increasingly focus on preventative activities and early intervention, with a view to empowering residents and supporting communities to become more resilient. The outcomes that could be achieved through that work would support the ambitions set out in the Inclusive Growth and Health and Well-Being Strategies.
- 4.3.3 The proportion of the households reporting anti-social behaviour is included as one of the KPIs used to measure progress against the Best City priorities.
- 4.3.4 The LASBT review aims to enable the service to work towards priorities set out in the Safer Leeds Community Safety Strategy, which was approved by Executive Board in October 2018.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.5 Officers recognise the ambition to tackle the Climate Emergency in Leeds as declared at the Council meeting in March.
- 4.3.6 The direct CO₂ impacts of the proposals in this report are anticipated to be relatively low and primarily relate to the use of offices and vehicles.

- 4.3.7 Relocating staff from the West team to co-locate with other services offers the opportunity to reduce energy use. In line with existing Council policy opportunities will also be explored as appropriate to support the move away from diesel vehicles to electric vehicles.
- 4.3.8 Similarly, telemetry in vehicles will also be considered to support more efficient use of vehicles and to improve staff safety.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The aim of this review is to change the way LASBT operates in order to maximise the value derived from existing resources.
- 4.4.2 The ambition is to enable officers to work with communities, and to make better use of early intervention tools, thereby reducing demand on public services and the associated cost of dealing with complex cases that have escalated.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 As a significant programme of change, the review has been a standing agenda item for the Safer Leeds Executive, which has accountability for the LASBT review.
- 4.5.2 There are no exempt items so there are no access to information issues.
- 4.5.3 There are no legal implications for the work set out in this report.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 The increased volume of cases being handled by the LASBT team is unsustainable. Furthermore, current systems are not flexible enough to enable a priority based response to reflect varying degrees of severity of anti-social behaviour and its potential consequences.
- 4.6.2 The key to ensuring a sustainable, effective LASBT service will be to enable decision making to be based upon need, to inform targeted use of resource and capacity. This will rely upon more integrated, join-up working with both LCC colleagues and external partners.
- 4.6.3 Safeguarding runs through all the work and priorities of the LASBT service and the community safety partnership, as outlined in the corporate risk report on community cohesion.
- 4.6.4 Delivering the proposed changes to the service will ensure vulnerable victims and perpetrators receive a prioritised response and appropriate support from either the LASBT team or through signposting to an alternative service. Embedding an identification and assessment of vulnerability will be a fundamental part of the proposed triage system and is reflective of the ambition to be a compassionate city.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The current LASBT service is unsustainable given the increasing demands on the service and the increasingly complex needs of the victims and perpetrators interacting with the team.
- 5.2 The proposed re-design aims to strengthen partnership working and better target resources and capacity. Critically, decisions about how to best to target resources

will be based on an assessment of risk at the first point of contact, ensuring citizens receive a more efficient response.

- 5.3 It is intended that improved communications will also ensure that customers are better informed about what they can expect from the service, as well as the expectations the service will have of them.
- 5.4 Successfully implementing this approach will deliver improved outcomes for citizens in line with Council ambitions and help manage financial risk by preventing incidents of ASB escalating into more complex, costly scenarios.

6. Recommendations

- 7. Executive Board members are asked to consider the priorities outlined in the report and to endorse the implementation of the service changes set out in paragraphs 3.7 – 3.20.

8. Background documents¹

- 8.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.