

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6 <sup>th</sup> May 2008	Unrestricted		
<b>Report of:</b> Michael Keating Acting Assistant Chief Executive  <b>Originating Officer(s):</b> Ashraf Ali Scrutiny Policy Officer		<b>Title:</b> Report of the Scrutiny Working Group Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour  <b>Ward(s) affected:</b> All		

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report submits the recommendations of the Tackling Anti Social Behaviour Scrutiny Working Group for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Endorse the draft report of the Scrutiny Working Group
- 2.2 The Acting Chief Executive be authorised to agree the final report before its submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for Living Safely.

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### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

#### ***LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT***

Background paper	Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection
Tower Hamlets Anti Social Behaviour Strategy	

**Ashraf Ali**  
**020 7364 0528**

### **3. Background**

The Working Group was established in November 2007. The intention of the investigation was to identify recommendations for the future direction of the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour strategy.

- 3.1 The Working Group heard evidence from the Local Strategic Partnership, residents and Registered Social Landlords. Also studied statistics and information.
- 3.2 Once agreed, the working group's recommendations will be submitted to Cabinet for a response to their recommendations.

### **4. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)**

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Any legal considerations arising from the resultant Action Plan will be addressed at that point.

### **5. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer**

- 5.1 The report contains a range of recommendations outlined at Paragraphs R1 - R15, a number of which have financial implications, these will need to be costed and proposals taken to Cabinet for consideration of funding options.

### **6. Equal Opportunity Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct equal opportunities implications.

### **7. Anti-Poverty Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct anti-poverty implications.

### **8. Sustainable Action for a Greener Environment**

- 8.1 There are no direct actions for a greener environment arising from the report.

### **9. Risk Management**

- 9.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the report or recommendations.

Appendix 1 Report of the Scrutiny Working Group on Tackling Anti Social Behaviour

# Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

Report of the Scrutiny Working Group

Tower Hamlets Council  
May 2008

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## **Acknowledgements**

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### **Working Group Chair:**

Councillor Salim Ullah

### **Working Group members:**

Councillor Mohammed Shahid Ali  
Councillor Carli-Harper Penman  
Councillor Mohammed Abdus Salique  
Councillor Dulal Uddin  
Councillor Phil Briscoe  
Councillor Stephanie Eaton

### **Other Councillors**

Councillor Marc Francis – Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Abdal Ullah – Lead Member Cleaner, Greener & Safer

### **London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Andy Bamber, Head of Community Safety Service  
Jon Underwood, CS P&P Manager  
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Shazia Hussain, Interim Director of Tower Hamlets Partnership  
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### **Scrutiny and Equalities**

Ashraf Ali, Scrutiny Policy Officer  
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Rob Brown, Metropolitan Police Service  
Sarah Castro, Community Safety Manager, Poplar HARCA

The Working Group would like to thank all Tower Hamlets officers and Partner agencies for their time and advice and all those residents and young people who made contributions and gave input into the review.

## **Chair's Foreword**

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**TO BE COMPLETED**

**Cllr Salim Ullah  
Scrutiny Lead, Living Safely**

## Recommendations

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- R1** That the Council and all RSL'S in Tower Hamlets provide Cabinet an annual report detailing how they are meeting the six strands of the Respect agenda.
- R2** That the Council continues to identify tackling ASB as a key Corporate Priority. This should be reflected in funding decisions and performance management against ambitious targets, reflecting the emphasis that residents place on this issue.
- R3** That the Community Safety Service provide Members with a briefing explaining how the ASB database functions and complaints are investigated. This may well be a one off training session or site demonstration.
- R4** That the Council should continue to work to find ways to get all 64 RSLs operating in the Borough to develop consistent standards to tackling ASB.
- R5** That the Council and RSLs undertake a cost-benefit analysis of procuring a new single reporting system, to capture all ASB reports made in Tower Hamlets.
- R6** That the Borough Commander provides details of running costs to enable an assessment of an expansion in the number and duration of Good Behaviour Zones.
- R7** That the Council look at progress of the National pilot scheme to withdraw housing benefit from those found guilty of persistent ASB and report back to Cabinet on the merit of Tower Hamlets participating in any future pilots.
- R8** That SNTs provide Members with data on response times to ASB calls made by residents, to help evaluate the effectiveness of SNTs in their current capacity.
- R9** That the Partnership set aside funding to pilot an expanded SNT of six PCs and six PCSOs in at least two wards for a period of up to two years.
- R10** That the Community Safety Service with the help of the Tower Hamlets Partnership and East End Life look to better promote the Council's ASB strategy to residents in the Borough.
- R11** That Children's Service with the help of Education Psychologist support schools to further help develop young people's appreciation of acceptable behaviour by reviewing behaviour codes and practises that are in line with tackling ASB.

- R12 That Children Service work with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and other agencies to identify and support vulnerable children and young people, most at risk of causing ASB and ensure that wherever possible all pupils are able to access appropriate educational provision.**
- R13 That the Community Safety Service gives further thought into early intervention and family work through working with Children's service, Schools, Sure Start and Police to develop a long term strategy for preventive work with children and their families.**
- R14 That the Council enhance youth services offered to young people, including both the quality of facilities within centres and the operating days/hours. Additional funding should be set aside to significantly expanded youth services on offer within at least two wards for a period of two years. Tower Hamlets Youth Service should undertake a thorough consultation, with young people, parents and schools to understand what would be most attractive in helping young people stay off the streets.**



# Introduction

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- 1 Anti-social behaviour is one of the biggest challenges that Tower Hamlets, like all local authorities around the country, is facing. The Council must act within a national and local context, implementing policies and legislation from central government as well as seeking practical local solutions. Formulating effective strategies to tackle ASB effectively is therefore a complex balancing act, but it is one of the biggest responsibilities the Council faces.
- 2 This report considers the extent of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Tower Hamlets, examines the effectiveness of the Council's ASB strategy, and explores potential for amendments to policy and practice in line with national developments and policy.
- 3 A politically balanced Working Group was established in November 2007, comprising of 7 Councillors. The Chair of the Working Group was Councillor Salim Ullah, Scrutiny Lead for Living Safely.
- 4 The review had five main objectives:
  - To consider the borough's current ASB protocols and methodology regarding; effectiveness of the ASB hotline (through a customer satisfaction survey), effectiveness of the ASB database;
  - To engage with residents and young people and consider their views on how to combat ASB;
  - To look at how the work of the Council's partners (the Tower Hamlets Partnership, Police and RSLs) is helping to combat ASB locally;
  - To provide background information on the Councillor Call for Action, and engage with councillors as to what this will mean for them;
- 5 **Methodology** - The following timetable was agreed to undertake work for the review:

## **Introductory Meeting (January 2008)**

- Agree scoping document
- Overview of how ASB is currently being dealt with.
- Summary of ASB processes and procedures
- Presentation on Councillor call for action (CCfA) and its implications for LBTH

## **Role of Partners (February 2008)**

- Role of Tower Hamlets partners in tackling ASB

## **Resident focus group (March 2008)**

- Round table discussion with residents

**Youth partnership focus group (April 2008)**

- Round table discussion with young people

- 6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the Working Group's report and recommendations. The Council's Cabinet will then respond to the report and its recommendations.

# Findings

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## Background

### Definition of Anti Social Behavior

- 7 ASB is not a concept that can be neatly and easily categorised. This is borne out by the multiplicity of definitions in existence, some of which are given below.
- 8 In the Housing Act 1996, ASB is defined as; causing nuisance or annoyance to another person'. However, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 defines Anti Social Behaviour as 'a conduct which causes, or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons.
- 9 Anti social behaviour can include: harassment, noise nuisance, damaging of public property, aggressive, offensive or threatening language or behaviour, violence against people or property, crimes based on discrimination and using housing accommodation for supplying drugs, or for other illegal purposes.
- 10 The Home office defines ASB as a 'variety of behavior covering a whole complex of selfish and unacceptable activity that can blight the quality of community life. Including;
  - nuisance neighbors
  - rowdy and nuisance behavior
  - yobbish behavior and intimidating groups taking over public spaces
  - vandalism, graffiti and fly-posting
  - people dealing and buying drugs on the street
  - people dumping rubbish and abandoning cars
  - begging and anti-social drinking
  - the misuse of fireworks

### Government Policy

- 11 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced the Anti-Social Behavior Order (ASBO). ASBOs can be granted by the court against people who participate in actions that cause or are likely to cause alarm or distress to other persons. An ASBO can specify types of behavior individuals should not engage in or even ban them completely from particular areas. Breach of the terms of an ASBO is a criminal offence which can result in a fine, community sentence or even a custodial sentence.
- 12 In Tower Hamlets, an ASBO is usually preceded by a warning letter and than an Acceptable Behavior Contract (ABC) which is a voluntary code of conduct drawn up with the individual behaving in a anti social manner. There appears to be strong evidence that these are effective in encouraging some individuals to moderate their behavior.

- 13 The 1998 Act also established the crime and disorder partnership, this includes the police, local authorities, probation service, health authorities, the voluntary sector, and local residents and businesses.
- 14 These partnerships work to reduce crime and disorder by:
  - Establishing the levels of crime and disorder problems in their area, and consulting widely with the population of that area to make sure that the partnership's perception matches that of local people, especially minority groups.
  - Devising a strategy containing measures to tackle those priority problems. This is to include targets, and target owners for each of the priority areas. The strategy will last for three years, but must be kept under review by the partnership.
- 15 In March 2003 the Government published a white paper outlining its proposals for tackling anti-social behavior. The '*Respect and Responsibility – taking a stand against anti-social behavior*' white paper focused on giving local authorities and the police a wider, more flexible array of powers to help meet their existing responsibilities and respond to the needs of the local communities.
- 16 The Anti-Social Behavior 2003 Act was introduced to ensure that the police have the appropriate powers to deal with serious anti-social behavior. This included tackling drug dealing, and dispersing intimidating groups. The act also enables the police to tackle the nuisance that can be caused by young people with air weapons, and supports action against gun crime by banning the possession of imitation guns and air guns in public without good reason.
- 17 Furthermore, the 2003 Act provides powers for local authorities and those working with them to tackle anti-social behavior in local communities. It extends landlords powers to deal with anti-social behavior in social housing, including a more streamlined process for the use of injunctions and the introduction demoted tenancies. The Act also includes provisions aimed at dealing with noise nuisance. It develops the sanctions that are available for use against those who engage in anti-social behavior and extends the range of agencies that can use them.

### The Respect Agenda

- 18 In January 2006, the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, launched the Government's RESPECT Action Plan. This was intended to build upon the drive to clamp down on ASB and engender a modern culture of respect. It sought to direct focus on tackling the underlying causes of ASB, advocating early intervention where possible and broadening efforts to tackle new areas of poor behaviour. The agenda had six strands:
  - supporting families,
  - a new approach to the most challenging families,
  - improving behaviour and attendance in schools,
  - activities for children & young people,
  - strengthening communities and

- effective enforcement & community justice.
- 19 In line with the Respect agenda, the aim of Tower Hamlets Council is to achieve a major and continued reduction in the levels and fear of anti social behaviour within the borough, and to create a safer environment for community life and economic activity.
  - 20 The Working Group acknowledged that the Respect Agenda is very broad in scope and is a challenge for services and partnerships to embed. However a need to consider how services can ensure that the culture of Respect is driven forward needs to be constantly looked at. To that end the Group were keen for there to be a continued focus on early intervention, through working specifically with parents, schools, support agencies and young people to address underlying factors such as drug or alcohol misuse, truancy, peer pressure, poor parenting etc.

#### **Recommendation**

- R1 That the Council and all RSL'S in Tower Hamlets provide Cabinet an annual report detailing how they are meeting the six strands of the Respect agenda.

#### The Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

- 21 The Councillor Call for Action has been introduced through the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2007, with full implementation expected sometime in 2008. This new mechanism is expected to give support to all councillors to raise matters of concern for their constituents and for Overview and Scrutiny to contribute to the community leadership role of the council.
- 22 The issues that offer the most scope for these scrutiny inquiries are those which local councillors feel they have been unable to get resolved through the usual channels. If the issue represents a significant and genuine concern affecting a number of individuals within the wider community and which is about the quality of public service provision at a local level, it could very well appear as a CCfA.
- 23 This review can be considered a pilot, of sorts, of the CCfA process. The Scrutiny Lead Member for Living Safely felt that ASB in his ward, Bethnal Green South, was and is a serious enough community issue that has not been resolved and that it warranted further attention. Utilising Scrutiny to try to address this issue, when all other attempts have failed, typifies the sort of procedure that future CCfAs might take. At the same time, the review provided an opportunity to look into how the Council is tackling ASB across the borough as well, in terms of procedures, measures, partnership working and so on.

#### Local policy

- 24 Tower Hamlets Council works with the Metropolitan Police, Local Primary Health Trust, the North East London Probation Service, the London Fire Brigade and other partners within the local Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership. The Partnership has agreed a 3-year Crime & Drugs Strategy for 2005-08, which includes its targets for reducing levels of

anti social behaviour. These are to reduce the number of incidents reported and increase the percentage of effective interventions from March 2007 to March 2008

- 25 The Council's aim is to achieve a major and sustained reduction in the levels and fear of anti-social behaviour within the borough, thus creating a safer environment for community life and economic activity. These are summarised in the Tower Hamlets ASB strategy as;
- Responding promptly to all forms of anti social behaviour with action taken against perpetrators and incidents resolved as quickly as possible;
  - Enabling all residents to have quiet enjoyment of their home and neighbourhood;
  - Addressing all racial harassment and forms of intimidation focused on ethnic minority residents and groups, including encouraging the reporting of incidents of racial harassment;
  - Providing a seamless link between Social Housing providers and Community Services, which will investigate the more serious cases of anti social behaviour and take the enforcement action that is appropriate and proportionate against perpetrators;
  - Supporting victims and witnesses and increase local people's willingness to address anti social behaviour in collaboration with the council;
  - Promoting good standards of behaviour through education and awareness training;
  - Adopting best practice in dealing with incidents of anti social behaviour and in the enforcement of tenancy agreements and leases.

#### **Recommendation**

R2 That the Council continues to identify tackling ASB as a key Corporate Priority. This should be reflected in funding decisions and performance management against ambitious targets, reflecting the emphasis that residents place on this issue.

### Tower Hamlets Community Safety Service

- 26 The Council has a dedicated Community Safety Service. This service has a co-ordinating role across the council for all services that have a major operational role in tackling anti social behaviour. Having a single service responsible for anti social behaviour removes some of the operational barriers so that a streamlined service is provided.

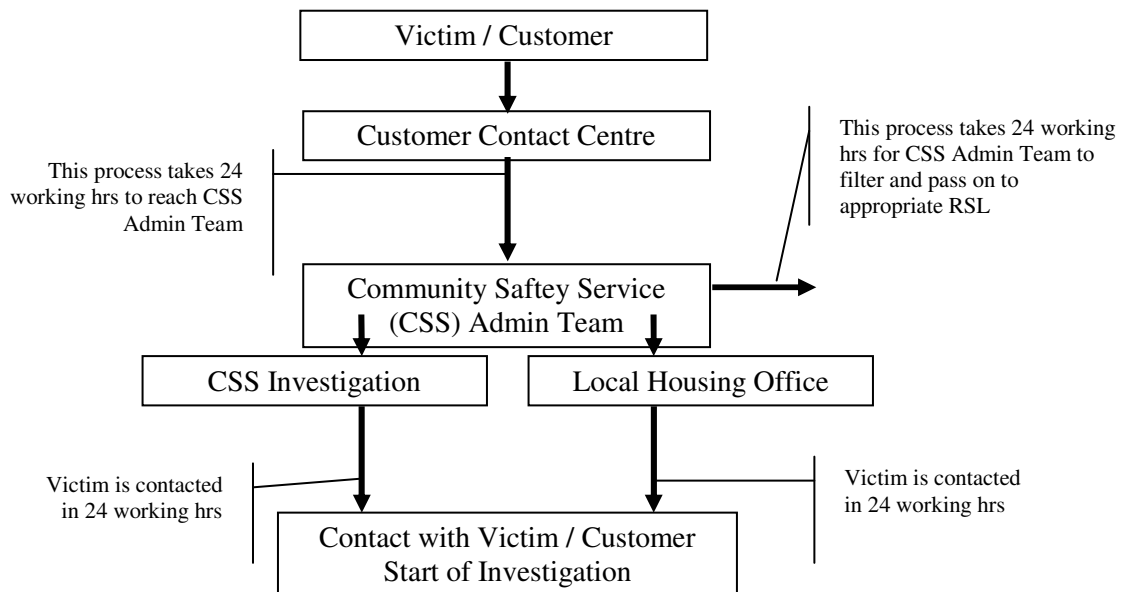
- 27 The Community Service takes the lead in delivering services to combat anti social behaviour. Complaints of anti social behaviour are logged on to a reporting and casework management system. This gives the Community Safety Service an overview and allows it to monitor investigations.
- 28 The Working Group alluded to the fact that they do not fully understand the way ASB is captured by the Community Safety Service. Although the majority understand the basic processes involved there was a general lack of awareness as to how ASB reports are stored and processed. The Working group were keen to know how different types of behaviour are recorded and also to see how the database captures information on outcomes of actions being taken.
- 29 The Working Group felt that this is an important issue, and concluded that if they understand the reporting process then they can cascade this knowledge down at a local level to help reassure residents that their complaints are properly being dealt with.

### **Recommendation**

R3 That the Community Safety Service provide Members with a briefing explaining how the ASB database functions and complaints are investigated. This may well be a one off training session or site demonstration.

- 30 For Council-owned properties, local housing officers initially investigate complaints from Council tenants and residential leaseholders. They also have a role to play where complaints are from non-council residents but the alleged perpetrator is a council tenant or leaseholder. For residents placed in temporary leased accommodation, the local housing office will arrange investigation of complaints of anti social behaviour, and where applicable, this will be done in conjunction with the Community Safety Service.
- 31 More serious cases of anti social behaviour are referred by housing officers to the Community Safety Service for full investigation and enforcement action. The Community Safety Service maintains a cross-tenure approach so that, for example, where possession orders are sought against council tenants, the Community Safety Service may also consider an application for an Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) at the same time, so that the wider community continues to receive protection even after the tenant has been evicted.
- 32 The Council's policy to support the work of housing officers dealing with anti social behaviour mirrors the approach of the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership. This approach is to firstly look at prevention, then intervention and diversion and, as a last resort enforcement, depending on the seriousness of ASB and its effect on the community.

Figure 1 shows the ASB reporting process adopted by Tower Hamlets.

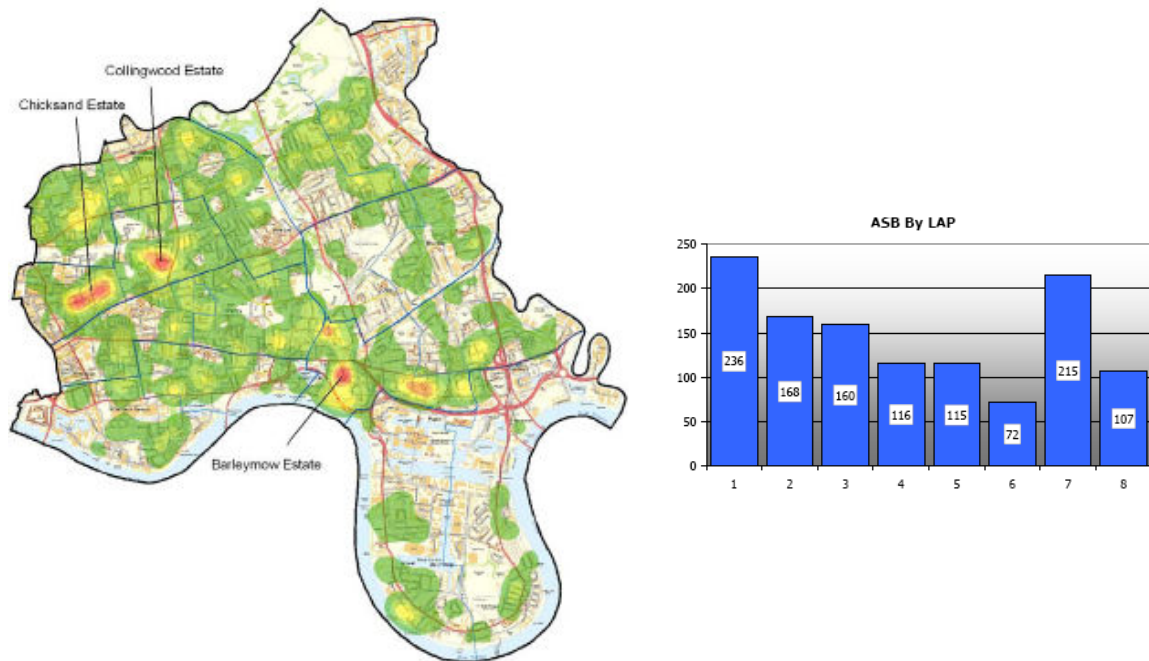


**Figure 1 – ASB reporting process**

## Statistics and Information

- 33 The Councils ASB strategy aims through its performance management framework to contribute towards the targets for anti social behaviour set out by the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership. These targets are to reduce the incidents of Anti Social Behaviour and to increase the effectiveness of interventions from March 2007 to March 2008 by:
- Reducing anti social behaviour by 20%;
  - Responding to 95% of all calls about anti social behaviour promptly and appropriately;
  - Increasing the percentage who feel informed about what is being done to tackle ASB in their local area by 38%;
  - Reducing graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles to 23%;
  - Reducing people using or dealing drugs to 41%;
  - Reducing people being drunk or rowdy in public place to 18%.
- 34 Data in Figure 2 shows ASB by LAPs and Tower Hamlets estates for the last quarter in September 2007. Data indicates that reports of anti social behaviour for the last quarter in September 2007 are 13.9 per cent lower on the same period in 2006. However ASB reports have increased by 2.6 per cent on the last quarter of 2007. The data shows that LAPs 1, 2 and 7 have the highest number of reports originating from within them. In the last six months, the Collingwood, Chicksand and Barleymow Estates have all been significant hotspots. Noise harassment remains the most frequently reported incident to the hotline. Threatening behaviour and drug harassment have slightly increased as a proportion of the total number of ASB reports.





**Figure 2 - ASB in Tower Hamlets by LAP and Estates**

35 Figure 3 shows data collected from the Tower Hamlets Annual resident survey. Data indicates that for all the key indicators perception of ASB is falling. Significantly there is a less perceived problem of abandoned vehicles, and noisy neighbours in 06/07 compared to 03/04.

Percentage of residents saying the following are a 'very' or 'fairly' big problem:	2003/04	2006/07	Change
1. Noisy neighbours or loud parties	41%	33%	-8%
2. Teenagers hanging around on the streets	81%	76%	-5%
3. Rubbish and litter lying around	65%	66%	+1%
4. People being drunk or rowdy in public spaces	59%	41%	-18%
5. Abandoned or burnt out cars	54%	23%	-31%
6. Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	79%	60%	-19%
7. People using or dealing drugs	82%	68%	-14%
8. Parents not taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children	No data	75%	N/A
9. People not treating other people with respect and consideration	No data	59%	N/A

**Figure 3 – Annual Resident Survey results**

36 Detailed below are latest ASB reporting data provided by the Tower Hamlets Customer Contact Centre (CCC). This information shows that the Council has exceeded targets for the number of calls answered relating to ASB. Data shows that 94 per cent of ASB calls are answered against the service target level of 75 per cent.

Service	Calls Offered	Calls Answered	% Calls Answered	Target % Calls Answered	Service Level	Target Service Level
ASB	331	311	94.0	90	81.4	75
Hate Crime	84	78	92.9	90	82.1	75
<b>ASB TOTAL</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>93.7</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>81.5</b>	<b>75</b>

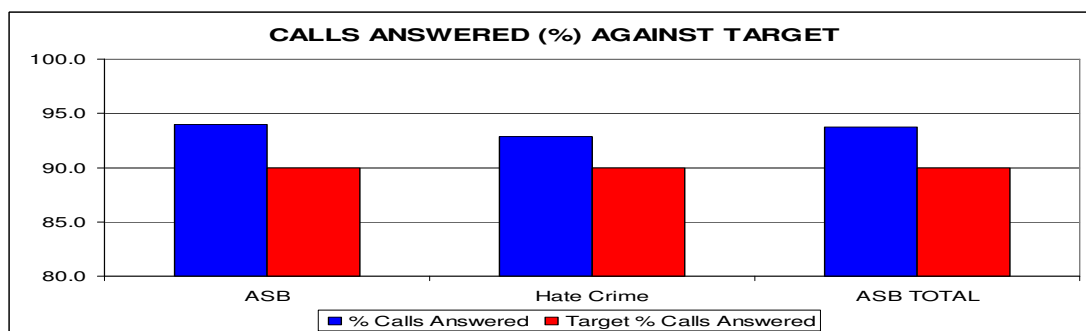
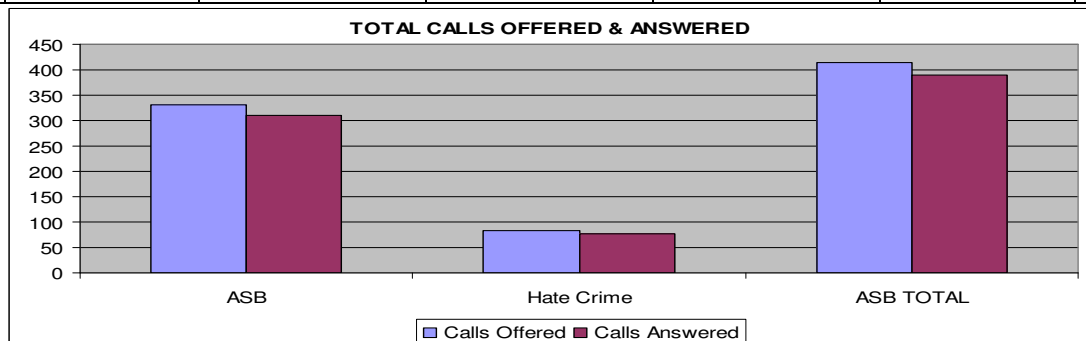


Figure 4 - ASB response to calls

## Partnership Working

- 37 A partnership approach is the best way to expand successful strategies to prevent and manage anti social behaviour. The Partnership is synchronized through the Local Area Partnership (LAP) areas to have the strongest impact on specific local concerns around anti-social behaviour.
- 38 There are large number of forums where ASB is dealt with which includes joint commissioning of youth provision which has helped to ensure the successful delivery of projects. In addition, working with the youth inclusion programme demonstrates the partnerships commitment in addressing the root causes of ASB. There is also a safer schools officer works closely with each local Safer Neighbourhood Team to improve understanding of children.
- 39 Information sharing within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSPs) is essential if ASB is to be tackled; also it is a requirement under section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Working Group heard of good evidence of communication between the LSPs. However some members felt that more effort should be made to involve Registered Social Landlords (RSL). LSP s and RSLs should work together to help develop consistent approaches to tackling ASB.

- 40 The Working group recognises that information sharing between LSPs and RSLs is important. There will be many occasions when it will be necessary for the LSPs to request data or information from each other as well as RSLs. protocols need to be developed between Partners to facilitate the sharing of information more easily. RSLs should take proactive steps to ensure that they are represented on such protocols.
- 41 The Working Group agreed that by involving all RSLs, the Council will increase knowledge and understanding of all partners and so effectively tackle ASB. The Working Group felt that information sharing between the Council, Partner agencies and RSLs will lead to greater understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities and a collective way of working when tackling ASB.

#### **Recommendation**

- R4 That the Council should continue to work to find ways to get all 64 RSLs operating in the Borough to develop consistent standards to tackling ASB.
- R5 That the Council and RSLs undertake a cost-benefit analysis of procuring a new single reporting system, to capture all ASB reports made in Tower Hamlets.

## **Enforcement**

- 42 Tower Hamlets has a clear strategy and has invested significant resources into SNTs, CCTV and yet public perceptions of the extent of anti-social behaviour remain stubbornly high. Working Group members were aware of numerous anecdotal examples of residents being asked to complete diary sheets, and yet little or no action seeming to follow it.
- 43 The Working Group was drawn to a number of initiatives designed to strengthen the sanctions available against those responsible for persistent anti-social behaviour. The first of these is the power to "demote" a secure or assured tenancy introduced in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. This sanction appears to be only rarely applied, or even threatened. The Working Group considers that more work should be done to understand why demoted tenancies are so rarely used in the Borough and that their use should be actively encouraged, particularly by Housing Services.
- 44 The Metropolitan Police has introduced a number of temporary Good Behaviour Zones (GBZs) within parts of Tower Hamlets in recent years. GBZs involve the use of section 30 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act, giving the police officers additional powers of dispersal and the provision of extra diversionary activities for young people. This intervention is designed to help residents and businesses in areas plagued by nuisance and harassment.
- 45 One such GBZ was instituted around Roman Road Market in October and November 2007. A full impact assessment is not yet available, but almost half the respondents in a survey said they felt that crime and ASB had reduced during this period and that they felt

safer as a result. Despite this apparent success, LBTH and the Borough Commander appear reluctant to make greater use of GBZs and the associated powers of dispersal, especially for more sustained periods.

- 46 The Working Group recognises that a GBZ will involve a significant diversion of police resources, and we are reluctant to second guess the operational decisions of the Borough Commander. Nevertheless, the Group believe that greater use could and should be made of GBZs. Details of running-costs should therefore be made available to enable an assessment to be made of an expansion in the number and duration of GBZs.

Furthermore ten local authorities have in England agreed to pilot a new sanction, which is the withdrawal of Housing Benefit from those guilty of persistent anti-social behaviour. When initially proposed by Frank Field MP, this proved extremely controversial and was opposed by most Members of Parliament and those working with people suffering anti-social behaviour. However, legislation enabling this pilot scheme to take place now includes much stronger safeguards protecting vulnerable people from its use and limiting the sanction to a short period unless the perpetrator continues to engage with services to help reform their behaviour. LBTH cannot unilaterally introduce this sanction, but the Working Group believe that officers should take a close interest in the progress of the pilot scheme and report back to Cabinet on the merit of Tower Hamlets participating in any future pilots.

#### **Recommendation**

- R6 That the Borough Commander provides details of running costs to enable an assessment of an expansion in the number and duration of Good Behaviour Zones.
- R7 That the Council look at progress of the pilot scheme to withdraw housing benefit from those found guilty of persistent ASB and report back to Cabinet on the merit of Tower Hamlets participating in any future pilots.

## **Safer Neighbourhood Teams**

- 47 Ward-based Safer Neighbourhood Teams have been introduced to provide a visible uniformed presence and discourage crime and anti-social behaviour. Tower Hamlets was the first authority in London to roll-out these teams across every ward in the Borough. The evidence shows that SNTs have had some impact in reducing crime and ASB. However, many residents are yet to be convinced of their effectiveness.
- 48 Working Group was specifically told that the local SNT response was too slow. A number of residents did acknowledge that SNTs are not meant to be rapid response teams, but anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that the response could be quicker and involve greater feedback to residents. A pilot study is apparently in process, looking at SNT response times to ASB calls made by residents.
- 49 The Metropolitan Police representative confirmed that SNT resources are overstretched. The demands of the shift system mean that it is extremely unlikely that more than three or

four of the officers within the six-strong teams would be out any one time. In a ward as big as Bethnal Green South, this is just not sufficient to cover the ground.

- 50 The Working Group considers that an increase in the size of each SNT could have a significant impact on the levels of low level crime and ASB, and especially on public perceptions. However, any expansion would clearly involve significant additional funding. The costs of this would almost certainly fall on LBTH itself, and so the Working Group believes it is prudent to test the effectiveness of a double-sized SNT before rolling it out more widely.

#### **Recommendation**

- R8 That SNTs provide Members with data on response times to ASB calls made by residents, to help evaluate the effectiveness of SNTs in their current capacity.
- R9 That LBTH set aside funding to pilot an expanded SNT of six PCs and six PCSOs in at least two wards for a period of up to two years.

### **Public View**

- 51 The Working Group met with representatives of Tower Hamlets Local Area Partnership and other local residents on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2008. Many issues were raised.
- 52 It was apparent that many of the residents are not aware of the Tower Hamlets ASB Strategy except that ASB seems to be a back office activity in that policy and strategies are in place but not much is happening on the streets. Although some residents agreed that the Council is working towards tackling ASB, some questioned the level of effort being exerted. Residents also reported that they still did not feel comfortable reporting ASB for fear of retribution. Others raised concerns about the continuing problem of young people using council properties to perpetrate ASB within estates.

#### **Recommendation**

- R10 That the Community Safety Service with the help of the Tower Hamlets Partnership and East End Life look to better promote the Council's ASB strategy to residents in the Borough.

- 53 Many residents felt that an enhanced provision of youth facilities would be an essential factor in reducing ASB. Youth Services have already been the subject of a Scrutiny Challenge Session and a series of recommendations were made by those members that took part.
- 54 Responding to Anti-Social Behaviour is not only a matter of reacting to complaints of misbehaviour, but is also about promoting tolerance, diversity and a respect for others. Through schools, it is necessary to develop young people's responsibility and involvement in the community to give them a sense of attachment.

- 55 Residents discussed that role of Schools in tackling ASB, Most agreed that schools which promotes positive behaviour, intervenes early with bad behaviour and in most cases uses exclusions as a last resort after a range of measures have been tried. Problems in school can often be symptomatic outside. Schools should be engaged with broader support services to help identify problems early and deliver a whole household response wherever appropriate. There should also be a focused action on persistent absence, including truancy. This should involve the wide range of local public services and should target both the pupils and their parents.

**Recommendation**

- R11 That Children's Service with the help of Education Psychologist support schools to further help develop young people's appreciation of acceptable behaviour by reviewing behaviour codes and practises that are in line with tackling ASB.
- R12 That Children Service work with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and other agencies to identify and support vulnerable children and young people, most at risk of causing ASB and ensure that wherever possible all pupils are able to access appropriate educational provision.

- 56 Some residents highlighted that Tower Hamlets has one of the highest population of young people in Europe. This meant that there would always be young people congregating in large groups. This should not be a problem, rather give opportunities to engage with young people.
- 57 Particular mention was made of the work on the Cleveland Estate, where a partnership approach helped utilise (amongst others) the Housing Directorate, Youth Service, and Rapid Response Teams. This work sought to decriminalise young people, with a resultant decrease of crime by 48 per cent. It was felt that similar methods could be rolled out to other estates across the borough.
- 58 Parents have a critical role in helping their children develop good values and behavior. Some residents argued that the Council should be looking to involve parents and families in incidents involving their children. It was felt that parents must be informed by the authorities of what their children were up to, to exercise a greater control over the children than any other authority could. Also the Council should evaluate its parenting provision in the local authority and see if these provisions are enough to support parents whose children are in risk of ASB.

**Recommendation**

- R13 That the Community Safety Service gives further thought into early intervention and family work through working with Children's service, Schools, Sure Start and Police to develop a long term strategy for preventive work with children and their families.

- 59 Whilst some residents acknowledged that Councillors and the Council had improved matters, there was a feeling that there was only so much government could be expected to do. Members of the community could not rely on further funding or resources, they themselves would have to do more.
- 60 What has to be tackled is a culture of lack of respect for the rule of law and order; residents were frustrated by either the lack of a police response or ineffectual action when they did.

## Young People's view

- 61 Question remains, of the extent to which perceptions of young people causing problems reflect actual incidents in the community and personal experience. Young people are generally seen as offenders, but this is not true of the majority. For those involved in ASB, preventive measures for tackling ASB should include working with children and young people to improve their understanding of social responsibilities and the consequences of anti-social behaviour.
- 62 The working group were invited to attend the Youth Partnerships "Cotchin' with the Councillors" session. This involved young people aged between 11 and 25 asking questions on ASB, with the Working Group being on hand to answer these questions.
- 63 From this session it appears that young people are as much victims as perpetrators of ASB. Young people felt that they have often had a bad press in recent years for the way they dress (hoodies), for hanging around and for generally being seen as threatening. Some also felt that peer pressure was also a reason for them committing ASB. One young person said that "*we have to fit in otherwise we'll be bullied or beaten up*". There was also a lack of confidence in the police; some felt that the police had a negative perception of them.
- 64 One group felt that ASB exists as a result of poor provisions for young people. Specific discussions took place on the role of youth clubs. Some felt that there are not enough youth clubs for young people. Also those fortunate to be near a youth club felt that the resources were poor. One said "*there is one pool table amongst 20 kids*". The young people agreed that the lack of proper facilities leads to young people "hanging out" on the streets.

### Recommendation

R14 . That the Council enhance youth services offered to young people, including both the quality of facilities within centres and the operating days/hours. Additional funding should be set aside to significantly expanded youth services on offer within at least two wards for a period of two years. Tower Hamlets Youth Service should undertake a thorough consultation, with young people, parents and schools to understand what would be most attractive in helping young people stay off the streets.

## Conclusion

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- 65 The Council's strategy to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) sends out a strong message that anti social behaviour will not be tolerated in Tower Hamlets.
- 66 Discussions with residents and council officers indicate that there is a high priority to tackling anti-social behaviour in Tower Hamlets. Anti social behaviour can include: harassment, noise nuisance, damaging or public property, aggressive, offensive or threatening language or behaviour, violence against people or property, crimes based on discrimination and using housing accommodation for supplying drugs, or for other illegal purposes.
- 67 The council and its partners, especially the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the Tower Hamlets youth service have policies and practice in place to tackle ASB. However further involvement of RSLs needs to develop.
- 68 Annual resident survey shows that concern about crime and ASB has fallen. This proves that the Council has made good progress but needs to continue to give high priority to tackling ASB, building on successes and meeting residents' priorities.



## Scrutiny and Equalities in Tower Hamlets

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