



***Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Service  
Revised Proposal***

For consideration by: Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date: 15 June 2021

Lead director: Chris Burgin

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**Report Author:**

Gurjit Minhas– Head of Service Housing

**1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out a revised proposal to change how we deliver Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Services. Currently services are delivered by Neighbourhood Housing Officers within the Housing Division and the Crime and ASB (CrASBU) Team based in the Neighbourhood and Environmental Division.
- 1.2 The revised proposal is to create a central housing Anti-Social Behaviour Team that will work closely with CrASBU. Council tenants will still be able to report ASB to their housing officers as they do now, however all investigations will be carried out by a central housing ASB team.
- 1.3 The key benefits of this proposal will be to provide a consistent specialist ASB service to all complainants regardless of tenure and enable Neighbourhood Housing Officers to focus on supporting tenants.
- 1.4 The proposal to change the ASB service has been consulted on previously with the Housing Scrutiny Commission and with the Tenant's and Leaseholders Forum in 2020 and has been amended in line with the consultation feedback received.
- 1.5 The original proposal was for all ASB to be dealt with by CrASBU, however you the Scrutiny Commission and the Forum told us that you had the following concerns about the original proposal:
  - less resources for housing services, retain the £100k efficiency saving
  - housing officer's knowledge would be lost
  - tenants wanted to report incidents to housing officers
  - that CRASBU would not be sufficiently resourced to deal with the work
  - that the new arrangement would need to be monitored to check its effectiveness
  - support for people poor mental health
- 1.6 Creating a housing ASB team to carry out investigations and retaining the £100k efficiency saving to provide the face to face customer service role within housing, addresses the above concerns. A central housing team with specialist knowledge is also required as we are dealing with more complex cases in various parts of the City.
- 1.7 This revised proposal has now been consulted on with the Tenant's Forum in January and February 2021. Their feedback on the new proposal is wide-ranging and is attached, please see **Appendix 1**. A commitment has been made to the Forum that they will receive regular feedback on the performance of the ASB service for council tenants going forward. Publicity will also be provided on how services can be accessed. Forum members requested for a definition of ASB to be included in this report, which is as follows:

**Anti-social behaviour (ASB) was defined in the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) as acting 'in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the perpetrator**

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- 1.8 This report also highlights on how the service will be accessed in future and the work of other local authorities and how performance will be monitored in the new service model.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Historically housing services have dealt with ASB associated with council tenancies separately as council estates used to be made up of mostly council owned properties. Low to medium level ASB could be managed through the legal responsibilities of the council as a landlord. This is outlined within 'The Conditions of Tenancy' document which all council tenants sign up to. Mainly due to Right to Buy we are seeing an increase in the mixture of tenures on estates, we have approximately 30 new applications each month. Some of these sold properties are owner occupied, leasehold and some are rented out to private tenants.
- 2.2 CrASBU historically has dealt with all reports of ASB from residents and tenants in private sector housing from initial report to high level investigations and legal action. CrASBU also deals with council tenancy cases as they progress and become more complex, serious or high-risk.
- 2.3 With the increasing mixture of tenures on estates, the two investigation functions sitting separately is not in alignment with the nature of ASB service requests being reported. Reports often involve disputes with households from different tenures. The proposal for the teams to be based centrally will help them to more effectively deal with ASB across all tenures and prevent duplication of work.
- 2.4 The needs of council tenants are also changing as more people are presenting with complex issues, related to substance use, mental health and poverty. Therefore, there is a necessity now to enhance the support role of Neighbourhood Housing Officers to support people in their tenancies. The enforcement function of tackling ASB no longer aligns with the support role Neighbourhood Housing Officers are increasingly having to carry out.
- 2.5 The current arrangement is that each Neighbourhood Housing Officer takes reports and investigates council housing associated cases in their area. This means an uneven and excessive workload for some officers especially in the West of the City. Having a central housing team will mean that caseloads can be more evenly distributed, and work can be resourced more effectively. Since April 2020 the Housing Service has received 931 reports of ASB.

## **3. Purpose**

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is for members to consider the proposal of setting up a housing ASB investigation team that will work in close partnership with CrASBU and be based centrally.
  - 3.2 This proposal will lead to a more effective specialist services that will reduce any duplication of functions. All officers dealing with ASB will be trained to provide support and signpost people who have poor mental health.
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Increasingly more service users are presenting with mental health issues and this can be a contributing factor in ASB cases.

- 3.3 In line with the feedback received from the Scrutiny Commission and Forum on the initial proposal for the new model would have realised efficiencies of 100k. This will now be retained within the Housing Service to ensure Neighbourhood Housing Officers carry out the key link and customer contact role.

#### **4. Scope and Impact of Proposed Change**

- 4.1 A Business Case for Organisational Change in accordance with the Organisational Review Policy is proposed to be prepared by the Head of Service for Community Safety and Protection with support from the Head of Housing Services. This would need to be consulted on as this potential change will impact on the job roles of Neighbourhood Housing Officers within the Tenancy Management Service and the creation of job roles within the new central housing ASB Team and the CrASBU team.
- 4.2 The proposed change will also impact on Council Tenants, as Neighbourhood Housing Officers will no longer investigate low level ASB cases. In line with feedback from the Scrutiny Commission and the Tenants Forum, in the future model, tenants will still be able to contact housing officers to report ASB and housing staff will provide advice and assistance and refer to the central teams where appropriate. Tenants will also be able to report cases directly to the ASB teams and will be able to contact the officer dealing with the case directly throughout the investigation.

#### **5. Proposed Future Working Model**

- 5.1 For council tenants, Neighbourhood Housing Officers (NHOs) would continue to be a key contact person and provide advice and low-level assistance via the standard letters and information that is readily available.
  - 5.2 NHO's will deal with issues that are not deemed as formal ASB. Cases that need formal investigation will be referred to the central teams, however NHO's will continue to be a point of local intelligence and local information for the central teams.
  - 5.3 The central housing ASB team will be made up of housing ASB officers who will be managed in partnership by both Housing and CrASBU.
  - 5.4 Housing staff will lead on cases primarily involving council housing but as with CrASBU will deal with cross tenure cases. CrASBU will lead on those primarily involving private housing and will work cross tenure to include council housing.
  - 5.5 The central housing ASB Team will be managed in partnership by Housing Services and CrASBU and be based in Mansfield House while also utilising local bases. This will enable the housing team to have a close working relationship with CrASBU and utilise central resources and knowledge to deal with ASB more effectively. This will also enable improved joint working with the police, through the use of a shared intelligence system called SENTINEL, which is currently used by CrASBU officers to manage cases
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5.6 As part of on-going commitment to ensure that this model provides continuous improvement and yields the type of outcomes required, the following key performance information will be captured and shared;

- i) Service/ Information Request (ensuring that data is captured where council tenants are involved as victims and/ or perpetrator)
- ii) Action Taken
- iii) Review/ Evaluation

5.7 As part of the consultation with members and the tenant's forum, there was interest in relation to how other local authorities delivered services in relation to ASB. With this in mind, officers contacted the 10 local authorities to understand their approach to dealing with ASB.

5.8 Of those 7 cities with housing stock and ASB services for residents of the city; 5 cities have a single route for reporting ASB regardless of tenure. One of the city's shared with us that they feel that there is a more uniform approach across their area with this approach and that the staff work more consistently using the same policies and procedures.

## **6. Benefits of Future Working Model**

6.1 The point of contact for all stakeholders will be clear, avoiding any uncertainty about who is dealing with a case irrespective of tenure. Contact details of the case worker will be provided.

6.2 The new service will eliminate any duplication of work and improve partnership working.

6.3 The current role of a Neighbourhood Housing Officer covering several landlord functions does not lend itself to providing a dedicated service to deal with ASB.

6.4 Removing the ASB function from the Neighbourhood Housing Officer role will enable officers to focus on supporting tenants to sustain their tenancies and their building responsibility duties.

6.5 All complainants regardless of tenure will receive a consistent and specialist ASB service with support for mental health.

6.6 Improved joint working with the police through a shared intelligence system, SENTINEL which CrASBU utilise; ensuring that issues are communicated and resolved much more swiftly.

6.7 This model will benefit from the Channel Shift programme, with an expectation that complainants reporting ASB are able to access help and support by way of information that can assist them in "self-help".

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## **7. Financial, legal and other implications**

### **7.1 Financial implications**

**7.1.1** The total current cost of managing ASB across Council services is £727k (£432k within the CrASBU service and approximately £295k in the HRA). The proposed model will have no impact on overall costs. Centralising HRA ASB support into a single team will free up time to an estimated value of £100k for Housing Officers to spend on other tasks.

*Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant*

### **7.2. Legal implications**

7.2.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report

*Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer*

### **7.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Implications**

7.3.1. There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.

*Aidan Davis - Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284*

### **7.4 Equalities Implications**

7.4.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

7.4.2 Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. If the recommendations are agreed and as part of the ongoing work to reshape the service, it is recommended that an Equalities Impact Assessment is undertaken.

However, the Equality Impact Assessment is an iterative document which should be revisited throughout the decision-making process and should, ultimately, also take into account any consultation findings including housing tenants. Consultation needs to be meaningful and accessible and this needs to be reflected in the Communications Strategy. Any strategies/policies developed as part of this proposal need to ensure they outline how they meet the Equality Duty as prescribed by the Equality Act, such as the development of an Anti-Social Behaviour Policy for the new central team.

An organisational review EIA will need to be completed once the staffing establishment has been fully determined looking at any positive and negative impacts on staff in scope of the review. A service change EIA is attached.

Advice and guidance can be sought from the Corporate Equalities Team.

*Sukhi Biring -Equalities Officer, 454 4175*

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# Appendix 1

## Forum Members feedback on ASB proposals

In early January the revised Anti-Social Behaviour proposals report was sent to all Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum members. This was followed up with telephone calls to obtain individual member feedback on the revised proposals.

A Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum meeting was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021. At this meeting the individual feedback was shared. The Forum members were then given the opportunity to add any further comments they would like to make. The feedback received is as follows:

### **May Jones**

Generally happy with the proposals and in favour.

- Thought the idea of setting up a central Housing ASB team was a good idea
- Agreed with the close working arrangements with CRASBU
- Pleased anti-social behaviour can still be reported to housing officers
- Pleased the previous saving of £100k will continue to be used to fund services

### **Ann Green**

Generally, in favour of the proposals, but would like to know:

- What exactly what will the 100k be used for?
- There's already a shortage of housing officers. Will there be new Housing Officers recruited or will they use existing ones?

### **Wendy Biddles**

- Would like dealing with ASB to stay as it is, Housing Officers and for them to be responsible for their tenants.
  - In the report didn't understand why right to buy was being mentioned and what this had to do with things.
  - Asked what the £100k savings is to be used for? For Tenants who have needs, the money should be spent on their homes.
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## **Jill Rhys**

Generally, in favour of the proposals

- Concerned about the burden it would place on housing officers having to deal with more complex cases and thought more partnership working with mental health service to reduce this burden
- Providing a range of ways people reporting ASB was good but these could be kept simple and streamlined so people don't have to repeat themselves.
- Would like to see the project reviewed after a set period to see how it has worked. Views should be sought from tenants and staff for this to get feedback on the ground, not just reporting on numbers.
- Service should be published better on existing literature that goes out.

## **Joe Carroll**

Not in favour of the proposals

- In relation to keeping Housing officer involved - what is proposed was not what was asked for
  - LCC are reducing the number of housing Officers and funding CRASBU through the HRA, making Housing Officers do more.
  - Where is the savings - if CRASBU are only to deal with serious cases - giving CRASBU more officers to do less work as LCC want to use HO to do the low level cases
  - Joe was concerned about vulnerable tenants and the amount of work HO have helping these people
  - The extra contact with CRASBU seems unrealistic.
  - Joe wanted a separate in house ASB team and felt CRASBU had a poor record in tackling anti social behaviour, also their lack of interest in the community. They only seem to assist the person that causes the ASB. He would like more information from CRASBU of existing cases
  - Fears Housing office will have no impact or control over CRASBU
  - Joe would like to increase the number of housing officers to be able to effectively deal with ASB themselves.
  - Questions raised:
    - Where do STAR fit into this?
    - Why is Right to Buy in the paper
    - What will the £100k be used for? Can't we use it to improve services for council tenants?
    - – the paper talks about housing officers helping people with mental health difficulties, can this link into STAR's work?
    - How many tenants have CRASBU evicted
    - Will these proposals mean fewer housing officers to do regular housing officer work?
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## **Jean Williams**

Generally, in favour and happy with the ASB papers

- One thing she would like to know more about and see is an emphasis relationship between council tenants and leaseholders is addressed.
- There seems to be a lot of issues between leaseholders and tenants she and would like to know more about and see more emphasis on how these issues are managed.

## **Peter Hookway**

Not in favour of the proposals

- Why is there no mention of the night service for ASB? What are the plans for this?
- Doesn't see why we should go in with the private sector. The private sector seems to have a higher profile and get more consideration than council tenants – it feels like this is about improving the service for the private sector, not council tenants. I'm concerned that the needs of council tenants will be overlooked.
- Also, this proposal seems to be putting a lot of work on housing officers when they already have a full workload. Will this mean fewer housing officers having to do regular housing officer work?
- No mention of how STAR is going to be involved.

## **Phillip Allen**

- Why doesn't this paper mention leaseholders?
  - How is the proposal going to impact on the visibility of Housing Officers, can we expect to see a more visible housing officer presence in the future?
  - Dealing with ASB should be pro-active. Will the new proposals result in a more proactive approach rather than reactive?
  - Supporting homeless vulnerable people and those with mental health issues is admirable, however, the resulting issues completely prevent the vast majority of people being unable to live a peaceful life what support is offered to them?
  - If implemented when will an evaluation of how it works take place?
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