

Housing Scrutiny Commission Report

Executive Response to the Housing Scrutiny Commission
findings into the Proposed Housing Anti-Social Behaviour
Team

Date: 6th June 2022

Lead Director: Chris Burgin

Lead member: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin

Wards Affected: All wards
Report author: Gurjit Kaur Minhas
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1. Purpose

1.1 To provide a response to the findings of the Housing Scrutiny Commission review of the proposal for a new Housing Anti- Social Behaviour Team.

2. Summary

2.1 The Scrutiny review was a focused exercise to gain clarity and assurances over the new proposal for a central Housing ASB team that would work closely with CrASBU (Crime and Anti- Social Behaviour Unit). To find out how the new structure would work and how it would improve processes and outcomes. How the team would work alongside other agencies including CrASBU and to understand the benefits that this could bring. The review resulted in a number of recommendations and requested feedback once the new structure is in place and impact of the team in dealing with cases of anti-Social Behaviour to be reported back to the scrutiny commission.

2.2 The Lead Member for Housing and the Director of Housing welcomed the findings of the review and agreed for the recommendations from the review to be incorporated into future service delivery to help enhance the service proposal.

3. Recommendations

3.1 To note the response from the Assistant Mayor and the Director of Housing

4. Report

4.1 The detailed recommendations agreed from the scrutiny review are set out below:

- a) That mechanisms be established to ensure that the new Housing ASB team has access to the data and information held by other agencies required to progress cases, including adequate access to relevant police records and data.
- b) That a comprehensive communication strategy be compiled which sets out the changes and benefits for tenants, the respective roles of each agency in dealing with ASB and clearly explains the new process in incremental stages
- c) To use fliers/letters to tenants and residents to communicate the changes and the benefits of the these, and to consider additional methods of contact in areas with a higher prevalence of ASB cases.
- d) That further communication on the new proposal be provided to the Tenants and Residents Forum and that the forum receives an a regular summary of progress.
- e) That, where appropriate, representatives from the Tenants and Leaseholders Forum be invited to participate in inter-agency liaison, particularly through regular beat meetings arranged by the Police.
- f) That a robust programme of training be put in place for the new team, including mediation training and training in relation to mental health when supporting victims and those that report ASB.
- g) That a training programme regarding the new process be embedded into the work of all corporate customer services staff.
- h) That a more robust and regular system of contact between the new team and victims of ASB be established, particularly in respect of those cases that take many months to resolve.
- i) That future consideration be given in respect of the size and structure of the newly established team based on its initial period of work, with considering given to flexibly transferring resources to support areas of the city with the highest need.
- j) That further work be undertaken to continue to benchmark the service provision against neighbouring and comparable local authorities, given that several other authorities are in the process of establishing a similar model to that proposed.

k) That in addition to the preparation of an Executive response report, further reports be brought to the Housing Scrutiny Commission every six months once the new team has been established. Such reports would cover to what extent the anticipated benefits had been achieved, including benefits to the work of NHOs.

4.2 The Lead Member for Housing and the Director welcomed the response from the Commission Working Group and officers have within the attached report in Appendix A have embedded these recommendations and will embed recommendations which will become part of working arrangements upon go live of the revised specialist service.

5. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

6. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

No

Appendix A

City Mayor Briefing Report

***Response to the Housing Scrutiny
Review
Anti-Social Behaviour Service Proposal***

10th March 2022

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin

Lead Director: Chris Burgin, Director of Housing



City Mayor

Report Author:

Gurjit Minhas – Head of Service, Housing Division

1. Summary

1.1 This report sets out a revised proposal in response to the scrutiny review of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) service offer. It is proposed that a new central Housing ASB Team is set up alongside the Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (CrASBU). The housing team will deal with ASB associated with council tenancies and CrASBU will continue to deal with cases across all tenures. The Tenants and Leaseholders Forum have been consulted on this proposal and an in-depth review of the proposal has been undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

1.2 The process of consultation and review has been lengthy; however, it has proved valuable, and we have listened to and revised this proposal in line with the feedback received. The service offer being put forward is much enhanced, as it has been shaped by the very people that receive the service. In line with feedback from the Tenant’s Forum, the new team will retain and have access to housing knowledge as well as being specialised in dealing with ASB, therefore providing an improved service offer.

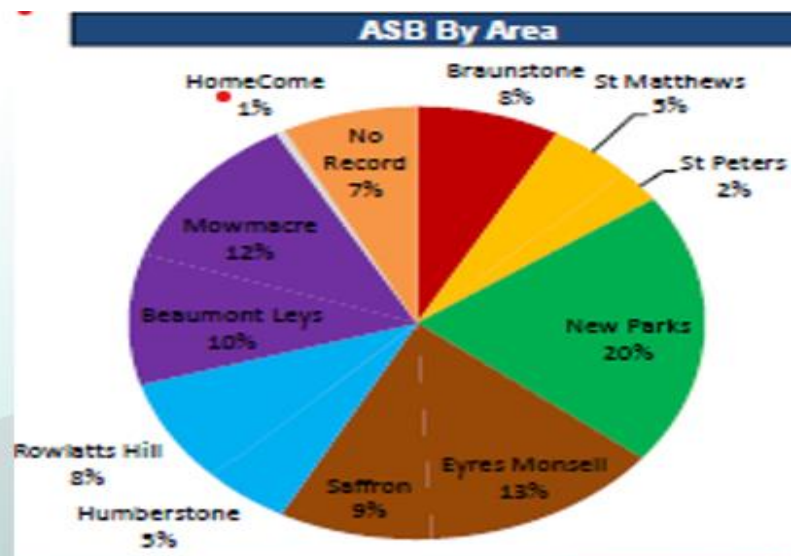
2. Background

2.1 ASB is defined in the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) as acting in a manner that was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the perpetrator. ASB has a real detrimental impact on the lives of our residents and Leicester City Council is committed to delivering the most effective service to tackle this social issue.

2.2 The current arrangement is for council housing associated ASB to be reported to the Neighbourhood Housing Officer (NHO), who will investigate lower-level cases using an incremental approach. CrASBU deal with cases across all tenures including the higher-level cases in relation to council tenants. With the increasing mixture of tenants on estates, the two investigatory functions sitting separately is not in alignment with the nature of ASB service requests being reported.

Current work is allocated by area

Officers in New Parks have the higher case load



2.3 NHOs are required to investigate ASB cases in their own geographical area as above, which has led to an uneven and often, excessive workload for some officers. Therefore, the need to review how we allocate resources to tackle ASB effectively in the city is paramount. The existing pool of 37.6 NHOs currently spend approximately 20% of their time dealing with approximately 1,200 cases of ASB a year.

The Revised Proposal

2.4 To create a new central Housing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team that would sit alongside the existing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (CrASBU). Council tenants will still be able to report ASB to their Neighbourhood Housing Officer (NHO), who would deal with any low-level nuisance, but any incident that requires investigation or case work would be referred to the new team.

2.5 The scrutiny commission were keen to understand the improved outcomes the proposal would deliver as well as the working relationship with the new team, CrASBU and the Police and the impact on NHOs.

Improved Outcomes/Benefits of the Revised Proposal

2.6 The benefits of the proposal include less duplication of work, a dedicated specialised service offering a consistent approach. One officer will lead on a case and hand over in a timely manner to CrASBU when the case requires higher-level intervention. The key outcome will be a more effective and equitable service.

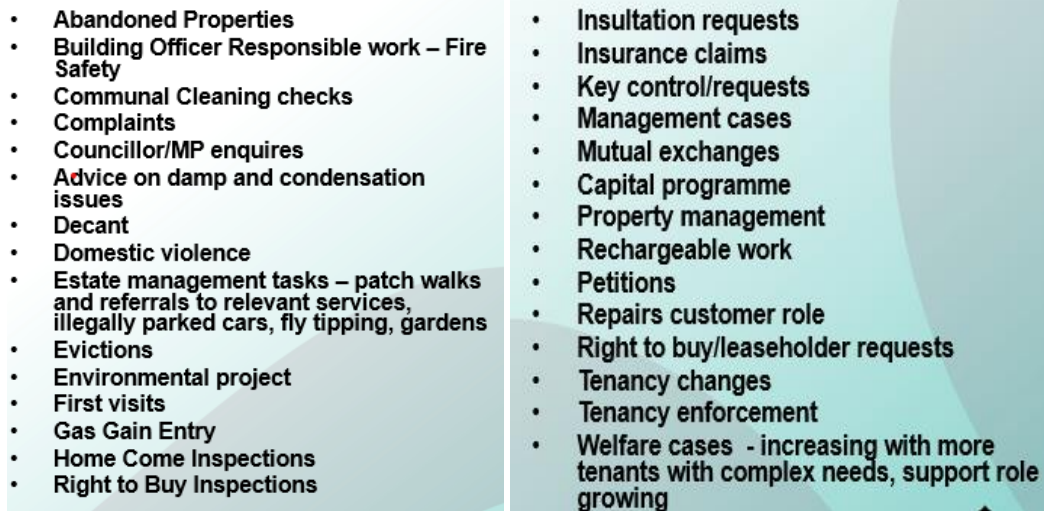
2.7 The team will have access to specialised ASB training from the Police and CrASBU and will be trained to support people with poor mental health. Closer working with the Police and sharing of intelligence will be possible, it has been confirmed that the new team can be co-located at Mansfield House and will have access to the Police database, Sentinel.

Impact on the NHO Role

2.8 Separating out the ASB function from the NHO role will enable officers to provide more support to tenants and be less involved in enforcement issues, which currently can cause conflict in their role. This will help ease the case load of NHOs and enable officers to deal with the increasing number of complex support cases.

2.9 The support needs of tenants are increasing and NHOs need to be able to implement the Tenancy Support Policy effectively by managing the welfare case work and referring people to appropriate support agencies. NHO capacity will be released to deliver the range of other landlord tasks, such as dealing with fire safety, tenancy related functions, estate management and estate improvement tasks as set out below:

NHO Duties

- 
- Abandoned Properties
 - Building Officer Responsible work – Fire Safety
 - Communal Cleaning checks
 - Complaints
 - Councillor/MP enquires
 - Advice on damp and condensation issues
 - Decant
 - Domestic violence
 - Estate management tasks – patch walks and referrals to relevant services, illegally parked cars, fly tipping, gardens
 - Evictions
 - Environmental project
 - First visits
 - Gas Gain Entry
 - Home Come Inspections
 - Right to Buy Inspections
 - Insultation requests
 - Insurance claims
 - Key control/requests
 - Management cases
 - Mutual exchanges
 - Capital programme
 - Property management
 - Rechargeable work
 - Petitions
 - Repairs customer role
 - Right to buy/leaseholder requests
 - Tenancy changes
 - Tenancy enforcement
 - Welfare cases - increasing with more tenants with complex needs, support role growing

2.10 NHO's will retain the key point of contact role for the tenant, tenants will still be able to report ASB to NHOs. Any ASB cases will be referred onto the new team to investigate and NHO's will also share local intelligence and information relevant to the case. Close working will take place with housing staff as ASB officers will also be co-located in community hubs and have access to Northgate the housing IT system.

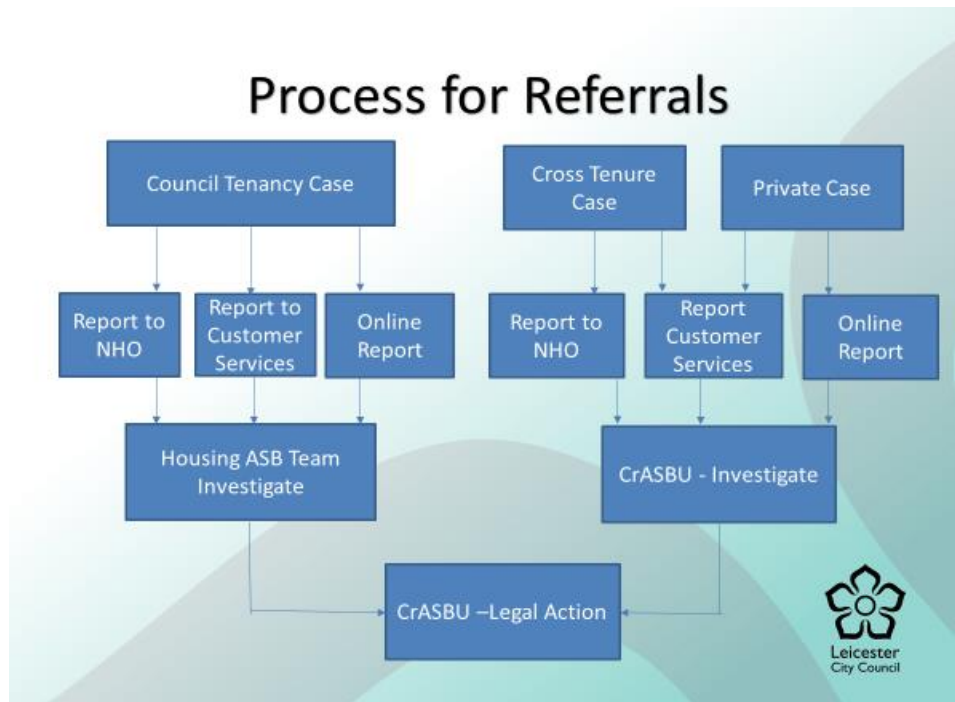
New ASB Team

2.11 It is proposed that the Housing ASB team be made up of four new dedicated and specialist Housing ASB officers, who would report to a Neighbourhood Housing Team Leader, but would also be managed in partnership by CrASBU. ASB officers would be co-located at local neighbourhood hubs and at Mansfield House, which would enable intelligence to be more easily shared between the Housing team, CrASBU and the Police.

2.12 It is expected that each ASB officer would deal with approximately 18 intensive cases each month, and that this represents a more manageable case approach and would offer a greater level of dedicated and tailored support to victims and those affected by ASB. Caseloads are anticipated to be evenly spread amongst staff, with officers being deployed to areas with a higher case prevalence if deemed necessary.

2.13 The CrASBU manager will be responsible for ensuring the new team works to capacity and becomes specialised through work allocation and management of caseloads. Best practice procedures around decision making will also be utilised by the new team.

2.14 The new team will lead on all cases primarily involving council housing, whilst CrASBU would lead on those primarily involving private housing and would also work cross-tenure to include council housing when required, as indicated in the process chart below. The new co-managerial and co-location arrangements would support the cross-working arrangements between CrASBU and Housing.



2.15 To resource the new team it is proposed that vacancies within the establishment of NHOs be utilised to take into account the transfer of the ASB function and the job role of the NHO be amended to reflect this change. Currently there are staff on temporary contracts covering vacant NHO posts, who would have the skills, knowledge and experience to be in a good position to apply for any new posts in the Housing ASB team.

Equality Issues

2.16 The Scrutiny Commission were particularly interested on the equality impact. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. The assessment findings were that the creation of a new team should lead to positive impacts for tenants from across a range of protected characteristics by improving the services available to them.

2.17 The new team will meet the needs of the diverse population of Leicester by ensuring language needs of different communities are met and team members receive equality and diversity training to enable them to provide appropriate services to people with a range of protected characteristics.

Initial Proposal

2.18 In 2020 an initial proposal to transfer dealing with all cases of ASB (regardless of tenure) from the Housing Division to the CrASBU was consulted on. This proposal was met with a number of concerns from the Tenants and Leaseholder Forum and the Housing Scrutiny Commission such as:

- fewer resources for housing services with the retention of the £100k efficiency saving

- *a loss of housing officer's specialist knowledge*
- *a view from tenants that they wanted to report incidents to housing officers*
- *views that CrASBU would not be sufficiently resourced to deal with the work*
- *concerns that the new arrangement would need to be monitored to check its effectiveness*
- *questions around the support for people poor mental health*

2.19 The Housing Scrutiny commission requested that further consultation be carried out with the Tenants and Leaseholders Forum and a revised report addressing the above concerns be bought back to the commission.

Scrutiny Review

2.20 A revised report and proposal was taken back to the commission taking into consideration and addressing the concerns raised. The commission broadly supported the revised proposal but felt a deeper level of investigation was necessary to understand the benefits of the proposed arrangements and hence a task and finish exercise was set up.

2.21 Further in-depth information was presented to the Housing Scrutiny Commission by Housing Services and CrASBU as requested. The task group then concluded that they were in broad agreement with the proposals, however issued a number of recommendations as set out below:

- a) That mechanisms be established to ensure that the new Housing ASB team has access to the data and information held by other agencies required to progress cases, including adequate access to relevant police records and data.
- b) That a comprehensive communication strategy be compiled which sets out the changes and benefits for tenants, the respective roles of each agency in dealing with ASB and clearly explains the new process in incremental stages
- c) To use fliers/letters to tenants and residents to communicate the changes and the benefits of the these, and to consider additional methods of contact in areas with a higher prevalence of ASB cases.
- d) That further communication on the new proposal be provided to the Tenants and Residents Forum and that the forum receives and a regular summary of progress.
- e) That, where appropriate, representatives from the Tenants and Leaseholders Forum be invited to participate in inter-agency liaison, particularly through regular beat meetings arranged by the Police.
- f) That a robust programme of training be put in place for the new team, including mediation training and training in relation to mental health when supporting victims and those that report ASB.
- g) That a training programme regarding the new process be embedded into the work of all corporate customer services staff.

- h) That a more robust and regular system of contact between the new team and victims of ASB be established, particularly in respect of those cases that take many months to resolve.
- i) That future consideration be given in respect of the size and structure of the newly established team based on its initial period of work, with considering given to flexibly transferring resources to support areas of the city with the highest need.
- j) That further work be undertaken to continue to benchmark the service provision against neighbouring and comparable local authorities, given that several other authorities are in the process of establishing a similar model to that proposed.
- k) That in addition to the preparation of an Executive response report, further reports be brought to the Housing Scrutiny Commission every six months once the new team has been established. Such reports would cover to what extent the anticipated benefits had been achieved, including benefits to the work of NHOs.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 To agree to the setting up of the new Housing ASB Team and creation of the new post of Housing ASB Officer
- 3.2 To reflect the transfer of the function by deleting vacant posts in the NHO establishment and amend the job role of the NHO in line with this proposed change.
- 3.3 To implement all the recommendations of the Housing Scrutiny Commission, which include a focus on communicating the changes to tenants, involving tenants, and providing feedback on the implementation of the change.
- 3.4 To review the effectiveness of the new service and realisation of benefits with further update reports once the new arrangements are in place. To consider any changes to arrangements to address any issues identified.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 If the proposals are agreed the next steps would be to carry out work to create and evaluate the new Housing ASB posts by May 22
- 4.2 Carry out consultation and communication with all staff affected by this proposal. by May 22, initial advice from HR is that this change to the NHO role would not require an organisational review
- 4.3 Communicate to tenants and stakeholders the keys changes and the benefits of the more dedicated specialist service.
- 4.4 Mobilise for implementing the change in the NHO role and setting up the new team, recruit and train staff and launch the team in July 22.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

This report outlines the proposal to separate out the ASB elements of Neighbourhood Housing Officer duties and create a new team to focus specifically on these activities. The overall number of staff within the budgeted establishment would remain unchanged, and it is not anticipated that there would be a financial impact of the proposals.

Stuart McAvoy – Acting Head of Finance

5.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation) – x371435

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Implications

There are limited climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. However, as service delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon emissions, impacts can be managed through measures such as encouraging sustainable staff travel behaviours, using buildings efficiently and following sustainable procurement guidance, as applicable to the service.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

5.4 Equalities Implications

When making decisions, the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard, when carrying out their functions, to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

In doing so, the council must consider the possible impact on those who are likely to be affected by the recommendation and their protected characteristics.

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.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and an action plan produced reflecting the outcomes of the consultation and the creation of the new ASB Housing Team and new posts of Housing ASB Officers. The action plan will be implemented over the coming months with progress being monitored by the lead officer. The creation of a new team should lead to positive impacts for tenants from across a range of protected characteristics by improving the services available to them.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer, 454 4175