



## **NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

#### **SCRUTINY PANEL 1– SERIOUS ACQUISITIVE CRIME, VIOLENT CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**26<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

#### **BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISIT – SPENCER AND KINGS HEATH**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Panel on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012, it was agreed that two site visits take place. One to a locality where there were currently problems with serious acquisitive crime (SAC) and one where improvement work had been carried out. The purpose of the visits was to concentrate on “hotspots” and focus on environmental improvements. Two site visits were therefore set up.
- 1.2 A visit to Spring Boroughs and Bellinge took place on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012, details of which were provided to the meeting of the Panel on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2012. A further site visit to Spencer ward took place on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012.
- 1.3 This site visit was led by Laura Major, Crime Prevention Manager, Northants Police.

### **2 Information**

- 2.1 The site visit to Spencer and Kings Heath was attended by Councillor David Palethorpe, Vice Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1, Councillor Christopher Malpas, Chief Inspector Max Williams, Northants Police, (co optee), Laura Major, Crime Prevention Manager, Northants Police, Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, Lincoln Henry, Neighbourhood Warden and Will Finn, Community Safety Data Analyst, Northampton Borough Council (NBC).

#### **Spencer and Kings Heath**

- 2.2 An Environment Visual Audit (EVA) of Kings Heath had been undertaken approximately two years ago. It had been revisited this year, an EVA for specific areas within Spencer has been undertaken and an Action Plan has been produced as directed by the Northampton CSP.
- 2.3 The Site Visit was informed that some communal doors had been replaced within the Ward, and that some environmental improvements had taken place to prohibit access to the rear of flats.

- 2.4 As part of the Action Plan the Police are working with Housing Services, Northampton Borough Council, regarding secure by design standard for access communal doors.
- 2.5 During the site visit the problem of storage cupboards within communal halls was noted, as was the condition of some of the fencing.
- 2.6 The Site Visit noted a number of out of date signs in relation to crime prevention, and partnership operations in situ around the area.
- 2.7 Two sites where pubs had originally stood were observed. The Site Visit was concerned that the areas were overgrown with a lot of litter, and rubble. The Site Visit commented on the need for proper clearing of unused sites, and securing of them if appropriate.
- 2.8 The Site Visit observed disused and unkempt garage blocks, alongside knocked down street signage, overgrown foliage and general fly-tipping. It observed maintenance issues, such as the removal of gates on public rights of way, problems with communal steps in disrepair and littering within shrubbed areas. A number of discussions took place regarding the 'broken window syndrome'.
- 2.9 An unused open space, near to Brookside Meadows, was observed. The Site Visit felt that this could be used as a communal garden or allotments (access permitting).
- 2.10 The Site Visit commented on street signage, and there was a discussion regarding the importance of good street signage around the estates of Northampton.

### **3 Conclusions**

- 3.1 Councillors attending the site visit concluded that there was a need to ascertain whether the Police and Housing Services, NBC, prioritised access door entry systems and security to the same standard. There is a further need to understand how upgrades are prioritised. The Site Visit highlighted the importance of engaging residents in security so the purpose of security measures are understood and used (such as gates).
- 3.2 The Site Visit agreed that there is a need for improvements to be made, not only to the front access communal doors but also to the rear.
- 3.3 There is a need to understand NBC's maintenance programme for housing stock (including communal door), garage blocks and street cleansing, and maintenance of foliage.
- 3.4 It was agreed that a potential recommendation of the final report could that out of date signs be removed, in respect of the whole borough, not just the area recently visited. A further potential recommendation was to ensure that Street signs are not missing and are clear.

- 3.5 It was further agreed that another potential recommendation of the final report be that when land or buildings is transferred that it is stipulated that the land must be cleared and properly secured.
- 3.6 There is a need to understand the status of the two sites (Morris Man and Silver Cornet) and it was agreed that the Chair of this Panel be asked to contact Planning Services to ascertain the status of these sites.
- 3.7 A potential recommendation was proposed that investigations take place regarding unused open spaces being utilised as community gardens or allotments.
- 3.8 The Site Visit agreed that there was a need for all service areas involved in community safety to attend meetings of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

### **3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 That the information gathered from the site visit to Spencer and Kings Heath be used to inform the Panel's evidence base.
- 3.2 That the Chair of this Panel contacts Planning Services to ascertain the status of the Morris Man and Silver Cornet sites.
- 3.3 That there is a need for all service areas involved in community safety to attend meetings of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor David Palethorpe, Vice-Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1.

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012