

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY



SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – THE IMPACT OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ON THE TOWN

CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS

RESPONSE - Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review investigating the impact of anti-social behaviour on the town

Key lines of Inquiry:

- To investigate the levels of anti-social behaviour in the town, such as tackling psychoactive substances, alcohol, littering (including chewing gum), graffiti, fly-tipping, street urination and dog fouling
- To consider the nature of the psychoactive substances market and any health consequences
- To review the policies and strategies for dealing with the impact of anti-social behaviour in the town
- To consider the paper/Bill that is currently being drafted by the Home Office to address the issue of psychoactive substances
- To identify the prevention strategies that can help to address anti-social behaviour on the town
- To identify 'hotspots' of the impact of anti-social behaviour on the town
- To consider the enforcement powers that the Council and other Agencies has in respect of anti-social behaviour
- To consider how Northampton Borough Council can work in partnership with local groups, Agencies, organisations and residents to reduce and prevent the impact anti-social behaviour has on the town

The expected outcomes of this Scrutiny Review are:

- To make informed recommendations to all relevant parties on methods to deal with anti- social behaviour on the town

CORE QUESTIONS:

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

1. Please provide details of your organisation and its role in addressing anti-social behaviour

The Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust exists to restore the Abbey and prepare its opening to the public in 2016. We aim to educate people about its history and the part it has played in the life of Northampton and the country.

2. What Strategies and Policies do you have in place for addressing anti-social behaviour?

We aim to educate people about the value of the Abbey and surrounding estate (in public ownership) so that they will show it more respect.

3. What specific practices and measures do you currently undertake to address/tackle anti-social behaviour?

We work with the Park Rangers, local residents and park users as well as the local police to monitor anti-social behaviour and report abuse and vandalism to the Council as landowners.

4. Do you have specific budget/resources/funding in relation to addressing anti- social behaviour, if so please provide further details.

We do not have resources allocated to this.

5. Are the current partnership arrangements for tackling anti-social behaviour sufficient, and if not where are the gaps?

No. There is no visible security presence in the vicinity of the Abbey nor are there any attempts made by the Council to educate people, especially younger people, about the value of the park and the Abbey as places of recreation and amenity value

6. Do you feel there is adequate co-ordination between Agencies regarding dealing with anti-social behaviour? If not how could it be improved?

The Park Management Committee is an ideal vehicle for co-ordinating action to tackle anti-social behaviour but there is no cohesive strategy that they can support. The Trust would like to see a much more integrated approach by all agencies and stakeholders but we need human resources on the ground and a higher profile by rangers and others. Volunteers could help if suitably trained. We also need better physical security (gates at the end of the drive; stronger park fencing and repairs carried out more quickly).

7. How does anti-social behaviour impact upon you/organisation?

It affects the appearance of the grounds around the Abbey and deters people from visiting the park. The fear of being attacked or visible signs of drug abuse and litter will deter visitors to the Abbey and could impact on our business once the Abbey is reopened in 2016.

8. What do you think could be done to ensure effective strategic and operational links are made to tackle anti-social behaviour, or improve, on a town scale?

Identify the "hot spots" and have a task force ready to act in the event of any anti-social behaviour in those areas. This should be multi-agency and be on standby to act immediately if called upon. They should be easy to contact. If action to deal with drug abuse, littering, graffiti and wanton vandalism is taken quickly it often stops the activity at least in the short term. Community payback schemes also appear to be useful.

9 Please provide details of the enforcement powers that you have in respect of anti-social behaviour

None

10 Do you have the resources to enforce the powers that you have? Please explain.

None

11 Do you have information regarding the nature of the psychoactive substances market that you are able to inform the Scrutiny Panel of?

No

12 Please can you provide details of any health consequences of using psychoactive substances

N/A

13 Do you have any suggestions on how, as partners, we can improve our approach in addressing anti-social behaviour?

Give it a higher priority and be better at enforcing existing legislation. There are park byelaws for Delapre but I suspect most people, including those in authority, are unaware of their content.

14 What do you think is the key contributing factor to anti-social behaviour across Northampton?

Lack of pride in the town by its citizens. Neighbourhoods are often run-down, repairs to infrastructure such as potholes, walls etc are not carried out and there is then a cycle of decline in standards. The Council (and other agencies) have to take the lead

role. Cuts to budgets mean that the maintenance of the “public realm” deteriorates leading to further decline in standards exacerbating the situation. Enforcement of existing laws must also be improved.

15 Do you have further information regarding the impact of anti-social behaviour on the town of which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?

The Trust would like to see Northampton claim its place as an interesting, historic place to visit with a variety of things to see and do thus attracting more visitors and improving the local economy. If the town has a reputation as being litter-strewn, a place for drug dealing and alcoholism on the streets it can take years to change perceptions. Let's clean it up and be proud of its heritage so that the quality of experience not just for visitors but also for local people is enhanced in the future.