

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Thursday, 10 December 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Dennis Meredith (Chair), Councillor Phil Larratt (Deputy Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Rufia Ashraf, Anamul Haque (Enam), Jamie Lane, Zoe Smith and Graham Walker

Witnesses Mike Kay, Chief Executive, Northampton Partnership Homes
Russell Hall, Vice Chair, Northampton Town Centre BID
Chris Barker, Project Manager, Northampton Town Centre BID
Steve Lang, Business Development Manager, Northampton Retail Crime Initiative

Officers Ruth Austen, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager
Sophie Heasman, Senior Case Manager & Data Analyst
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Councillor Arthur McCutcheon - observing

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brian Oldham.

Due to conflicting working commitments, Councillor Davenport has asked that she is removed from the membership of this Panel. The Chair placed on record his thanks to Councillor Davenport for the work she had undertaken so far.

2. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

Councillor Zoe Smith declared a personal interest in agenda item 5(d). She works for St Andrews Hospital.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2015 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NORTHAMPTON PARTNERSHIP HOMES

Mike Kay, Chief Executive, Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH), presented their written response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel. The salient points were highlighted. Mike Kay advised that NPH had been in existence for less than one year. A lot of its policies and procedures had been adopted from NBC and were being reviewed.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- In answer to a question regarding improvements to environment works which in turn had an effect on the reduction of anti-social behaviour; Mike Kay advised that NPH commenced a programme of environmental improvement works this summer recognising that the decent homes standard targeted the inside homes and it was important that we improved the outside as well. Further works are planned next financial year and consultation would be undertaken regarding the proposed enhanced environmental work.
- In response to a query about fly-tipping on housing land, Mike Kay advised that NPH has a dedicated team that responds to fly-tipping regularly; however the success of this team often leads to more fly tipping occurring where if individuals are aware that fly-tipping is collected, more fly tipping is put out.

Mike Kay was thanked for providing a comprehensive response to the core questions.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny review.

(B) CHAIR, NORTHAMPTON TOWN CENTRE BID

Russell Hall, Vice Chair, Northampton Town Centre BID, and Chris Barker, BID Project Manager, Northampton Town Centre BID, made comment in relation this Scrutiny Review:

- Concerns were conveyed regarding the congregation of Street Drinkers, Beggars and individuals carrying out anti-social behaviour around the fountain on the Market Square. It was emphasised that the fountain is a focal point of the town
- Mr Hall referred to youths that congregate around the statue in Abington Street, particularly during the summer months. In the winter they often congregate under the canopy on the entrance to the Grosvenor Centre. Mr Hall confirmed that

following discussions with the Police, they had indicated that the youths were not deemed as carrying out anti-social behaviour.

- Licensing hours were referred to. The Police and interested parties have the power to request the review of a licence.
- Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) would be useful for Street Drinking and littering. Ruth Austen advised that this is covered in the [current consultation on the Public Open Spaces Protection Orders \(PSPOs\)](#).
- Littering includes cigarette butts. Ruth Austen advised that a campaign took place through September and that a total of 44 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued since 1 September for littering.
- The BID, in partnership with NBC, introduced 30 new bins in the town centre. Rough Sleepers in the town was referred to. It was reported that a shop front of a vacant premises that had been a frequent place for Rough Sleepers to use had been boarded up. Ruth Austen highlighted that Rough Sleepers are moved on. Mr Hall commented on the removal of the previous “Drinking Shelter” that had been in situ behind the old Fish Market and in his opinion there was a lack of public toilets in the town centre.
- Chris Barker confirmed that the Northampton Town Centre BID would respond to the consultation on [current consultation on the Public Open Spaces Protection Orders \(PSPOs\)](#).
- Mr Barker advised that the BID reports issues direct to the Police or the Neighbourhood Wardens. The BID itself has no enforcement powers. The [Public Open Spaces Protection Orders \(PSPOs\)](#) will allow a range of sanctions, including FPNs.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- The Chair confirmed that he, along with another member of the Scrutiny Panel, had undertaken a site visit to the town centre and had specifically visited the fountain. The findings of the site visit are detailed at a later agenda item.
- It was commented that [current consultation on the Public Open Spaces Protection Orders \(PSPOs\)](#) is currently live and the Scrutiny Panel and expert witnesses present were encouraged to respond to this consultation. A Public Spaces Order will allow sanctions of Fixed Penalty Notices
- In response to a comment about busking, Ruth Austen advised that the [current consultation on the Public Open Spaces Protection Orders \(PSPOs\)](#) refers to busking. The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit has ongoing work in relation to buskers too.
- In answer to a query regarding previous consultation on busking, the Scrutiny Panel heard that legislation has changed.
- The Scrutiny Panel commented that other towns provide areas for youths to congregate and that they have been successful.

- The Chair suggested that when considering the final report, the Scrutiny Panel should consider a recommendation around preventing Street Drinkers and Beggars from congregating around the fountain. For example, that the fountain, Market Square and Abington Street are patrolled regularly by the Neighbourhood Wardens.
- The Scrutiny Panel commented on individuals congregating on the Market Square at night.
- In answer to a query regarding littering etc. left after the night-time economy over the weekend; Ruth Austen advised that there is a cleaning schedule and this would be forwarded to the Scrutiny Panel for information.
- The Scrutiny Panel requested a briefing paper on the process of late night levy charges to a future meeting.
- The Chair referred to the site visit and that some licensed outlets serve until 5am. Sometimes just one can is sold at a time.

Russell Hall and Chris Barker were thanked for providing a response to the core questions.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny review.

(C) CHAIR, PUBWATCH

A written response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel was received from Northampton PubWatch.

The Scrutiny Panel commented that a response had not been received to the question in respect of psychoactive substances but heard that there is an awareness of these substances and drug usage within the Licensed Trade.

The Chair advised that PubWatch is wider than the town centre and is an excellent resource that co-ordinates, links and communicates. Positive communication is issued in relation to the prevention of anti-social behaviour.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny review.

(D) CHAIR, NORTHAMPTON RETAIL CRIME INITIATIVE

Steve Lang, Business Development Manager, Northampton Retail Crime Initiative, presented the written response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel. The salient points were highlighted.

- A number of Rough Sleepers used to congregate around the premises that had now been boarded up.
- Issues in relation to anti-social behaviour need to be addressed holistically.
- Since May 2015 there had been 388 incidents of retail crime in addition to Police reports. 16% involved violence. 7% a weapon and 19% abuse.
- Since 16 January 2015 160 Exclusion orders have been served to 128 offenders. 25 have two current Exclusion Orders and three have 3 Exclusion Orders. Steve Lang explained the bail process in relation to Exclusion Orders.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- In response to a query how much retail crime is drug related, Steve Lang advised NRCI has 160 stores that it monitors and retailers can report not only what they report to the Police but issues that they haven't reported to the Police too. For example not all shop lifting is reported to the Police.
- It is often a "life style choice " for prolific offenders.
- Often just prolific offenders are reported to the Police. NRCI helps retailers; they can report low level crime to NRCI which is collated.
- It was reported that the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit has access to the data base of NRCI and receives referrals to those most violent.
- Mental health issues was referred to and the work undertaken by St Andrews.
- The Scrutiny Panel commented that there appeared to be an increase in Rough Sleepers at this time of the year. Information from the Homeless Team would be collated and put into a briefing paper regarding Rough Sleepers.

Steve Lang was thanked for providing a comprehensive response to the core questions.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny review.

(E) PARISH COUNCILS

A written response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel was received from West Hunsbury Parish Council.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny review.

(F) LONDON MIDLAND

The Chair informed the Scrutiny Panel that London Midland had advised that London Midland does not have a specific Anti-Graffiti Policy, but it always aims to remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours and other graffiti as soon as possible.

(G) NETWORK RAIL

The Chair informed the Scrutiny Panel that Network Rail had advised that its policy is to remove any offensive or racial graffiti as soon as is possible once reported to the helpline. Any other graffiti reported through the help line is distributed to the local depot for planning of removal.

The Scrutiny Panel suggested a final recommendation of its report could be that the hotline number of Network Rail for reporting graffiti is issued to all ward Councillors.

The Scrutiny Panel suggested that a further recommendation of its final report could be around ascertaining whether Enterprise could remove graffiti on the buildings near to the train station.

6. REPORT BACK FROM SITE VISITS

The Chair advised the Scrutiny Panel of the findings from the various site visits that he had attended.

The Chair suggested potential recommendations that had come from the site visits:

That potential recommendations of the final report include:

A letter is sent to the MPs highlighting the problems of anti-social behaviour that the selling of, and users of psychoactive substances create.

Consideration is given to providing Neighbourhood Wardens with body-worn CCTV cameras, similar to those used by Police Officers. This would assist them in dealing with incidents of anti-social behaviour.

The training programme for Neighbourhood Wardens includes dealing with Street Drinkers.

The option of providing a shelter, or similar area, where Street Drinkers can congregate is explored.

That when reports of fly-tipping are made by Neighbourhood Wardens the rubbish is collected as a matter of urgency.

A room in Children's' Centres, and other appropriate community buildings, is used for Neighbourhood Wardens to hot-desk, with a telephone, on various set days. The purpose being for residents to meet with the Neighbourhood Warden and share any issues they may have. The days and times that the Neighbourhood Warden is based at one of the community buildings should

be widely promoted within the ward. The Scrutiny Panel further suggested that Parish Councils, with facilities, could be contacted to see if they could also assist.

In acknowledging that the need to ascertain why individuals rough sleep and street drink; Religious organisations are contacted to establish how they do and could provide assistance.

That details of the cleaning schedule of the town centre, including Emporium Way is provided to the Scrutiny Panel.

In recognising that there are already a number of flats that have cameras in their communal areas; it is recommended that the Scrutiny Panel requests information on their effectiveness in respect of reducing ASB from Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH).

All Agencies dealing with anti-social behaviour are recommended to link in with, and make referrals to the Northampton Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU) to ensure effective management of anti-social behaviour issues/cases.

In ensuring an effective response is provided in supporting victims/witnesses and addressing perpetrators behaviour, it is recognised that the ECIN's case management system is the central location for detailing and logging all anti-social behaviour cases for Northampton Borough Council.

The Scrutiny Panel queried why Rough Sleepers were coming to Northampton and whether they had moved from areas in the county or from further afield. Sophie Heasman advised that Rough Sleepers come from a variety of other towns such as Milton Keynes, Liverpool and London. There is nothing in particular that attracts them to Northampton.

The Scrutiny Panel commented that there appeared to be more Beggars visible during the night-safe event than during day light hours. The Night Safe event was commended and the Chair encouraged the Scrutiny Panel to attend one of these should a further event be organised.

7. BACKGROUND DATA

The Scrutiny Panel noted two briefing notes detailing background data:

Hazzard Alley, Milton Keynes
Street Pastors

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny review.

The meeting concluded at 7:47 pm