Appendix 1

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Select Committee on Anti-Social Behaviour

Final Report ~ May 2004
Contents

FOREWORD by Committee Chair: Cllr. Terry Williams 4

1. INTRODUCTION 5 - 7

2. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

   Partnership Working 8 - 10
   • Drugs & Alcohol
   • Communications/Publicity
   • Home Visits

   Communities 11 - 15
   • Black and Minority Ethnic Communities
   • Older People
   • Mental Health
   • Local schemes
   • Alleyways and Footpaths
   • Schools
   • Sandwell Community Information & Participation Service (SCIPS)

   Sandwell Council 16 - 21
   • Anti-Social Behaviour Team
   • Social Inclusion
   • Absence from School
   • Licensing Laws
   • Proof of Age Schemes
   • Youth Services
   • Urban Ranger Service

   Criminal Justice 22 - 25
   • Police & Neighbourhood Watch
   • Courts
   • Witness Support

   Emergency Services 26

3. WAY FORWARD 27 - 28

4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 29 - 34
## Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix 1</th>
<th>Select Committee’s Terms of Reference and Membership <strong>(attached)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>Information about use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) in Sandwell. <strong>(to follow)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>Comments from the Sandwell Website Discussion Forum on Anti-Social Behaviour. <strong>(attached)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
<td>List of individuals and organisations who were consulted by or submitted evidence to the Select Committee. <strong>(to follow)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
<td>Details of the Tantany pilot on ASB. <strong>(to follow)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35

36 - 48

49 - 50
FOREWORD

Anti social behaviour (ASB) seems to be the plague of modern times. Our communities often seem to be dominated by usually a few arrogant and uncaring individuals who think they can riot through our lives. But that is about to change.

The Labour Government has played its part with safety nets in place to alter the offending habits of these troublemakers. Now it has introduced a raft of new Anti Social Behaviour legislation to clamp down on this problem.

Sandwell Council set up the Anti Social Behaviour Select Committee a year ago and tasked us to find out how the borough was performing on tackling ASB and recommend ways of improving this work.

It’s a big subject and we found many examples of good practice in the borough. We also found that many organisations inside and outside the council need to get better at sharing information with others tackling ASB.

Our report can be no more than a snap shot of the situation in Sandwell but it comes after taking evidence at 12 meetings, reading huge piles of written submissions and talking to hundreds of people at community meetings.

I thank all members of the Select Committee and supporting officers for their patience in taking part in some very long meetings. I also thank the people and organisations of Sandwell who gave us their opinions.

One thing is certain. National and Local Government is quite properly playing its part in the battle against ASB by helping people change – and, where these people will not, by getting tough. But we cannot win the war without the support of Sandwell’s communities.

Official bodies from the police to council departments and the courts need to improve the way they support the Sandwell public in tackling troublemakers. In turn our communities will be given the confidence to work alongside them and beat this blight on their lives.

Cllr Terry Williams
Chair, Select Committee on Anti Social Behaviour
1. INTRODUCTION

The issues relating to anti-social behaviour (ASB), its causes and impact, as the Select Committee has discovered, are very wide and varied. Attempts to closely define what is meant are often unhelpful and so in approaching its work the Committee has included any activity or behaviour (criminal or otherwise) that causes nuisance, annoyance or distress to others. This report aims to provide an overview of the intensive work undertaken by the Select Committee in a relatively short time period. It does not aim to be a definitive and final statement on the issue of ASB and how it should be tackled in Sandwell.

The report summarises the work done by and evidence presented to the Committee and the conclusions that the Committee has drawn. Most importantly it makes recommendations, which, if pursued, the Committee believes can have a significant impact on tackling the issues surrounding ASB, and bring about improvements in community safety and the quality of life to be enjoyed by the people of Sandwell.

Whilst the report signifies the end of the Select Committee's work, it does not signal an end to the Councils' efforts to address this key issue for local people. The Committee believes that this report will be a significant milestone along the way to improving the way that the Council and its partners work together.

The issues involved in ASB are so wide ranging and often complex that it has not been possible in the time given to the Select Committee to look in depth at every one of them. As the Committee was conscious of the immediacy on many of the problems faced by our communities it has paid most attention to policies, plans and action aimed at bringing a quick response to problems.

The Committee has met with and heard evidence from a very broad range of people including those who suffer from anti-social behaviour and those whose primary work function is to tackle the concerns.

At an early stage the Select Committee adopted a framework as a way of organising its work and thinking. This framework centred on a three stage model:

- PREVENTION
- ENFORCEMENT
- RESETTLEMENT
PREVENTION

The Select Committee has heard evidence which would indicate that whilst the motivation of some anti-social behaviour/activity is a deliberate intention to cause distress, it could also be unwitting (but which nevertheless causes distress).

Unwitting ASB could be caused by the lack of awareness of individuals that their behaviour is a problem. This clearly points to the need to raise peoples’ awareness and to send clear (consistent and constant) messages to everyone about what is reasonable and acceptable and what is not. Those who continue to indulge in ASB then have little excuse and should expect to be dealt with accordingly. This is not always straightforward as there may be exceptional cases where the behaviour is not actually always within the individuals control e.g. people with mental health problems.

In many situations the two parties involved hold differing views or attitudes about what is reasonable. Nevertheless there must be a broadly acceptable test of reasonableness in any given situation as this is the ultimate test of whether behaviour is acceptable.

In any given situation the identification of anti-social behaviour will depend on the tolerance and attitudes of the person(s) who perceives that there is a problem.

The starting point should be that people generally want to get on with one another and that once people are made aware that their behaviour is causing annoyance or distress that they will accept the reasonableness argument and go on to modify or change their behaviour. This may not be easy for everyone (e.g. people with poorly developed life- or coping skills) and therefore help and support may need to be provided in order to successfully to address these problems.

The role of those who influence or shape people’s attitudes is vital. The suggestion is that people’s attitudes and sense of respect, community etc are formed from an early stage and therefore the role of parents and the family is vital in promoting a sense of citizenship and respect for others. Thus the role of “prevention” and those services which relate to young people were seen as a vital are for any attempt to tackle anti-social behaviour. The Committee recognised that such preventative approaches are long term strategies whereas the concerns of local communities today are more immediate.
ENFORCEMENT

However, a level of “education” and support cannot be infinite. Once everything that could be reasonably done to help someone (prevent someone) from committing anti-social behaviour has been done, but they persist, we need to have in place robust measures to deal with such people.

RESETTLEMENT

The implementation of enforcement measures may act as a “reinforcer” to the education process and make people willing to change their behaviour and this “second chance” needs to be supported by services. Due attention also needs to be paid to the needs of victims and those who have the courage to come forward as witnesses to assist in the process of tackling anti-social behaviour.

The Committee recognises that anti-social behaviour is carried out by all ages. During its evidence collection, however, there has been a great emphasis on young people as perpetrators. The Committee has been as great pains to ensure that misconceptions about who anti-social behaviour perpetrators are not reinforced.

This is particular relevant in respect of young people and council tenants. Despite this desire, a great deal of the work and conclusions of the Committee do focus on young people. This is partly in recognition of the fact that children and young people are the parents of the future and it essential to the long term reduction of anti-social behaviour that future generations have a strong sense of citizenship and are willing and able to act as positive role models to their children.
2. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Drugs and Alcohol

The misuse of drugs and alcohol is a serious problem in the borough. In many cases the causes and impact of both forms of misuse are related to serious social issues and as a result there is a pressing need for much closer co-operation with a variety of agencies.

Drugs and alcohol misuse needs to be challenged through a rigorous programme of enforcement and public education. They are both a major source of anti social behaviour in our communities, e.g. violence and theft, and the Committee was impressed with the work being done by the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team on a comparatively limited budget - although there was concern about the imbalance of the use resources with most of the funding directed at tackling drug abuse. If anything, alcohol misuse appears to be a bigger problem in the borough (and indeed the UK) rather than drug misuse. The Drug Strategy Co-ordinator, Ken Stringer, informed the Committee that alcohol misuse, though the biggest cause of ASB, had the least resources targeted at treatment. Statistics showed that more young people experimented with alcohol than drugs.

The Committee believes that in order to break the cycle of alcohol and drug misuse, the education programmes available locally need to be stepped up, especially in schools and through youth services where such a programme is likely to have most effect.

Recommendations:

- *That all Sandwell organisations involved in tackling problems of drugs and alcohol misuse in the borough step up the programme of public education and, in particular aim this programme at young people in order to break the cycle of misuse.*

- *That consideration should be given to merging the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team into the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in order to support its work in reducing the problems of misuse and addiction which are often at the root of crime and anti social behaviour. Consideration should also be given to increasing funding, particularly to combat the growing problem of alcohol misuse.*
Communications/ Publicity

The Government’s White Paper “Respect and Responsibility – Taking a Stand Against Anti-Social Behaviour” highlighted the need for the “community to set clear standards of behaviour – the police, local authorities and others must enforce these standards and take swift, effective action if they are breached.

Whilst the Select Committee has found it difficult to encapsulate in a single definition of what constitutes Anti-Social Behaviour, and recognises the need to have a flexible approach to this, it is clear that communities need agree common standards of behaviour (using the reasonableness test) then publicise, raise awareness and understanding of this and illustrate what the consequences may be for individuals involved in such behaviour.

In addition, there is a need to keep local communities informed about what the Council and its partners are doing to tackle ASB (also communication within and between partner organisations), publicise success and the good work that is already going on in Sandwell. Those who are making a contribution need to be recognised and appreciated.

In the Interim Report there was a recommendation relating to the possible introduction of annual good practice award for individuals and organisations involved in work to combat anti social behaviour. The Council has indicated that it agrees in principle with the concept of recognising local achievements in this field and is committed to working out the practical details of how this might be implemented.

Again in the Interim Report the Committee was agreed that the concept of publishing details of those subject to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) should be pursued. This would serve a number of purposes including allowing the public to see that positive action is being taken and actively involving communities in reporting breaches of ASBOs. The Committee praises the recent Express and Star campaign which published photographs and details of people who are subjects of ASBOs in the Black Country.

**Recommendation:**

- (From Interim Report) That Sandwell should print and deliver leaflets with a photo and details of people subject to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) within the relevant geographical area. Where ASBOs are made on a boroughwide basis, consideration should be given to publicity via the mass media e.g. local newspapers.
Home Visits

Anti social behaviour undermines communities' sense of security and confidence. If ignored, a small problem can snowball into a big one. Good estate management by Council and Sandwell Homes staff has a key role to play in helping to detect and tackle these problems. Where families or individuals within families fail to respond to formal approaches from authority, joint working by the police and housing managers can provide the answers. The presence of a police offer and housing manager on someone’s doorstep does demonstrate how seriously the matter is being taken, especially if backed up by an Acceptable Behaviour Contract. As solutions can lie in both civil and criminal fields, (and increasingly a mixture of both), offenders may be less inclined to believe they can escape punishment if they witness such joint working.

On a more positive note, families may be given encouragement to participate in legitimate community activities and support projects. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts are an effective tool for dealing with low level crime. Their use will not criminalise children in the way that Anti Social Behaviour Orders do and a holistic view is taken of the problem, through taking into account a young person’s educational and social development. If families do not co-operate, tougher action will inevitably follow.

Recommendation:

- The partnership approach of both police and senior housing staff making personal visits to the homes of people causing anti social behaviour be adopted throughout Sandwell. The use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts as part of this approach is recognised as a positive way forward.
COMMUNITIES

Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (BME) Groups

As highlighted before, everyone is affected by anti-social behaviour in one way or another even though some communities, such as the elderly, feel that they are more affected by such behaviour. The evidence that the Committee heard from BME community representatives suggested that BME groups experience anti-social behaviour in the same way that other communities do, although the motivation in some cases may be racial. However, it was noted that the extent of the problems experienced was difficult to assess because some communities tended to keep their concerns and fears within the community rather than reporting them.

One particular concern raised was an increase in anti-social behaviour incidents in areas of Sandwell where right-wing political parties are active. This is similar to the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the borough as the result of the extreme reporting by the national tabloid newspapers. Sandwell is proud of its reputation as a tolerant, multi ethnic community and needs to act to prevent the spread of racism and counter myths lies circulated about people from other ethnic groups.

Recommendation:

- That Sandwell Council and its partners take a particularly robust stand against forms of anti-social behaviour which have a racial motivation.

Older People

Older people feel themselves to be particularly vulnerable to ASB and they represent the biggest source of complaints logged by the police and council. Ironically, a significant number of retired people, who have so many years experience which could be passed on, often find themselves in conflict with young people. Yet, as was reported in the Interim Report, children and young people are themselves often on the receiving end of ASB.

The Committee was disturbed to hear that one group of older people refused to take part in a cross-generation project because of their concerns about problems being caused by young people in their area.
There was also evidence of widespread disillusionment amongst older people about the ability of organisations such as then police and council to tackle ASB.

There is a clear need to rebuild confidence amongst the older members of our communities and show them that action will be taken against those who make their lives unbearable. There is also a need to promote tolerance and understanding between different generations and communities. Perhaps older people need to remember that they were young once and that they were not always perfectly behaved. The important thing is that older people in our communities have a wealth of experience and are the communities’ grandparents who can help and offer advice and support to younger people in any attempt to change bad behaviour.

**Recommendations:**

- *That the police and council in Sandwell work closely with agencies such as AgeWell on a programme to rebuild confidence and trust in services which can reduce the problems of ASB which impact on older peoples’ lives.*

- *That Sandwell Council appoints a member of its Cabinet as a champion for older people as part of the process of rebuilding confidence.*

**Mental Health**

People with mental health needs can be both the perpetrators and victims of anti social behaviour. More often than not it is the latter. Care in the Community, although it has offered many benefits to people with mental health needs, has also meant that the number of cases of both types has increased in recent years. Council housing staff and police have been offered some limited training in identifying such cases and awareness in how to deal with problems.

Hazel Murphy, Director of Social Care for Sandwell Mental Health and Social Care Trust, reminded the Committee that there may be link between the fact that young people are perceived as responsible for a significant proportion of ASB and that in the last 30 years there has been a significant increase in the poor mental health of children and young people particularly in deprived areas. There is a need to ensure that all parties likely to be involved in such cases know how best to support people who are among the most vulnerable in society.
Recommendation

• **That existing training for relevant police officers and staff in council departments on how to recognise a person’s mental health needs and ways in which people can then be supported - whether as a perpetrator or victim - continues and is expanded where appropriate.**

Local Schemes

In its Interim Report the Committee highlighted the need to make the most of the resources that are available to tackle anti-social behaviour by concentrating efforts on the most serious cases and those geographical hotspots which are the cause of greatest concern.

Since that time the Committee has been made aware of a variety of local projects in Sandwell that are dealing with anti-social behaviour either explicitly/directly or by undertaking work, e.g. setting up activities for young people, which will have a positive impact on reducing anti-social behaviour problems. The Committee also feels that local responses to local needs have the best chance of success.

In early 2004, the Chair of the Select Committee, Cllr. Terry Williams, decided to put some of what the Select Committee had learnt into practice via a pilot task force in the Tantany area of his Ward (see Appendix 5). This has been done in co-operation with the West Bromwich Town Team and the Tantany Tenants and Residents Association and has produced some early successes. It is however accepted that both short and long term action plans are needed and the following recommendations come from the early findings of this pilot project:

Recommendations

• **That greater use be made of localised ASB Task Groups in order to pull together key players who can bring about changes and to monitor progress. Such Task Groups will benefit from the sharing of information.**

• **That local Tenants and Residents Associations should take the long term responsibility for such Task Groups and be given training in how best to tackle the many ways in which anti-social manifests itself.**
Alleyways and Footpaths

The Committee has heard evidence about nuisance caused by ASB associated with alleyways and footpaths. In many cases only those causing problems use these areas and the Committee supports the idea of restricting access in such cases. The Committee reviewed evidence of the successful implementation of “alleygating” schemes both locally and further a field.

Despite the introduction of new legislation the Committee was concerned that there was still confusion about if and how problematic footpaths/alleyways can be closed.

Recommendation:

• That the Council produces and publishes clear guidelines/protocols on how problematic footpaths/alleyways can be dealt with to reduce ASB.

Schools

The Committee was concerned to hear of from local communities of problems associated with littering and anti-social behaviour by children outside their schools and the reluctance sometimes for school staff to take action.

The Committee supports the Local Education Authority statement that head teachers have responsibility for the conduct of the children in their charge both inside the school and in the immediate surrounding community and should take appropriate action.

Recommendation:

• That head teachers take greater responsibility for the conduct of their pupils in and around their schools, and take appropriate action to address anti-social behaviour activity which affects the communities of which they are an integral part. This area of responsibility should include pupils going to and returning from school
Sandwell Community Information & Participation Service (SCIPS)

SCIPS works with Sandwell tenants and residents all across the borough’s 6 towns, learning at first hand from its members about ASB. One of the lessons learnt has been that there is under-reporting of ASB to the police because of a belief that little, if any, action will result.

There appears to be unsatisfactory variations in the help and support that people get from Sandwell’s housing offices. Complaints were made about inconsistent information given out by some housing offices, mislaid or lost evidence sheets and a perception that housing office staff do not follow a standard ASB reporting procedure.

Recommendations:

- **Housing offices and surgeries are on the front line of the fight against ASB and that there is a need to review and standardise ASB reporting procedures across all housing offices to ensure that a consistency in the quality of service offered.**

- **That where a case is being handled by a housing office, written communication, at appropriate levels, be sent out to keep complainants informed about progress.**
Anti Social Behaviour Team

Several recommendations included in the Committee’s Interim Report focussed on increasing the capacity of the team and its work. The first step towards this, the appointment of a Head of Service with a remit to include the co-ordination of Council services to tackle ASB, has been taken.

The Interim Head of Service, Kevin Dennis, has the task to start to bring together several services in order to provide a faster and more efficient response to ASB issues. The Committee will not be making fresh recommendations as the Interim Head of Service’s work is to take place over a short time frame and such recommendations would probably be soon out of date. However, he has taken up the Committee’s offer to work closely with him for the next few weeks in order to pass on the results of the Committee’s year long inquiry and help him to reach his own final recommendation to Cabinet in due course.

In view of this the Committee wishes to repeat two of its recommendations made in the Interim Report.

**Recommendations:**

- **That the Council increases the capacity of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team in order to be able to deal more quickly and efficiently with a greater number of cases.**

- **That the Council should take responsibility for providing a single point of contact and initial processing of all anti-social behaviour cases regardless of the tenure of the victim/offender.**

Social Inclusion

Sometimes Social Inclusion staff can find themselves in the unenviable position of supporting the most difficult people in our communities while being called upon to help the police and other departments who need to act to prevent on-going problems of anti social behaviour. The twin responsibilities of staff need not cause a problem as Sandwell will continue to give both individuals and families every opportunity to change their ways by responding to help that is made available.
However there comes a point when unresponsive people must face the consequences of their actions.

Some service areas within the council have reported problems in getting the support of Social Inclusion staff. In fact the Committee heard evidence that there have been difficulties in getting appropriate and consistent levels of attendance from Social Inclusion staff at meetings aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour. In response to these concerns, the Director for Social Inclusion and Health is currently working on a series of protocols for her staff which should lead to an improved working relationship between the department and other council officers.

Recommendation:

- That the Council’s Social Inclusion and Health Thematic Area consult widely with partners in order to draw up protocols which will ensure staff make appropriate contributions to supporting work to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Absence from School

Sandwell’s drive to improve school standards is being hampered in part by improper absences from schools and the level of truancy. The Local Education Authority has programmes in place to address both issues and the Government is giving LEAs the tools to enforce these actions.

The Committee has identified two major problems. Firstly, there are parents who take their children on holiday during term time and this is exacerbated by those who choose to take children out of school for extended holidays abroad. Secondly, there are the children who regularly truant from school and as a result often become involved in anti social behaviour.

The Committee’s concern from the point of view of ASB, is the second group and it supports the Local Education Authority strategy which will assist the early detection of problem cases, offer pupil and parents improved support and monitor cases more closely to try to ensure that they do not drop out of mainstream education. The Committee notes that under the scheme, secondary schools will have to meet attendance targets of 90.9 per cent by 2006 while cutting long term truancy cases and exclusions by 10 per cent each year.

The Committee supports the use of financial penalties against parents who fail to get their children to school but only as a measure of last resort where LEA officers deem it is most appropriate.
Recommendations:

- **That every effort is made to ensure that the LEA targets of a minimum attendance level of 90.9 per cent by 2006 for Sandwell Secondary Schools and the cutting of long-term truancy cases and exclusion by 10 per cent each year be achieved**

- **That performance against these targets be monitored annually by the Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.**

Licensing Laws

The Committee's Interim Report made a recommendation based on police concerns about the lack of an official door staff registration scheme for pubs and clubs in Sandwell. The police consider this to be a major cause of disorder on and outside licensed premises.

The Committee heard evidence from the Council’s Safety and Licensing Team and were partly reassured that although no official registration scheme was in place, the Licensing Committee paid careful attention to all matters related to pub and club safety before granting or renewing a licence.

The Committee notes that the Council Leader joined us in calling for the early introduction of such a scheme and that all premises covered by licences to sell alcohol must be covered by a national scheme once the new Licensing Laws come into force in October 2004.

The recommendation about an early introduction of this scheme is included in the final report so as to serve as a reminder to the holders of licences, that where there is a requirement for door staff to be registered and this is not met, then licensees are in breach of their conditions and subject to immediate review.

The Committee expressed concern about the extent of the liberalisation of licensing laws and noted that even late night take-aways will be able to apply for such licences. Whilst the granting of licences to these types of premises is not guaranteed, the Committee was concerned that the ones that are granted may add to the sum total of ASB being experienced in the Borough.

The Committee calls upon the Licensing Committee and future sub-committees to give careful consideration to the likelihood of anti-social behaviour occurring as the result of such applications.
Once licenses have been granted, swift action to remove them should be taken to remove them, where the evidence demonstrates anti-social behaviour has increased as a result.

The Committee believes that all councillors should receive a list of such license application, in the same way in which planning application are circulated, so that councillors and residents can raise local concerns, if necessary.

Recommendations:

- That a system of registration for door supervision staff in Sandwell be implemented as a matter of urgency

- The Committee is concerned about the possible significant increase in applications to sell alcohol - especially from premises such as late night take-a-ways which might contribute to an increase in the amount of ASB experienced by communities and urge that local people’s views be taken into account when Licensing Panels are considering such applications

- Ward councillors will be aware of local circumstances which may provide reasons why a license to sell alcohol should not be granted. The Committee therefore recommends that Licensing Panels circulate a list of application to councillors for comments in a similar way to that done by the planning committee.

“Proof of Age” Schemes

The issue of “Proof of Age” schemes was highlighted both by young people and council officers responsible for promoting a local scheme. The Committee recognised that a properly implemented scheme can greatly assist agencies (such as Environment Health and Trading Standards) in their work to tackle the sale of age restricted products such as alcohol, fireworks, knives and intoxicating solvents, which can contribute to anti-social behaviour.

Recommendations:

- That the Council and its partners do all they can to promote and develop the “Proof of Age” scheme across the whole borough.
• That consideration be given to requiring all future applicants for licenses to sell alcohol be registered with the scheme

Youth Services

In its Interim Report the Committee noted that young people are often looked on as the perpetrators of Anti-Social Behaviour and whilst it cannot be denied that they do often contribute to the problem, it needs to be emphasised that young people are also victims.

The Committee was concerned that there is a relative shortage of opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities and highlighted the important role that both Council and voluntary sector youth services have to play in providing positive activities for young people (especially in school holidays).

The Committee heard evidence about the valuable work being undertaken by the Council's detached youth team and recognized that it has a key role to play in reducing anti-social behaviour. The Committee noted that at present there are up to 42 part time detached youth workers in the borough, with teams of 7 workers operating in each of the Six Towns. However, this amounts to only 1.5 full time equivalent posts and the Committee felt that there was room to expand this important service.

The Committee also wishes to highlight the importance of the voluntary sector contribution to youth work. Many voluntary groups provide a committed and cost effective service to the community and this is now being recognised why the council through greater co-operation and the provision of grant aid to local groups.

Recommendations:

• That the Youth Service take a lead on increasing capacity for general youth provision within “safe environments”, in all areas and all year round

• That the Youth Service take a lead on further developing a general programme of activities during schools holidays to engage as many young people as possible

• That improvements should be sought in the range and methods of publicity to promote the activities that take place during term time and weekends.
That the Youth Service needs to develop a system of identifying the success in such schemes and what impact they have had on Anti-Social Behaviour.

That the Youth Service gives consideration to expanding the numbers of workers in its already stretched detached teams.

That the Council continues to develop partnerships with the voluntary sector provide grant aid in recognition of the sector’s important contribution to youth work in the Borough.

**Urban Ranger Service**

Sandwell’s Team of 14 Urban Rangers have to cover 7 Urban Town Parks, 21 Neighbourhood parks, 18 designated Playing Fields sites and 44 Neighbourhood Green Spaces in the Borough. An estimated 7.5 million people visit these facilities annually. However, nowadays the public view these facilities as a source of ASB rather than places of leisure and relaxation. The over stretched Urban rangers are also called upon to deal with ASB problems of verbal assault and nuisance behaviour in public libraries and community centres. The calls come from both council staff and the police. This is in contrast to occasions where Urban Rangers have called on the police for back up and have experienced lengthy delays or where the police have been unable to attend. Some problems can only be tackled by the use of police powers and a number of councils around the country have introduced enforcement powers for their ranger services or have established Community Safety Enforcement Teams.

The Committee welcomed the developing partnerships between the urban ranger service and local Friends Groups which are linked to some Sandwell parks and open spaces. The Committee was pleased to see that the urban Ranger service, along with other Council staff involved in safety and security work, are likely to form part of the Council’s new Community Safety Division, as recommended in the Committee’s Interim Report.

**Recommendations:**

- That the Council consider the results of Cllr. Keith Davies’ report with regard to expanding the range of services available in parks and green spaces which can have a positive impact on reducing ASB

- That the Council further develops the Friends Group initiative in partnership with local communities.
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Police and Neighbourhood Watch

The Interim Report highlighted a need for either the joining together of the two police Operational Command Units (OCUs) in Sandwell or, at least, improved co-operation between the two OCUs. The Committee recommended this because of evidence from a number of people that meetings were being duplicated and competing priorities between the OCUs did not lead to the most effective policing in the Borough.

Co-operation between the two OCUs has shown considerable improvement. This owes much to the excellent working relationship between the two current OCU commanders and the Committee would like to see consideration being given to how the new arrangements can be supported in such a way that they are not solely dependent on the continued presence of these specific officers.

Another theme which came from people giving both written and verbal evidence was the desire to see more police on the beat. In one Council Ward where extra police officers were put on the streets for a two week period, there were positive comments from the public and a big drop in reports of anti-social behaviour. The Committee believes that this approach has merits and has positive benefits for local people. The Committee believes that it would be beneficial for the police to give consideration as to how more “high profile” policing can be achieved in Sandwell. The Committee heard evidence from a number of individuals who expressed the belief that re-introducing the system of police houses within communities and encouraging officers to travel to and from work in uniform would assist this process.

A number of different forms of community ‘police’ can be found on our streets nowadays - they range from neighbourhood wardens to Police Community Support Officers. In the Interim Report the Committee recommended that closer working should be developed between the different patrolling agencies and still supports the development of a “mixed economy” patrolling strategy for the Borough.

Further to this the Committee thinks that Special Constables have a vital role to play in this work and note the recent campaign in Sandwell to recruit more. The Committee believes that the Police and Home Office should look at further ways of attracting more people from everyday lives into the ranks of special constables and hope that the recruitment campaign will be on-going in Sandwell.
The Committee has had a great deal of contact with members of Neighbourhood Watch and feel that it is seriously underrated in its work to prevent problems which blight our communities. Co-ordinators often call for greater communication with the police, are disappointed about the call-out response they get - and would welcome even the reimbursement of the many telephone calls they make to keep ‘Watches’ alive. Co-ordinators are often the unsung heroes of our communities and contribute to keeping down crime and ASB as well as catching the culprits.

We note that the police in Sandwell have increased support for Neighbourhood Watch but believe that much more needs to be done.

The Select Committee believe there is a need to call a conference of Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators to agree an Action Plan for how their numbers can be increased and how their need for extra support can be met.

The Committee considered a recommendation from the Select Committee on Community Cohesion that Sandwell Council should take responsibility for Neighbourhood Watch. However, the Neighbourhood Watch members who gave evidence to this Select Committee felt that, whilst it welcomes close and productive links with any organisation that shares its goals, it wishes to maintain its close ties with the police and believe that any proposal which weakens this would prove to be a retrograde step.

**Recommendations:**

- **West Midlands Police consider how the improved collaborative working between Sandwell’s two OCUs can be developed and maintained regardless of who the most senior officers are.**

- **That West Midlands Police and its partners give further consideration how more “high profile” policing to tackle anti-social behaviour can be achieved in Sandwell.**

- **That West Midlands Police increase its efforts to recruit more Special Constables from all communities in Sandwell and investigate further ways of making the role more attractive to applicants.**
• That West Midlands Police continues to consult with Neighbourhood Watch members in order to develop and introduce an Action Plan to support existing schemes and introduce new ones throughout Sandwell.

• That the Select Committee believes that the close relationship between the police and Neighbourhood Watch should continue and rejects any move to tie NW in with the council as this has no popular support amongst its Sandwell members.

Courts

The Committee’s Interim Report emphasised how vital it is to have in place a fast, effective and transparent system of criminal justice to deal with the most intractable cases of ASB. In order to achieve there needs to be effective co-ordination between each agency within the criminal justice system and with other agencies such as the Council. The Committee noted that protocols have now been introduced to achieve better outcomes but feels that there is still a need for improvement in the way ASB cases are dealt with. One suggestion made was that Stipendiary Magistrates might be introduced to local courts to focus specifically on cases of ASB.

During the course of its work the Committee heard evidence about new legislation and in particular the introduction of Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (CRASBOs) and recognised the benefit that could result if these powers are used appropriately. Recently a defendant was the first to be made subject to a CRASBO by Sandwell magistrates.

The Committee’s Interim Report also included a recommendation that consideration be given to improving and expanding services available to witnesses and that adequate and appropriate provision for victims and witnesses in court buildings should form an integral part of the planning/design processes for a new courthouse.

The Courts have responded positively to this recommendation especially in relation to the new courthouse in Sandwell. A site for the new court has now been secured and a planning application for outline consent has recently been submitted. It is anticipated at this stage that work will commence in late 2006 with completion in mid to late 2008.

Part of the development brief includes a design criteria that there be provided "adequate and appropriate provision for victims and witnesses". This will be developed as part of the output specification.
The West Midlands Magistrates Courts Committee's Head of Facilities has indicated that local involvement is key to ensuring delivery of the right facilities and they are looking to establish user group(s) at some point during this year.

**Recommendations:**

- That local courts make appropriate use of new powers in respect of issuing Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (CRASBOs)

- That the Courts ensure that plans for providing facilities for witnesses and victims are carried through.

**Witness Support**

The Select Committee believes that local people who are prepared to act as witnesses in order to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour should receive a high level of support from all those agencies and organisations involved with them.

The Select Committee believes there is room for improvement and was impressed with the level of care and support provided in Manchester by the City Council’s Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and the Pilot scheme operated by the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Committee heard evidence about an excellent Victim/Witness Support scheme which has been piloted in West Bromwich by the Crown Prosecution Service. Once a not guilty plea has been entered the scheme offers help to witness - sometimes in partnership with Sandwell Victim Support.

The result has been a dramatic increase from 36 per cent to 86 per cent of successfully completed trials. This type of support is essential if more witnesses, who are fearful of repercussions/retaliation, are to be encouraged to come forward in order to tackle local problems.

**Recommendation:**

*That the pilot scheme offering support for witnesses and managed by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) be made available across the whole Borough.*
Attacks by hooligans on emergency services personnel and vehicles attending incidents are spreading around the country. In the West Midlands closed circuit television (CCTV) has been installed on 16 appliances by the West Midlands Fire Service. Here in Sandwell, CCTV has been fitted to appliances at Tipton, West Bromwich and Wednesbury Fire Stations.

All three stations report their staff experiencing both physical and verbal abuse as well as a noted increase in stone and bottle throwing during attendance at fires.

The West Midlands Ambulance Service report that similar types of incidents are less frequent and have no plans at present to install CCTV on their vehicles.

However, the Committee believes that our emergency services need to be given the fullest possible support in dealing with these hooligans and would like to see police giving some priority to arresting culprits and courts to dealing with them in the strongest manner.

**Recommendation:**

- *That the police make maximum use of CCTV footage which identifies hooligans attacking emergency services personnel and property and that the courts recognise the seriousness of such offences and give appropriate sentences to those putting lives at risk.*
3. WAY FORWARD

In carrying out its work the Committee has been anxious to find out as much as possible about groups and organisations who are similarly interested in, and committed to, tackling ASB. This has highlighted a wide range of groups some of which pre-date the introduction of the ASB Select Committee and which will continue to operate after the Select Committee’s current work ends.

One of the most significant of these groups is Sandwell Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership’s (Safer Sandwell Partnership) Safer Estates Group.

Many of the Select Committee’s concerns about the future direction of work to tackle ASB in Sandwell were addressed at a recent Anti-Social Behaviour Summit organised by the Safer Sandwell Partnership. At this meeting it was agreed that the current focus of the Safer Estates Group was too narrow and that it should become a more general ASB Task Group. This Task Group will include amongst its membership representatives from the main Council service areas, Police and emergency services and social landlords.

In addition to the specific recommendations made in this report the Select Committee has been anxious to ensure that the focus on this important issue is not lost and that the work of the Select Committee is recognised and built upon.

The Committee believes that plans already in train to appoint an ASB Co-ordinator within the new Community Safety Division of the Council will provide a focus for monitoring progress including the responses to the recommendations contained in this report.

The Select Committee would welcome the opportunity to review progress in 12 months time. In the meantime, the Committee looks to the Council’s Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety and ASB to act as a champion and ensure that all Council Service areas make a full and effective contribution to tackling ASB.

Recommendations:

- That the Safer Sandwell Partnership’s Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group acts as the Borough’s chief co-ordinating body in relation to partnership working.
• That the Council’s Scrutiny Management Board establish a Scrutiny Panel (which would involve existing members of the Select Committee and other interested parties) to undertake an annual review of progress on tackling ASB, with the help of the ASB Co-ordinator and ASB Task Group.

• That the ASB Task Group takes responsibility for monitoring the recommendations contained in the Select Committee’s final report and agrees to ensure that both quarterly progress reports are submitted to the appropriate Council Cabinet and that an annual report is presented to an appropriate Council scrutiny panel.
## 4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref. No.</th>
<th>Lead</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>That all Sandwell organisations involved in tackling problems of drugs and alcohol misuse in the borough step up the programme of public education and, in particular aim this programme at young people in order to break the cycle of misuse.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>That consideration should be given to merging the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team into the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in order to support its work in reducing the problems of misuse and addiction which are often at the root of crime and anti social behaviour. Consideration should also be given to increasing funding, particularly to combat the growing problem of alcohol misuse.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>(From Interim Report) That Sandwell should print and deliver leaflets with a photo and details of people subject to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) within the relevant geographical area. Where ASBOs are made on a boroughwide basis, consideration should be given to publicity via the mass media e.g. local newspapers.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The partnership approach of both police and senior housing staff making personal visits to the homes of people causing anti social behaviour be adopted throughout Sandwell. The use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts as part of this approach is recognised as a positive way forward.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>That Sandwell Council and its partners takes a particularly robust stand against forms of anti-social behaviour which have a racial motivation</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>That the police and council in Sandwell work closely with agencies such as AgeWell on a programme to rebuild confidence and trust in services which can reduce the problems of ASB which impact on older peoples’ lives.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>That Sandwell Council appoints a member of its Cabinet as a champion for older people as part of the process of rebuilding confidence.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>That relevant police officers and staff in council departments be provided with appropriate levels of training on how to recognise a person’s mental health needs and ways in which people can then be supported - whether as a perpetrator or victim.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>That greater use be made of localised ASB Task Groups in order to bring together key players who can bring about changes and to monitor progress. Such Task Groups will benefit from the sharing of information.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>That local Tenants and Residents Associations should take the long term responsibility for such Task Groups and be given training in how best to tackle the many ways in which anti-social manifests itself.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>That the Council produces and publishes clear guidelines/protocols on how problematic footpaths/alleyways can be dealt with to reduce ASB</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>That head teachers take greater responsibility for the conduct of their pupils in and around their schools, and take appropriate action to address anti-social behaviour activity which affects the communities of which they are an integral part. This area of responsibility should include pupils going to and returning from school</td>
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<td>Housing offices and surgeries are on the front line of the fight against ASB and that there is a need to review and standardise ASB reporting procedures across all housing offices to ensure that a consistency in the quality of service offered.</td>
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<td>That where a case is being handled by a housing office, written communication, at appropriate levels, be sent out to keep complainants informed about progress.</td>
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<td>That the Council increases the capacity of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team in order to be able to deal more quickly and efficiently with a greater number of cases.</td>
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<td>That the Council should take responsibility for providing a single point of contact and initial processing of all anti-social behaviour cases regardless of the tenure of the victim/offender.</td>
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<td>That the Council’s Social Inclusion and Health Thematic Area consult widely with partners in order to draw up protocols which will ensure staff make appropriate contributions to supporting work to tackle anti-social behaviour.</td>
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<td>That every effort is made to ensure that the LEA targets of a minimum attendance level of 90.9 per cent by 2006 for Sandwell Secondary Schools and the cutting of long-term truancy cases and exclusion by 10 per cent each year be achieved.</td>
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<td>That performance against these targets be monitored annually by the Education &amp; Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.</td>
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<td>That a system of registration for door supervision staff in Sandwell be implemented as a matter of urgency</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>The Committee is concerned about the possible significant increase in applications to sell alcohol - especially from premises such as late night take-a-ways which might contribute to an increase in the amount of ASB experienced by communities and urge that local people’s views be taken into account when Licensing Panels are considering such applications</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Ward councillors will be aware of local circumstances which may provide reasons why a license to sell alcohol should not be granted. The Committee therefore recommends that Licensing Panels circulate a list of application to councillors for comments in a similar way to that done by the planning committee.</td>
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<td>That the Council and its partners do all they can to promote and develop this scheme across the whole borough.</td>
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Appendix 1

The Select Committee’s Terms of Reference:

1. To explore how existing and potential structures and processes of the Council and its key partners can address the Government’s objective of achieving “a society in which people respect each others’ property, respect the streets and public spaces and respect neighbours’ rights to live free from harassment and distress”.

2. To consider the implications of the Government’s Anti-Social Behaviour Bill and any relevant legislation.

3. To explore existing and potential structures and processes by which the Council and its key partners (including the Police) can engage with the communities of Sandwell with a view to addressing community concerns on the incidence of anti-social behaviour.

4. To submit a report to Council on its findings with regard to what specific measures can be implemented to strengthen the Council’s commitment to reducing anti-social behaviour in the Borough.

Membership

Councillor Williams (Chair)
Councillor Archer
Councillor Mrs L R Horton
Councillor S L Smith
Councillor Mrs Webb
Councillor Mrs Whitehouse

Liberal Democrat Substitute Member - Councillor Wilson.
Conservative Substitute Member - Councillor Grainger.
Since the Summer 2003 the Sandwell Website has hosted a discussion forum on Anti-Social Behaviour. Seven questions were posed and in total 74 messages have been posted.

Questions that were posed and number of responses:

1. **What types of behaviour should be classed as anti-social?**
   
   30 responses between August.03 - January.04

2. **How much of these types of behaviour is taking place in the Borough?**
   
   26 responses between July.03 – April.04

3. **What is the Council doing and what could it do better?**
   
   7 Responses between September .03 - March .04

4. **Where could better co-ordination of effort be achieved within the Council?**
   
   0 responses

5. **What are other key organisations doing?**
   
   5 Responses between August.03 - October.03

6. **How could the Council link up to other organisations to achieve better outcomes for local people?**
   
   3 responses between October .03 – November.03

7. **What do you think should be included?**
   
   3 responses between December.03 – April.04
The following summary sets out to capture some of the emerging themes/concerns. The summary headings are as follows:

- Definitions/problems  
  Pages 38
- Causes  
  Pages 39
- How much of a problem?  
  Pages 41 - 42
- Solutions  
  Pages 42 - 45
- Council/Key Organisation actions  
  Pages 45 - 47
- General  
  Pages 47 - 48
Definitions/Problems

“I would say that ASB is anything that causes nuisance to other people”

- Spitting
- Swearing in the street
- Taking illegal drugs
- Drinking alcohol (getting drunk) in the street and housing estates.
- 'Cable boxes' are a magnet to youths
- Smoking
- Making a messing in public areas
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Fighting
- Stealing cars
- Robbing people
- Racism
- Dropping litter, especially chewing gum.
- Nuisance such as intimidating gangs of youths hanging around on street corners;
- Constantly burning rubbish or bonfires close to houses
- Animals:

“Chickens … waking you up between 2.45am and 6.30am"

“….letting dogs make messes in the street,”

- Ball games:

“The continuous ball games that are happening. It is damaging people’s property. They are playing with heavy balls and are generally being a nuisance by climbing over huge fences the balls have gone over and retrieving the balls.”

- Noise (inc. loud music or excessive noise):

“Adults and children who hang outside your house at night making noise, and also in the early hours of the morning”

- Young people’s behaviour:

“Kids running around housing estates, across peoples gardens, round peoples cars, dropping litter and screaming their heads off is antisocial behaviour.

But because they are minors nothing is done and this is not classed as antisocial behaviour but it is.
The older residents cannot challenge these "young children" for fear of verbal abuse and damage to your property from both the youngsters and their parents and feel trapped and terrorized.

This was a nice estate with lots of small houses for single people or older couples however the council permits lots of extensions to the houses and the demographic of the estate changes and the residents suffer. Now we have more larger family homes we have the problems of all the children yet the council who allow all the extensions (presumably to get extra income from the fees) do nothing to make provision for these kids to play”

**Underlying causes**

**Lack of respect:**

“As a young person in Sandwell, I believe that the young people of today have lost all sense of respect! From early age young people experience behaviour which is anti-social but which is presented to them as normal”

**Ignorance:**

“Teenagers and young children seem to be completely oblivious to realise what they are causing is wrong. They think it is just a bit of fun. Something needs to be done so they understand that they can't get away with doing it.”

**Lack of a sense of responsibility:**

“The core factor of anti social behaviour is that the people that act in this manner, including their parents fail to take responsibility for their actions. The root therefore has to lie in the fact that families no longer have any values such as respect and understanding of other people and the environment”

**Lack of pride and sense of community:**

“A sense of shame is missing in these anti social louts, people were poor in the past before easy money came along i.e. social security , these people of the past had one thing that money can't buy a sense of pride and community ,all we have today is no community ,No pride and no care for our fellow man ,HOW SAD IS THAT?”
"Immorality":

"In my view some sort of action/or crackdown is definantly needed. What the youth tend to do is jet off for a fortnight to one of these islands of pleasure …, where they indulge in Hedonistic behaviour (some of the stories I’ve heard are revolting – eating dog food sandwiches etc. One need just read the news headlines).

After reaching the Vicissitudes of immorality, they then (after spending all their earnings on a vacancy they will probably never ever remember) come back to the UK and attempt to get on with their everyday lifestyles.

Or that is that they try to get on with their everyday lifestyles. It never works, something has to give in? That something is increased crime, hoolaganism, drug-tacking, anti-social behaviour, binge culture. Which the rest of us restrained, moral citizens have to suffer.

So how can we tackle the problem? Well I see a solution difficult, especially when today’s youngsters (adults even) are given free rein in the ‘islands of pleasure’, and they are free to return to the UK without even having time for a detox.

However, I believe the initiatives and actions the government is taking at present to counter these problem are right, and one step nearer in resolving anti-social behaviour in Sandwell.

But we will never be free of such type problems until these 'pastures of immorality' are properly regulated.”

Parental Responsibility:

“…make parents responsible for their children and their actions. Enough of this looney liberal attitude that anti social behaviour is down to poverty, being dis-advantaged, etc, etc, etc. The fact of the matter is, the parents of children who are unruley, tend to don't care what the their children get up to, they show no interest in what they are doing, they are not prepared for some hard work when the children are young, to teach them such things that do not cost anything except time, such as manors and respect. All they care about is how much benefit they can claim and when they can cash it in and purchase alcohol and Cigerettes. I have seen this myself in my local post office, A lady cashed in her child benefit, her young sone (no older than 5 or six) wanted a 15p chocolate, the sharp response was "no can't afford it" as she purchased 40 B&H. You see children as young as 4 and 5 wondering the streets, hanging around shops, probably because the parents don't want them round the house, making too much noise."
Walkways:

“Due to the council's inability/lack of willpower to close off walkways on my estate, my wife & I have had enough and are having to move out of the area. Why does it have to come to this? The council know about the problems we've had on this estate caused by unruly kids/thugs who insist on dropping litter, shouting, swearing, vandalising cars, ripping outside lights off of houses, stealing plant pots & hanging baskets... the list goes on... (by the way, I'm only in my early 40's) but they won't do anything, so we have to move. Are all these social departments purely for political correctness? Do they actually do anything? I am SO annoyed at this.

My neighbours and myself have caught these thugs on video, but the police are powerless to do anything (because of the ages concerned), and so we have 2 options - give these kids a good belting or move out of the area - so Farewell...

And all because the council won't block off these walkways. There are hardly any of the original residents left now on my estate...”

Families:

It’s not just children in the Sandwell Borough who think that threatening and thuggish behaviour is an acceptable way to get on in society! Its like this all over this country!

It stems down to family life i guess, its a well known fact that when children don’t get their own way or feel ignored they will throw tantrums to get noticed - this same trend can be seen with the ‘young adults’ prowling the streets looking for trouble, i bet most have never heard a word of approval from their families the only way to get noticed is to misbehave!

Everybody no matter how young or old knows wrong from right, its a shame so many people decide to ignore their conscience and do what they know is wrong!

How much of these types of behaviour is taking place in the Borough?

“That is extremely hard to say. I can only go from my own personal experience, unfortunately toooooo much. A lot of it is being ignored by the police and wardens on my estate.”
If you report a crime you never get a crime number from old hill. That is assuming you are lucky enough to be able to contact one.

If not you try to get into the police station and it is never open.”

“In my opinion, there is a massive underestimation of the problems related to anti-social behaviour.

You will find that the majority of residents have no idea how to report anti-social behaviour. As a non-specific crime has taken place, then they feel it would not be acceptable to contact the police. eg: verbal abuse/obscene insults/general unreasonable behaviour. But nevertheless, all of the above can have as traumatic effect on the individual as being burgled.

It would help residents if Sandwell actually instigated a campaign to inform the general public of the contact points and who could actually help them.”

**SOLUTIONS:**

**Respect:**

“Perhaps more support groups should be set up to help people to discuss their problems with others. After all, ASB would be less of a problem if people learnt to respect themselves and other people.”

**Education/Respect:**

“Educate the children, educate the parents! Children are tomorrow’s future. From the earliest age they should be taught (both in and out of school) respect and the consequences brought to them if they don't.

I believe we have to do is get to the younger children of Sandwell now and get through to them the respect that not only Sandwell but the whole of the country has lost !!!”

“We all have our bit to do and bring/teach children to respect other people”
“Name and Shame”

“Maybe the Council could do more to name and shame those who get ASBOs put on them? And if possible (I've seen it done in the press for other areas) publishing pictures of these people so that if they break the conditions of their ASBO people will know!”

“I have noticed that the names of those issued with Anti-Social behaviour orders have been published in the local newspapers recently, which is a start! Perhaps the Council could distribute leaflets giving similar information to residents in the areas affected by these people? Or perhaps put the details of the cases on this website?”

“Name and Shame” linked to Community Reparation:

“I believe the issue should be criminal with a name and shame policy, and to ensure that the yobs who conduct this behaviour rectify any damage that they have done and are then forced to clean the streets where they have been conducting their acts.

They should also be forced to wear luminous vests with some logo on it to raise the fact that they have been idiots. People like this spoil the environment and so they should be forced to put back into it.”

Prison:

“For those that conduct serious ASB then prison has to be the only option - take them out of the equation. Whatever the solution it has to be something that is fast and effective.”

“Vigilantes”:

“The Police don't have the manpower to do anything about this problem, the Courts won't impose realistic penalties on these vermin kids that terrorise my estate, the Council won't block up the walkways to our estate that allow these kids unimpeded access, even after we petitioned the whole estate. So who does that leave to try to solve this problem? US - The Community. I can envisage residents like myself forming vigilante patrols and handing out our own punishments, because we are getting SO FED UP with this constant anti-social behaviour. And what will happen to these Community Protection Vigilantes? Probably get sent down for a few years whilst the do-gooders go on about the "poor kids who come from a disadvantaged background" etc..."
Planning:

"The council should not allow extensions that change the original set up of estates, neither should cable boxes be placed by peoples homes because these are a magnet for teenagers to sit on drinking, swearing and smoking and no open plan restrictions should be placed on home owners - everyone should be allowed to restrict access to their property and not have to return home to find four or five kids sitting on your garden or riding their bikes up and down your drive. And every estate above a certain number of family homes should have a compulsory play area - there is loads of open space surrounding this estate - use it Sandwell MBC and get these noisy, disrespectful kids off our streets. Furthermore make sure that police patrol housing estates to check underage drinking and foul mouthed abuse of elderly residents."

Fines:

“So what I would advocate is that if children or anyone under the age of 18 is caught committing any crimes that you would class as anti social behaviour, the make the parents pay, how I hear you ask, well the Government should give the parents a load that covers the full value of what was stolen/vandalised (similar to a student loan) and the repayments are taken either from their salaries or benefits or even both. When people realise that they will be out of pocket for their childrens behaviour, they will soon take interest.”

Community Involvement (a):

“…..how many people do you know who have experienced anti-social behaviour? I suspect virtually everyone, now, how many of them do you think have actually done something about it.....? Probably none!

It's up to us at the end of the day to do something about it. It's no good moaning and expecting somebody else to deal with it.

Record the problem, log the details, record on camera, and produce the evidence the authorities need to tackle the problem.

Then, if the authorities fail to deal with it, you have a valid complaint against them.

It's up to us if we want to stamp out this type of behaviour, too many people draw the curtains and think "somebody else will sort it out".
Not the case, all that happens is that the louts begin to think they are invincible, it then takes a lot more effort to deal with the problem instead of nipping it in the bud.

It's a problem that affects us, then we should play our part in resolving it.”

Community Involvement (b ):Alternative view

“… we have done all of that logged it down, contacted the so called regeneration police and warden. Wer have show them cctv evidence that is date and time stamped.

They then proceeded to moan about it being black and white. so we bought a color. They got more evidence and decided to put us in contact with the mediation service. the other party has ignored the mediation service and the police are now ignoring us.

What do the police want signed sealed confessions

We have got two witness statements backing us up with another one still awaiting to be taken. And surprise surprise it has taken them six months to get this far and nothing has happened. Anti social behaviour laws still don't work.”

Council/Key Organisations’ Action

Co-ordination

“There needs to be a team responsible for co-ordinating the various bodies dealing with anti-social behaviour.

At present, we either have to rely on the police or the council. I'm unsure if the ASB team at the council house co-ordinate with others, but it would make sense if they did.

Problems could be caused by council tenants, private landlords tenants or even home owners.

Action would need to be taken against each of these scenarios individually. It would be advantageous if a team could take it on board to co-ordinate the action required to remedy the problems.

I was pleased to hear that the government have announced that 22 million pounds will be made available to deal with ASB, lets hope it gets put to good use.
Action needs to be taken against the offenders, no good talking about it, without enforcement !!. About time these yobs and their parents were made responsible for their actions.....

Perceptions of the Council’s Approach to ASB:

“…the council do not have the authority to deal with private landlords and their tenancy conditions. E.g. There are two schools close to each other. A child gets expelled from one, school. That school then does not have the power to deny him entry to the school down the road. It is of no concern to them any more, because the child has nothing to do with them. That is how the council works.”

“The council is dealing with the problem of anti social behaviour rather expertly. They are gaining evictions of anti social tennants and washign theirs hands of them.

The sad fact is that the majority of them arte being rehoused on the same estate usually in the same street by private landlords. The councils answer to that then is NOT OUR PROBLEM NOT OUR PROBLEM. It is their problem just to evict them and not stop them from coming onto the same estate is not improving the local environment. It is only displacing the problem from public to private”

“Considering most offices close at 5.30 during the day and don't open weekends, how do you suggest they do this? If you have a way of getting them off the streets, please suggest some ideas so i can get rid of the nuisance. Its all well and good wanting things to be resolved, but council workers are only human too, if you cant think of ideas, how do you expect them to?”

“I feel that the council need to try and put a stop to the teenagers hanging around the streets on a evening and this could then begin to stop the litter, noise, etc.”

Key Organisations contributions:

“The answe to what are other organisations doing. The sad fact is nothing. The government speaks but doesn't act.

The police don't do much of anything in respect to anti social behavior it seems to be as they are only interested in traffic offences.

As for government regeneration funding for special police and wardens. I live on a so called warden and regeneration estate and rarely see the wardens. What i mean by rarely is once a month if im lucky.
It has been noticed by other people in my street saying you don't see the wardens now “

“From my perspective, and where I live, I would have to say they're doing absolutely nothing. The problem where I live is getting worse. This isn't a perception - it's a fact. I've even had to stoop to trying to catch the offenders on video cam now. Last year, my neighbour caught these riotous kids on video, and showed it to the police (in my presence). The officers attending recognised these kids at once and informed us that, regrettably, the kids were under the age of 10 and nothing could be done. This is a disgraceful situation. I am sure that if the walkways on our estate were blocked up, this anti-social behaviour would cease. I am getting so infuriated at the feeling of helplessness. What can I do? (apart from taking the law into my own hands and give these kids such a beating...)”

“I would have thought that the "key organisation" was the Police. However, they seem to spend so much time dealing with minor traffic offences (presumably because motorists are a soft touch and unlikely to fight back) that they don't have too much time for dealing with other types of criminality.

One only needs to look at the amount of vandalism, litter dropping, and other types of anti social behaviour that takes place to realise that the Police seem to have given up on them. I would have thought that clamping down on low level crime might send a message out that it was not worth trying more serious offences.

All the rules in the world will not stop criminal behaviour if they are not enforced.”

**General Comments**

**Who is to blame?**

While i agree that some of todays youths are just trouble makers, it is wrong to tar everyone with the same brush. Dont forget those ones who are good. We are the Majority not Minority.

Anti-Social Behaviour is happening everywhere and it is not just by the teenagers - some adults are involved in this too.
“Satisfied Customer”:

“I would like to say well done to Great Bridge. I have lived in my flat in Horton Street, Great Bridge for over 30 years. Last year a couple moved in above me and i hadn't had a moments peace since they moved. I reported this to the office. They explained i would have to fill out diary sheets so they could monitor the situation. The officer also explained that there was regulations they needed to follow, and that eventually the problem would be solved, but it wouldn't be resolved over night.

This was over 6 months ago and within the last couple of weeks the couple were (i assume evicted). So i believe (even though many people on this page seem to disagree) that the council are doing something. Its due to court regulations and procedures that prevent them from doing it straight away.

The officer at Great Bridge carried out investigations and spoke to other residents which inevitably backed my story which was enough evidence (along with the diary sheets) to take the appropriate action.

I would like to say thank you”
Appendix 5

Tantany Anti Social Behaviour Task Group

This was set up in response to the growing problems of anti social behaviour in the Tantany area of the Hateley Heath Ward and frustration felt in dealing with these matters by the Tantany Tenants and Residents Association.

I set up the Task Group after attending an open meeting of the TRA at which people told harrowing stories of the impact on their lives of anti social behaviour and TRA officers explained the difficulty of getting together the key players who could change the situation.

I decided to call together these meetings with a small group of key players in order to draw up short term and long term action plans and ensure that targets are met. The aim is that once a process has been set up and we can all see the results then the responsibility will be handed over to the TRA which plays a vital role in the Task Group meetings.

Membership includes the police, youth service, neighbourhood housing office, social inclusion, education welfare service, children’s fund, environmental health and youth offending team.

The Task Group has met twice since formation in February 2004 and further meetings are planned at roughly one month intervals. One of the main benefits from the initial meetings has been the sharing of information between various members on the group. Better working relationships has already helped progress.

The Task Group was set up and is co-ordinated by the West Bromwich Town Team and it identified the following areas of residents concerns: Problems with young people, school truancy, racism, ASB from a small groups of families on the estate and litter. These problems are being dealt with in the following ways:-

* Youth problems: Youth service outreach workers are active in the area and the service’s Happy project of activities runs during school holidays. The youth service is involving young people in race awareness training. The service is also mapping both Council and Voluntary provision in the area which is quite good and considering how to use the information in the interests of Tantany young people.
* Truancy: The police and the council’s education department have been involved in on-going ‘truancy’ sweeps of Tantany and the number of Truancy Watch is being promoted in local shops and through TRA newsletters.

* Police: Extra police time has been paid for by West Bromwich Town Team and an initial two weeks of putting beat policemen into the area saw a drop in ASB complaints to the police by 59 per cent (down from 80 to 36).

* Problem families: A number of these families have been visited by the local housing manager and police and this joint approach is being monitored to see if it results in changes in behaviour by both adults and children in these families. Support is being made available to these families and others involved in ASB in the area in order to give them every opportunity to change their ways. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts are being used.

* Litter: Detailed attention is being paid to this problem and the main difference has been achieved by a road sweeper dedicated to the area which is funded from West Bromwich Town Committee money. There have been positive comments about improvements to the appearance of the area but more needs to be done.

* Jesson group: Among other initiatives in the area encouraged by the Task Group are plans to set up a Friends of the Jesson recreation area which will monitor youth behaviour on the soon-to-be-set-up play equipment and put forward plans for making the open space attractive for use by all age groups.

CONCLUSION: There have been some immediate improvements after just two meetings of the Task group but members accept that there is much to be done to counteract the many problems caused by anti social behaviour. What the group has shown is that while promises of action from individual departments and the police are well intentioned, it requires the sharing of information between all players and regular monitoring to achieve results. This is something that TRAs are well placed to co-ordinate but where there are problems Ward councillors have the ‘clout’ to pull the various parties together and ensure that results are achieved.

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