

APPENDIX Q

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE– 12 JANUARY 2009

EXECUTIVE – 3 FEBRUARY 2009

Title:

RESPECT STANDARD FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Richard Gates]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

The Respect Standard for Housing Management is a national standard, developed by the Department of Communities & Local Government, the Audit Commission and Housemark. Signing up to the Respect Standard demonstrates that the Council is committed to do all it reasonably can to provide effective, responsive and flexible services to tackle anti-social behaviour, and create a culture of respect through the housing management role and broader involvement in neighbourhood management.

This report, which was considered by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12 January 2009, outlines the action that the Council taking in order to sign-up to the Respect Standard. It is expected that the Council will sign-up in spring 2009.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Respect Standard directly relates to three of the Council's Corporate Priorities namely: **Environment** – Protecting and enhancing Waverley's unique mix of rural and urban communities; **Improving Lives** – Improving the quality of life for all, particularly the more vulnerable within our society; and **Subsidised affordable housing** – Working for more affordable housing to be built and managing council housing well.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

Tenants must have the confidence and ability to report anti-social behaviour wherever and whenever it occurs. The profile of both complainants and perpetrators is collected at an early stage as part of case management processes enabling identification of any equality of access or diversity issues. Both complainants and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour have access to support services both internal and external. Implications of the Disability Discrimination Act are carefully assessed before any legal action is taken.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

There are no additional budgetary requirements arising from this report. It should be noted, however, that when a flare up of anti-social behaviour occurs the speedy response required of the staff involved does mean other work can be deferred. In

serious exceptional cases where, for instance, a closure order is obtained where drugs and anti-social behaviour cause a property to be closed down, associated costs are likely to be significant, but these are accommodated within the relevant HRA budget head.

Legal Implications:

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 required Councils to publish a statement of policy and procedures on anti-social behaviour and a summary of policy and procedures on anti-social behaviour. These are available on the Council's website. This work supports the Safer Waverley Partnership's Community Safety Strategy 2008-2011 with arrangements in place for working in partnership with Surrey Police, health and social care, probation, education services and the voluntary sector.

Background

1. The Government's Respect Standard for Housing Management has two aims:
 - to create and develop a climate in which landlords take action against anti-social behaviour as a core part of their activities, and residents will be assured that they will do so; and
 - to provide a benchmark for landlords to measure their services and work to improve.

2. The standard is built around six core commitments:
 - a) Accountability, leadership and commitment – Landlords need to make a visible commitment to the community so that everyone is clear they take issues of anti social behaviour and respect seriously and will deliver what they say they will.
 - b) Empowering and reassuring residents – Landlords and the community need to work as one by involving residents and giving them input to decision making. Engagement and effective communications act to reassure and empower communities.
 - c) Prevention and early intervention – Landlords can play a key role in preventing anti social behaviour from occurring. Where it does, addressing problems quickly often gets best results.
 - d) Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses – Success rests on people being prepared to report and then give support to agencies in taking action. Every case and every person deserves a robust, tailored and sensitive response.
 - e) Protecting communities through swift enforcement – Legislation has provided landlords with a range of tools they need to tackle a wide range of anti social behaviour. Landlords need to understand how these tools work and be prepared to use them quickly to protect communities.
 - f) Support to tackle the causes of anti social behaviour – provision of support can put an end to unacceptable behaviour by tackling underlying causes. This leads to sustainable out comes and gets people's lives back on track.

3. The Council adopted its first policy on Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment for Tenants of the Council in April 2004. In 2007, the policy and procedures were reviewed and further refined.
4. The Housing Service has a dedicated ASB Officer to deal with ASB issues. This post has enabled very close working relationships with the local police and police community support officers in dealing jointly with anti social behaviour problems, in both operational and strategic arenas.
5. In October 2008, the Audit Commission inspected the Housing Service, including anti-social behaviour. Their initial feedback on Waverley's approach to anti-social behaviour described the Council's approach as proactive, highlighting a good number of positive indicators relating to the Respect Standard.

Signing-up to the Respect Agenda for Housing Management

6. In order to meet the requirements of the Respect Agenda for Housing Management the Council must be able to demonstrate its approach and activity in relation to the six key commitments:
 - Accountability, leadership and commitment;
 - Empowering and reassuring residents;
 - Prevention and early intervention;
 - Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses;
 - Protecting communities through swift enforcement;
 - Support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour.
7. Annexe 1 to this report outlines the ways in which Waverley is demonstrating its approach to Anti-Social Behaviour and how it is meeting the Respect Agenda for Housing Management.

Time Scale for Signing-up to the Respect Agenda for Housing Management

8. The anti-social behaviour policy and the procedures provide the foundation for the Council to meet the 'Respect Standard for Housing Management', within the wider context of the Tenant Participation Compact and the Council's allocation and letting policies.
9. Feedback from the Audit Commission's inspection of Housing Services found positives in many areas of the Council's anti-social behaviour work. Furthermore, the Waverley and Surrey Police have been cited as a case study for 'good practice' in a recent Home Office document in respect of anti-social behaviour.
10. One area that needs development is the monitoring of casework and reporting mechanisms. In order to ensure this area is robust for the purposes of the Respect Standard, the Council has recently acquired new 'Respect Standard compliant' software so that we can monitor and report efficiently in the required formats.

11. Completing this element, along with workshops with tenants, will enable the Council to demonstrate that it measures up to the requirements of the Respect Standard. It is planned that Waverley will be in a position to sign-up with the Department of Communities and Local Government by the end of the current financial year.

Community Overview and Community Committee

12. The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the positive feedback from the Audit Commission's inspection of Housing Services in relation to the Council's anti-social behaviour work. Members also noted that the one area identified for improvement was for more robust monitoring and that new software had been acquired to address this issue.
13. The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the officer recommendation as set out below.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive

1. notes the progress being made on meeting the requirements of the Respect Standard for Housing Management;
2. endorses Waverley's commitment to signing up to the Respect Standard in Housing Management; and
3. agrees that the Council signs-up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management in the spring of 2009.

Background Papers (SDoC)

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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ANNEXE 1

WORKING TOWARDS MEETING THE RESPECT STANDARD FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Accountability, leadership and commitment:

- Housing Officers played a key role in developing the Safer Waverley Partnership's Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008, and in helping to deliver the 2008-2011 Community Safety Strategy.
- Housing officers engage directly with communities concerned about anti-social behaviour through the Neighbourhood Panel meetings coordinated by the local neighbourhood specialist police officer.
- Housing officers organise local meetings with residents, officers and local councilors to identify and address issues that impact on the community.
- Waverley was one of the first housing departments to revise its collection of performance indicators about anti-social behaviour to join the national standard for incident recording and performance management system co-ordinated by Housemark.
- The Council has robust policies in place to deal with abuse of staff and contractors in carrying out their functions.
- Both at a strategic and operational level Housing management staff are engaging with all the relevant partner agencies.
- The ASB Officer attends the Surrey ASB forum working on countywide policy, procedure and protocols with police, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and Local Authorities in Surrey.

Empowering and reassuring residents

- At the Neighbourhood Panel and locally arranged meetings the residents and tenants set their own priorities for tackling issues. There is always feedback on how these priorities have been dealt with and dialogue with the community about local solutions.
- Housing Officers carry out regular estate walkabouts with residents, tenants and members which have resulted in action, for example a rubbish amnesty to clear unwanted household goods and a litter pick with families, additional outside lighting, gating alleyways.
- A Waverley Homes special edition explained the support available, the joint working and the range of tools that are described in the revised policy that officers use to deal with anti-social behaviour.
- The Housing service support of the community development work in Ockford Ridge, Aarons Hill, The Chantry's and Farncombe/Binscombe are developing community capacity to achieve funding for children's playgrounds and Multi Use Games Areas MUGAs.
- Introducing a Neighbourhood Agreement at The Chantrys to engage with all residents on estates, regardless of tenure. This aims to produce a written agreement between service provider partners and residents, setting out standards and responsibilities of both.

Prevention and early intervention

- The Tenancy Agreement is currently being reviewed to ensure that it supports the anti-social behaviour and harassment policy. The tenants compact identifies the ways in which the community can be involved.
- All new tenants have a sign-up meeting where the conditions of tenancy are explained. A follow up visit to the new tenants home within the first six weeks can identify whether the tenant has support needs that have not already been identified, and to pick up any problems early in their tenancy.
- The Council's choice based lettings and allocations policy provides for local lettings plans where there have been housing management problems and can exclude applicants on the basis of previous anti social behaviour.
- The mediation service in Waverley is supported financially by the Council from the HRA and General Fund and most cases are referred at a very early stage. Regular meetings are held to ensure processes are effective.
- Through the monthly meetings of the Community Incident Action Group (CIAG) early identification of individuals/ families make sure that information is shared and a joint action plan agreed.
- In addition to the dedicated ASB Officer, the Complex Needs Officer (funded through Supporting People) can be deployed to support individuals or families to prevent anti-social behaviour.
- There are specialist support services that can support drug and alcohol users to change their behaviour. The Youth Justice team deal with parenting orders and young people can be referred to the Prevent and Deter scheme.
- Housing officers and community specialist police officers jointly visit tenants and residents to investigate and take action on anti-social behaviour.
- All the housing figures identified by post code are shared with the Co-ordination and Delivery Group of the Safer Waverley Partnership which can identify patterns and hotspots and develop initiatives to resolve problems.
- The purchase of a specialist anti-social behaviour integrated IT system, as recommended by the Audit Commission, will enable effective case management and provide swift analysis of trends and hotspots, as well as enabling performance management and benchmarking comparisons.
- The ASB Officer also helps monitor Prolific & Priority Offenders (serious offenders) in the Borough, and has a close working relationship with the ASB Unit and the Parenting Officer.

Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses

- One of the key roles of the Anti Social Behaviour Officer is to support the victims and witnesses who are reporting anti-social behaviour to the Council.
- The Legal and Court Officer will also support victims and witnesses through the Court process using Injunctions with immediate effect to protect them from the perpetrator.
- The Council has applied successfully to the Courts for anti-social behaviour Injunctions with the power of arrest to protect victims and witnesses from the alleged perpetrator.

- Injunctions and acceptable behaviour contracts cite the actual behaviours which have to stop which leave the perpetrator in no doubt about what they cannot do and the consequences if they do.
- Local meetings with tenants and the police allow for specific action to take place to protect the community.
- A community safety budget is used to provide lighting and other security devices to make residents feel safer. Careline alarms can be provided to individuals who feel vulnerable. Sanctuary schemes are also available for victims of domestic abuse.
- Victim Support are involved to provide support where appropriate.

Protecting communities through swift enforcement

- Each case is registered with the Housing Management team and case management procedures ensure victims and witnesses are providing the Council with evidence sheets.
- All individual cases of anti-social behaviour and/or harassment are regularly reviewed by the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer and the Housing Management Officers to ensure all relevant action is being taken as quickly as possible. Monthly meetings are held by the team to where experience and knowledge is shared to provide solutions to difficult cases.
- The multi agency Community Incident Action Group meets monthly to identify and assess problem individuals/ families or groups and can take action stop the anti social behaviour.
- Housing staff can obtain relevant and appropriate information from agencies signed up to the Information Sharing Protocol.
- Housing Officers and the local police will carry out joint visits quickly to all those identified as being involved in anti social behaviour incidents to assess the problems and explain clearly the possible consequences of such behaviour if continued.
- Through the appraisal process the Council ensures that all staff are trained and supervised to carry out the most appropriate action in dealing with anti-social behaviour.
- With all the tools at the disposal of the Council eviction is seen as the last resort in the management of anti social behaviour and harassment.

Support to tackle the causes of anti social behaviour

- The initial assessment of the Housing or Anti-Social Behaviour officer can identify whether there are any underlying health or drug/ alcohol abuse/domestic violence problems with the individual or family. Early referral to other health and other support services can prevent the situation escalating.
- The assessment by the members by the multi agency group CIAG of the individual involved in perpetrating anti-social behaviour and the different types of work being carried out in coordination with each other are powerful in resolving problems.
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Officer will work closely with individuals or families to assess with them why problems are happening and identify solutions to these problems.

- The Council's Complex Needs Officer will work with these families until the problems are under control or have been resolved.
- Specialist support providers such as OMNI or SADAS can be involved to assess and support individuals and families with more complex needs involving drugs and/or alcohol.
- The Domestic Violence officer is involved at the earliest possible stage if relevant, and the SW Surrey Domestic Abuse Outreach Service is available where required.
- The ASB Officer is involved with various youth projects such as 'all about you', helping youngsters with education, training, employment, housing, drug/alcohol issues.