



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Safer Neighbourhood Antisocial Behaviour Pilot
Date:	10 April 2008
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Laura Hamill, Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator

Relevant Background Information

The Antisocial Behaviour Pilot originated from the Safer City Group to provide a co-ordinated, One Council approach originally in 8 agreed areas towards tackling antisocial behaviour. In January 2008 Committee took the decision to add Castle Park to the Pilot as a result of concerns raised by residents from the Downhill Park West Residents Association.

The aim of the Pilot is to reduce the levels of antisocial behaviour, improve the public's perception of antisocial behaviour and increase the feeling of safety when using Council facilities.

Action plans for the 9 Pilot areas (*Appendix 1 lists the 9 pilot areas*) are underway and are being developed in full consultation with communities and agencies, linking into any other strategies or action plans for each area.

Local area meetings have been held within each of the pilot areas involving representatives from community/voluntary groups, statutory agencies and Elected Members to discuss the antisocial behaviour problems and to identify resources required and to decide upon what action needs to be taken. The information gathered at the meetings and in partnership with other Statutory and Voluntary Bodies has been drafted up into Action Plans.

The following themes have been used to develop the action plans:

- education and awareness;
- application of the bye-laws;
- environment;
- diversionary activities/programmes; and
- enforcement

Key Issues

Since the launch of the pilot in April 2007 a number of measures have been implemented to assist with achieving a full picture of the situation and key concerns for each of the Pilot areas.

Consultants completed a comprehensive 'Mapping Exercise'.

The final report outlined:-

- recommended themes to include in the action plans to ensure all aspects of life and social factors are taken into consideration;
- hotspot and peak times for antisocial behaviour;
- existing provision within each of the areas so that we could determine whether diversionary activities were being offered at the times the most antisocial behaviour occurs for each area and gaps could easily be identified; and
- key groups and organisations within each area so as to allow us to explore opportunities for partnership working by developing joint ASB action plans

The findings from the final report were presented to communities to assist in the development of the area specific action plans.

Environmental

A Design Out Crime Report was conducted by the PSNI Crime Prevention Team. Since the addition of the Castle Park to the Pilot a Design Out Crime Audit has also been completed for this area.

The following recommendations from the Design Out Crime Report were implemented immediately to encourage community 'buy in' to the action plans.

- graffiti - remove any that appears by 11am in the morning.
- new signage erected outlining the bye-laws
- cut back of vegetation and the pruning of trees ensures a clear panoramic view for Park users, hence, increasing the feeling of safety.

The other recommendations have now been considered by communities during the consultation process and those actions agreed upon are in the process of being carried out. Many have already been completed.

Application of the bye-laws/enforcement

ASB Statistics (*see appendix 2*) – a new ASB recording system has been piloted in the Parks & Leisure Department since April 07. Since this time the system has been further developed in partnership with the Council's Workplace Health Unit and ISB. Standard forms have now been developed to capture the vandalism figures and associated costs for each.

The Incident Reporting forms have also been adapted for use by police when reporting incidents regarding BCC Parks and Leisure facilities. The forms are submitted to the ASB Coordinator for appropriate action.

Due to the benefits to the Council as a whole the system was rolled out across

all Parks and Leisure facilities so that detailed antisocial behaviour statistics for each facility are now being captured. This will allow BCC to identify issues, trends quickly and allocate resources effectively.

In July 07 as part of the ASB Pilot, a new system was set up within Parks to generate warning letters, that is, when information regarding individual offenders is submitted from Council staff, police, community etc. After investigation a warning letter is sent out clearly outlining the offence, the bye-law and possibility of further action being taken if there is a repeat occurrence. The warning letter has been drafted in accordance with antisocial behaviour order (ASBO) guidelines so that in the event of further action, prosecution or application for an antisocial behaviour order a clear trail of good quality evidence is available. A spreadsheet of offenders that come to our attention is being up-dated regularly so that we may pick up any repeat offences that will in turn require further action. This ASB spreadsheet and spreadsheets kept by the ASBO Officers within the PSNI are now being shared to inform each agency of the names, contact details and offences of individuals known by each Agency.

Monthly meetings are held in each area between the Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator, Police Liaison Sergeant to BCC, Parks/Leisure Managers and PSNI to discuss current issues, implement urgent actions, follow up incidents and to forward plan preventative rather than reactionary activities for each area. Due to the benefits of this contact other sections within BCC have requested access to the area meetings.

High Visibility Exercises aimed at addressing under age drinking have been ongoing throughout the past year and will continue across Belfast targeting Off-Licenses, Parks/Leisure Facilities within the antisocial behaviour Pilot and other Hotspots outside the Pilot that require urgent attention. These are carried out in partnership with PSNI, BCC Antisocial Behaviour Pilot, Community Safety's Get Home Safe Project, Regulatory Services, Parks Rangers Service and Communities.

As a result of the antisocial behaviour Pilot strong relationships are being built up between Police and BCC staff as well as with other key agencies in each of the pilot areas. Mainstreaming of many of the initiatives found to be beneficial are being carried out. The Park Rangers and the Police now carry out regular joint foot patrols in the pilot areas as well as targeting Parks or Leisure facilities that are causing particular concern.

In relation to getting our own operational staff more involved in helping us to address ASB activity a training programme was developed for the Parks Rangers Service to assist them with carrying out their duties and increase motivation. This involved report writing, personal safety, conflict resolution and techniques for approaching young people. The training was carried out in partnership with PSNI, BELB, Mediation NI and the Community Safety Roaming Wardens Scheme. Feedback from this training was so positive that another round was carried out. Refresher courses will be planned to continue the development of the Parks Ranger Service.

Further training in partnership with Community Services will be offered in the coming months to staff within Parks and Leisure covering the Code of Behaviour and Child Protection.

Discussions are also ongoing currently in regard to providing necessary equipment and a change in uniform to portray an air of authority within Parks Rangers Service and assist them to carry out their duties effectively.

We continue to use the avenue of Antisocial Behaviour Forums regarding enforcement. This allows us to build up a full picture on individuals who have become known to the Police, NIHE or BCC so that the appropriate action can be decided upon and the lead agency agreed on.

Education/awareness

As part of the Pilot's Communication Strategy, the Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator continues to provide updates to the newspapers and radio. She responds to enquiries from media on specific issues by outlining the actions being taken to combat issues while emphasising the Council's priority for increasing the feeling of safety among the people of Belfast when using or living near BCC Parks and Leisure facilities as part of the Safer City Agenda.

A statement of key messages for the Pilot was drawn up and made available to members to assist in responding to media enquiries about the work of the Pilot.

The ASB Pilot site outlines the aims and objectives of the Pilot. This also includes an e-mail address for the public to contact the Council regarding antisocial behaviour in Parks/Leisure facilities. From this there are also links to the Community Safety site.

As a result of problems with antisocial behaviour in Parks from school pupils the ASB Coordinator has given talks at school assembly regarding the consequences of antisocial behaviour on Belfast City Council property while emphasising also the opportunities for promoting positive behaviour and choices available to young people with regards to taking a new direction in their lives. As a result of this discussions are ongoing regarding support from the ASB Coordinator within the Citizenship Curriculum as well as the introduction of early intervention methods to promote and support positive behaviour in individuals through, for example, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts or volunteering.

Diversionsary Activities/Programmes

The antisocial behaviour pilot has been providing assistance to groups within the pilot areas who wish to develop and implement activities/programmes targeting the problem of antisocial behaviour in the area. Many of the ongoing diversionsary programmes have also been captured through out 'Mapping Exercise' and our aim is to tap into what is currently being provided.

Partnership Action Plans

The Draft Partnership Action Plans have now been presented to all pilot areas except the Castle Park area, which due to the area's late addition to the Pilot is still during the consultation stage of the process.

The Plans have been received positively with recognition that a lot of work has been done within the past year and visible changes have been made. Communities are very keen that the relationship building, the area up-dates, monitoring and review of the plans remains ongoing to ensure that targets are being met and that identified actions remain appropriate to the current issues.

We continue to work with residents, Friends Groups, other community/voluntary groups and other agencies within each area in order to ensure that this carried out.

Evaluation

Even though the Pilot is over 2 years, it was agreed that an evaluation would be carried out at the end of the first year to ensure that we continue to identify key issues and target resources effectively. The specification for this evaluation is currently being drafted. This will take place within the next coming months and the final report will be brought to Committee on its completion.

Youth provision

Following the decision of Committee at last month's meeting regarding funding to support youth provision in the City, work has started on the necessary research and a report will be brought to Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Resource Implications

There are no new resource implications at this time

Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of this report.

Key to Abbreviations

ASB – Antisocial Behaviour
ASBO – Antisocial Behaviour Order
PSNI – Police Service Northern Ireland

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – List of 9 Pilot areas
Appendix 2 – Antisocial Behaviour Incident Reporting Figures

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