

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMUNITY SAFETY (EVALUATION OF  
DISPERSAL ORDERS) TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

**Thursday, 15 February 2007**

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Hoare (Chair)  
Councillor A Simpson  
Councillor L Tavener

Thomas Hall - Corporate Manager  
Debbie Ferguson - Community Safety Manager  
Tracy Tiff - Scrutiny Officer

**Witness**

Sergeant Mark Worthington (Northants Police)

**1. APOLOGIES**

There were none.

**2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2007**

Subject to the following amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2007 were agreed:

There had been **three** Dispersal Orders in Duston.

**3. TO APPROVE THE DRAFT SCOPE OF THE REVIEW**

The Scope of the Review, as amended, was agreed. A copy of which is attached.

**4. WITNESS EVIDENCE**

**(A) NORTHANTS POLICE**

Sergeant Mark Worthington provided a response to the Task and Finish Group's core questions:

**1 How do the Police view Dispersal Orders and in what circumstances does it see them as the most effective step in achieving long-term improvements in anti social behaviour?**

Dispersal Orders provide a short-term solution to assist in resolving a long-term problem. It gives the partner Agencies time to get together to solve the problem.

At present, the evidence gathering process needs improvement; incidents are not always logged but it is envisaged that the Safer Community Teams, and extended police family should be able to assist in this process. There is, however, the need to determine who should be responsible for logging incidents. If incidents continually identify an individual, the Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) route can

be taken. The central collection point for such incidents should be the Anti Social Behaviour Unit.

Sergeant Worthington advised that Dispersal Orders should only be used when other initiatives have been unsuccessful.

## **2 Do the Police believe that Exit Strategies are required, and if so, who should be responsible for their production?**

Yes Exit Strategies should be set up when the Dispersal Order is considered. The Stronger Safer Community Teams will take on the ownership of Dispersal Orders.

Regarding Dispersal Orders in Bellinge, Eastfields and Castle Wards, D Ferguson advised that that there had been a multi agency approach in compiling Exit Strategies.

The Task and Finish Group commented and heard:-

- Safer Community Teams should negate the need for Dispersal Orders. Multi Agencies (NBC, Northants Police, Community Safety Unit, Anti Social Behaviour Unit, Youth Workers, Ward Councillors, Chairs of Residents Associations, head teachers of local schools, education officers, welfare officers and housing officers) should deal with the problem before it gets to the Dispersal Order stage.
- Exit Strategies need to be put in place as part of the creation of Dispersal Orders. It is important that good practice is encouraged.

### **2a Who leads the Dispersal Order process?**

The Police identifies the problem and will initially lead the Dispersal Order process. The Police Superintendent will sign the request for a Dispersal Order but before it can be implemented it has to also be signed off by the Borough Council. There also needs to be at least one letter of support from a Councillor and written police evidence that the potential Dispersal Order has been discussed with local residents. The Anti Social Behaviour Unit acts as the gatekeeper. Referrals for Dispersal Orders can also come from Northampton Borough Council.

### **3 Are the Police committed to providing statistics during and post the Dispersal Order period in order to monitor the effectiveness of this form of intervention?**

Yes, the Police are committed to provide statistics but there is a need to improve on how it is done. There were errors in the system but these have now been rectified. Data is now being gathered. The Police has recently carried out a review, and it was found that a Dispersal Order had been set up but no one had been dispersed. However, on the first day of the Dispersal Order, a number of young people had been dispersed but no data had been input.

The Task and Finish Group asked questions and heard: -

- The type of data that the Police will look at includes: -
  - Ø The number dispersed outside the area
  - Ø The number dispersed in the area
  - Ø The number of young people taken home

#### Crime Statistics and Incident statistics

- The Anti Social Behaviour Unit receives the above data.
- The Police issues a random number of questionnaires to residents asking whether Dispersal Orders make them feel safer. Comments received are recorded.
- In response to a query regarding measuring displacement, Sergeant Worthington advised that this is anecdotal, for example the Dispersal Order at the Race Course displaced to Semilong. If it is the same group of young people that has displaced the Police would look at Anti Social Behaviour Initiatives.
- The Dispersal Order at Abington displaced to Christchurch Road.
- Initially, the location of Dispersal Orders was very small, but future ones were wider to try and counter and displacement issues .

#### **4 Are the number of Youth Dispersal Orders limited by Police resources?**

No, the Police looks at whether it will be able to enforce Dispersal Orders, but this would not be a limiting factor. There is no point setting up a Dispersal Order if it could not be policed. Often the Police will have a maximum of three Dispersal Orders in one sector. Safer Community Teams will take ownership of Dispersal Orders, the Teams comprise: one Sergeant, two/three Police Officers, four/five Police Community Support Officers and a number of Special Constables .

#### **5 Will the implementation of Safer Community Teams mean Dispersal Orders will be easier to police?**

It is the intention to make them easier to police. However, it will not be the sole responsibility of Safer Community Teams' to Police dispersal Orders, it is also the responsibility of the Incident resolution teams , but the SCTs will be co-ordinating them. There will be more consistent coverage and the Police Community Support Officers are keen to liaise with young people.

A good working relationship with Councillors is essential, as is all Agencies working together. Joint Action Groups tackle low level anti social behaviour.

The Task and Finish Group commented and heard:-

- There is a need for all 47 Councillors to understand the Dispersal Order process
- Roll out of Neighbourhood Management should be complete by the end of April 2007

Sergeant Worthington undertook for forward information about the Safer Community Teams to the Chair.

#### **6 Do the Police carry out its own evaluation of Dispersal Orders?**

Yes the Police do carry out evaluations, it wants to make sure that Dispersal Orders are working, or not, and share the information between the sectors.

The Task and Finish Group asked questions and heard:-

- The factors that make Dispersal Orders work include a zero tolerance approach, but it is not clear whether this tactic on its own works. Often just

publicising a forthcoming Dispersal Order will alleviate the problem.

- Often when a Dispersal Order has been implemented, the problem will disappear within a week.

The Chair thanked Sergeant Worthington for his informative address.

## **5. OFFICER REPORTS - BASELINE DATA**

### **(A) ANALYSIS OF 16 AREAS WITH DISPERSAL ORDERS**

D Ferguson, Community Safety Manager, presented two maps of the borough. One detailing the areas and levels of deprivation across the town and the other showing the 28 Dispersal Order areas. Comprehensive details regarding the 28 Dispersal Orders was circulated.

The Task and Finish Group asked questions and heard: -

- There has been one repeat Dispersal Order in Kings Heath. This is one of the most deprived areas and has received a lot of resources.
- The Dispersal Order in St David's ward resolved the problem of anti social behaviour (harassment, threatening behaviour, underage drinking and vehicle damage) quickly
- There is a lot of juvenile nuisance and criminal damage in Eastfield. A community shop will open and there will be a Safer Community Team and Youth Worker for the area
- There are crime problems in Briar Hill and Thorpelands. The police will increase patrols in these areas. There will also be a CASPAR project in Thorpelands. The police prescribes 'red routes' to high crime areas.
- The main problem in Briar Hill is motorcycle nuisance and burglary.
- It was felt that a Dispersal Order could not be implemented on the Racecourse as it could displace the problem to residential areas.
- There has been three ASBO's in Eastfield but these are due to come to an end next month
- There appears to be a relationship between Dispersal Orders and the provision of youth facilities in the town. Approximately three years ago an audit of such facilities was undertaken.
- It was noted that Castle ward is within the 5% most deprived wards in the country. It has received £4 million of funding over four years.
- There are some links with areas of deprivation to Dispersal Orders but the link is weaker than was expected
- There is a need for Joint Action Groups in each Neighbourhood Management Area.

### **(B) RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS**

D Ferguson provided a written response to the Task and Finish Group's questions:-

#### **1. Where are repeat Dispersal Order areas, why was the need for one?**

The only area in Northampton that has had a dispersal order repeated is Kings Heath, around and including the shopping area of Park Square. The original order ran from 21 October 2004 to 20 January 2005. There was positive feedback from the community and a

reduction in anti-social behaviour but the Police still felt there were issues that needed to be resolved and they were still receiving calls from the public. This led to a further application being made for the period 22 February 2005 to 21 April 2005.

## **2. Details on any Exit Strategies**

There is no specific exit strategy set up for Dispersal areas.

However since March 2006 multi-agency action groups have been set up in some of the dispersal areas to look more closely at the issues and identify actions that can be undertaken to address some of the problems. The groups usually operate for a 6-month period and are working well. An evaluation undertaken following the completion of work by the Duston group showed a 14% reduction in overall crime, and as we approach the end of the Semilong groups work, early indications are that there is an overall reduction in crime of 20% (this is to be confirmed by the Police).

There are currently three other groups working in the areas of St James/Castle, Bellinge and Eastfield.

## **3. Consultation process for Dispersal Orders**

It was agreed by NBC Executive 10 May 2004 'that the Chief Executive, Borough Solicitors or any Director be authorised to give the Councils consent to the issue by a relevant police officer of an authorisation under Part 4 of The Anti-social behaviour Act 2003'.

As in line with the legislation any application received by NBC from the police should be supported by:

- Clearly highlighted map of identified area
- Detailed reason for requesting the Order
- Significant recorded evidence of incidents of anti-social behaviour within the identified area is provided.
- Consultation has taken place with local councillors and written support/agreement included from at least one of them.
- Consultation with residents/groups has taken place.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit act as the 'gatekeepers' for applications and will not accept them if the above criteria has not been met. This is then further checked by the Community Safety Manager before seeking approval and signature. Dispersal Orders cannot go ahead if NBC does not approve them.

## **(C) ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTIONS WITHIN NBC'S CONTROL**

D Ferguson provided details on Anti Social Behaviour within Northampton Borough Council's control.

A multi agency approach has been adopted in the application of intervention work. It is co-ordinated through the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, NBC in consultation with partner agencies through the 6 weekly NASBAG (Northampton Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group)

meetings. The following types of intervention are used:

- Early warning letters
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
- Notices of Seeking Possession (Housing)
- Outreach Youth Work
- Family Intervention via the UTurn Project
- Local Action Groups
- Dispersal Orders
- Injunctions
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

## **6. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

The next meeting was noted as Thursday 8 March 2007 commencing at 6.30pm in the Jeffery Room.

The next meeting was noted as Thursday 8 March 2007 commencing at 6.30pm in the Jeffery Room.

The agenda will include:-

Councillors responses to the Dispersal Order questionnaire

Issues to capture in the Chair's final report, including:-

- What has been learnt from the Task and Finish Group process
- What the Group has covered/unable to cover

The Chair suggested that the following information be circulated to the Group:-

Details of the Safer Community Teams - Sergeant Mark Worthington

Summary on three/four Dispersal Orders – D Ferguson

A copy of the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy – T Tiff

The meeting concluded at 7:50 pm