



---

# Scrutiny of Antisocial Behaviour Management at Havebury Housing Partnership

## 1. SCOPE

The scope of the antisocial behaviour scrutiny was agreed at the panel meeting of 24 June 2019 as follows:

- a) Is Havebury's management of antisocial behaviour effective?

## 2. WHAT WE DID

The following methodology was agreed by panel members at the scoping meeting:

What will be reviewed	Details	How
Review of ASB policy	Examine Havebury's antisocial behaviour policy to determine whether it is fit for purpose	Desktop review
Interview tenancy and estates manager	Interview the tenancy and estates manager to ascertain how Havebury applies its antisocial policy and identify key challenges	Invite to PSP meeting
Review Havebury's case management	Review example cases to understand how policy is applied in practice and identify any learning	Desktop review/invite tenancy and estates co-ordinator to meeting
Assess relationship with Police and other partners	Interview representative from Police to establish where partnerships work well and not so well	Invite representative to PSP meeting
Data analysis	Analyse Havebury's antisocial behaviour performance monitoring data	Desktop review
Customer satisfaction	Analyse Havebury's antisocial behaviour customer satisfaction data	Desktop review
Make recommendations	Review evidence to identify recommendations	Desktop exercise

The timetable of the scrutiny review was as follows:

Action	Date
Scrutiny scoping	24 June 2019
Meeting attended by Tenancy and Estates manager	24 June 2019
ASB policy reviewed	24 June 2019
Meeting attended by Tenancy and Estates co-ordinator to review case studies	17 September 2019
Meeting attended by Police representative to discuss partnership working	17 September 2019
Review of antisocial behaviour customer satisfaction results	11 October 2019

Review of antisocial behaviour performance data	2 December 2019
Report and agree recommendations	2 December 2019
Sign off recommendations for submission to Leadership Team	10 February 2020

### 3. OUR FINDINGS

- 3.1 The scrutiny review of antisocial behaviour was triggered by the panel's concerns that well-publicised cuts to policing services might have placed increased pressure on Havebury resource for dealing effectively with antisocial behaviour and broaden the scope of issues Havebury may be looked to by tenants to resolve.
- 3.2 During initial interviews with staff, it was confirmed that there continued to be good engagement between the Police and Havebury and that cases requiring a partnered approach still got one. There was some acknowledgement however that cases might now move a little slower and that some local connectivity had been lost. The panel agreed to invite a representative of Suffolk Police to a meeting later in the review.
- 3.3 The panel learned that what constitutes 'antisocial behaviour' is complex. Criminal acts are dealt with by the Police and noise nuisance by Environmental Health and so partnership working is vital. What some people consider antisocial behaviour may not be so, and in these instances Havebury has limited ability to act.
- 3.4 The Tenancy and Estates Team carries out an initial assessment of risk against each new case by asking the complainant about the impact to them. They then speak to the perpetrator and gather evidence, keeping the case open until no further action is possible. All early intervention options are explored before legal action is taken, as a last resort. Going to court is never quick or easy, and it is a misconception that Havebury can act immediately to evict a tenant who it is reported has breached their tenancy. It is common for courts to grant injunction orders as they are seen as a supportive measure; possession is rarely granted and often suspended.
- 3.5 Havebury's Tenancy and Estates Manager was asked about the service standards applied in maintaining contact with complainants throughout antisocial behaviour cases. Havebury aims to do this every 10 days, however depending on the case, varying timescales may be agreed. The priority is to keep complainants reasonably informed, and to not leave anyone wondering what will happen next.
- 3.6 Noting the work Havebury is already doing in respect of keeping tenants informed and explaining what will happen during an antisocial behaviour case, the panel noted that there remains some misunderstanding amongst residents about what constitutes antisocial behaviour and Havebury's powers to deal with it.
- 3.7 The panel discussed mediation services and felt that this was probably a useful tool in resolving disputes, especially where compromise between neighbours is required. Havebury use mediation informally as a method of early intervention

and to identify preferred outcomes and manage expectations. Organisations such as Anglia Care Trust and Catch 22 offer more formal face to face or 'shuttle' mediation. It was reported to the panel that between June 2017 and May 2018 three referrals had been made for formal mediation, but none had been made since (to August 2019).

- 3.8 PC Neil Brown was invited to speak with the panel and explained the types of antisocial behaviour the Police are able to deal with and the tools available to them. Causing harassment, alarm or distress is a criminal offence; however nuisance/annoyance is not. He stated that in the Safer Neighbourhood Team there is one PC and three PCSO's, compared to six PCs and 12 PCSO's three years ago. The number of cases it is therefore possible to deal with has dropped from 95% previously, to just 8% now. Higher risk cases are still dealt with; lower level cases are often not.
- 3.9 The panel was encouraged to hear about fortnightly multi-agency meetings where cross agency, or complex cases are discussed so that the most effective resolution can be found together. Community Protection Notices can be issued by the Police or local authority to address housing antisocial behaviour, the breaching of which would be a criminal offence.
- 3.10 Closure orders are very effective, especially in cases of cuckooing linked to county lines. Partial closure orders can be used where the tenant is not complicit or is vulnerable.
- 3.11 The Police categorise antisocial behaviour as personal, nuisance or environmental and risk assess each report. If an initial report is not investigated, any second call is identified by the Police system in case the category/risk needs to be reviewed.
- 3.12 The panel were told about 'community triggers'. A community trigger can be used by any individual who feels antisocial behaviour has not been dealt with. If there has been three or more reports about the same issue and nothing has been done a community trigger will force the local authority to intervene, whom will pull together all agencies to investigate. Community triggers are used very infrequently and none of the panel had heard of them before.
- 3.13 PC Neil Brown was asked about instances where providers of social housing and the Police could work better together. The Police are sometimes not informed of injunctions that have been granted and so it is more difficult to act if they are breached, even if the injunction carries a power of arrest.
- 3.14 The cost of getting an injunction granted was also discussed. The Police feel that costs could be better shared and if this was the case, more antisocial behaviour cases could be resolved.
- 3.15 Representatives of both Havebury and the Police highlighted that a significant barrier to taking effective action was getting witnesses to come forward and collect evidence, without which remedial action is difficult to undertake. The panel understood residents' reluctance to get involved and invest the time in recording incidents e.g. on log sheets.

- 3.16 The panel discussed how witnesses could be protected and acknowledged the work Havebury and the Police already do to reassure residents but suggested exploring whether there was anything that could be done to make the process easier and more comfortable.
- 3.17 After reviewing mapping data of antisocial cases the panel found no specific ‘hot-spots’. Cases being dealt with by Havebury appeared proportionately distributed and concentrated only in areas where Havebury managed the most properties. It was noted however that antisocial behaviour occurs disproportionately more in blocks of flats compared to houses.
- 3.18 Analysis of customer satisfaction data showed that over one third of complainants are dissatisfied with how their antisocial behaviour case was handled by Havebury. Almost half are dissatisfied with the outcome.
- 3.19 Dissatisfied complainants reported that:
- The problem was still ongoing
  - Nothing had been done
  - Communication had been poor and there was no continuity of staff
  - They were not told the outcome of their complaint
  - It took too long to be resolved
- 3.20 Overwhelming, the most common reason for dissatisfaction was that the problem had not been resolved. The panel recognised that an element of dissatisfaction could be attributed to tenant expectations being too high, but expressed that satisfaction levels needed to be investigated.
- 3.21 With the Tenancy and Estates Co-Ordinator, the panel reviewed recent cases of antisocial behaviour. The review demonstrated two very different outcomes.
- 3.22 One example was a complex case and illustrated the challenges Havebury faces in taking enforcement action. In one example Shelter had supported the tenant to remain in the property, despite it being in everyone’s interest (including the perpetrator) to move. Havebury’s legal services provider had given assurance that all the appropriate action had been taken, but a lengthy legal process meant that the issue remained unresolved and been expensive.
- 3.23 Another case relating to drugs, noise, a dog and untidy communal area. The noise issue was resolved jointly with Public Health and Housing. Issuing and NSP resolved the issue of the tenant having a dog. Working with the Police using complementary powers removed the tenant from the area to stop some quite serious issues associated with drugs.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on their findings the panel make the following recommendations:

1. Approach partners (including local politicians) to develop a wider ASB strategy, particularly for town centres, to explore the wider approach to tackling ASB and funding. Ensure there are policies, procedures and a formal protocol for ASB partnership working
2. Incorporate information on 'community triggers' to ASB policy, procedure and communications
3. Ensure Police are always notified when Havebury has been successful in an injunction being granted
4. To help manage residents' expectations, review communication of the definition of ASB and Havebury's powers and responsibilities
5. Consider Havebury nominating a dedicated case worker for each case, or in the least offer complainants a single point of contact
6. Develop a plan for improving customer satisfaction with ASB case handling and outcome, including what is communicated to residents when a case is closed
7. Acknowledging the work Havebury already does in this regard and the difficulties that will always exist, explore options for assisting complainants and witnesses to feel more comfortable coming forward, gathering evidence and seeing the ASB process through to its conclusion
8. To increase the visible presence of Havebury, the Police and other partner agencies, consider re-introducing estate walkabouts, specifically in areas of high ASB/crime
9. Confirm Havebury is properly utilising mediation services where they offer a value for money and effective resolution to disputes, and consider formal mediation training for staff
10. To potentially inform specific intervention work analyse:
  - Profiling perpetrators and complainants of ASB to establish any characteristics (property/person) which indicate higher risk
  - Disproportionate level of ASB in the 'Bury Central' area and flats

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we refer back to the questions we aimed to answer at the beginning of the scrutiny:

QUESTION	CONCLUSION
a) Is Havebury's management of antisocial behaviour effective?	<p>The panel recognised the increasing challenges faced by Havebury in dealing with antisocial behaviour, especially in managing tenant expectations.</p> <p>In the majority of cases Havebury finds an effective resolution to antisocial behaviour complaints, however there are examples where its approach (and customer satisfaction) could be improved.</p> <p>Implementation of the recommendations made by the panel in section four of this report will help to ensure Havebury's management of antisocial behaviour is effective in all cases.</p>