

**Safer Communities Improvement Panel Meeting**  
**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November, 10.30am**  
**at Coastal House**

**Attendees:**

Keith Myers (KM)  
John Scholey (JS)  
John Raine (JR)  
Maurice Christian (MC)  
Edwin Hudson (EH)  
James Jason (JJ)  
Keith Edwards (KE)  
Irene Bishop (IB)  
Pauline Richmond (PRi)  
Peter Rowbotham (PRo)  
Colin Porter (CP)  
Janet Flint (JF) - Area Housing Manager & ASB Service Manager  
Yvonne Johnson (YJ) - ASB Team Leader  
Suzanne Tomlinson (ST) – Customer Involvement and Projects Officer

**Apologies:**

Carol Thornber  
Liz Welsh  
Mark Tugwood  
Mary Everett  
Elaine Christian

**1. Terms of Reference**

All attendees were provided with a copy of the Terms of Reference for this Panel illustrating the purpose of the group which is to monitor and scrutinise the performance of the ASB service. All Improvement Panels now have Terms of Reference and a Code of Conduct for each meeting.

**2. Minutes of the Last Meeting/Matters Arising**

The minutes of the last meeting were read through and agreed as a true record. The following points were updated:

**Environmental Protection**– Due to the Council cut backs, Blackpool Coastal Housing are looking at the option of training up staff to fit sound recording equipment in properties to monitor noise nuisance complaints.

**3. Quarterly Report/Panel Report**

The quarterly report was handed out to attendees and it was advised that this would be sent to members approximately two weeks before future meetings. JF explained that this report is produced from the in-house systems and includes performance information relating to the local offers, service standards and key performance indicators. It was advised that once the new IT system was in place, it will be possible to drill down further and provide information for different geographical areas. Attendees agreed that numbers (not percentages) should be reported on at future meetings. It was also requested that the performance reports are produced in colour and the graph is in bar chart form to make the information easier to understand. JF to look into.

The performance info was read through and discussed. Narratives were provided by JF and YJ where performance had not been met or had reduced and future actions were outlined to improve performance.

#### **4. Service Development and Benchmarking**

JF explained there are a number of ongoing service developments:

- Out of Hours Reports raised by Queens Park Security were causing performance and case figures to be distorted as each report had to be opened as a separate ReAct case, regardless of whether the issue warranted further action or not. To tackle this, Housing Assistants now open the case and deal with it, rather than it being referred to a Housing Officer. The action noted is that a verbal warning was given by security and then the case can be closed if no further action is required. This has drastically reduced the case loads of the Housing Officers, enabling them to dedicate their time elsewhere. Members of the Panel from Queens Park agreed with this.
- JF explained that following a spate of ASB in a particular block on Langdale Road, the ASB Team and Customer Involvement had sent surveys out to residents to gain a better understanding of the issues and to use the findings to consider further action to be taken. ST explained the survey received a poor response rate, however it was identified from the responses that were received that the majority of ASB was being caused by youths (who don't live in the block) getting in and congregating in the communal areas. As a result, new handles have been fitted to the doors to prevent non residents from entering the block and letters have been sent to residents asking them to ensure the doors are kept locked. Since this there have been no further complaints.
- BCH are part of the Housemark Benchmarking group. YJ advised that with regards to the percentage of ASB cases that had been closed and resolved, BCH are in the upper quartile, ranking 4<sup>th</sup> out of 25 organisations.
- YJ advised that BCH have been contacted by Lancaster Council for advice regarding Housemark Accreditation. BCH were inspected and achieved this accreditation and had been contacted by Lancaster as we had performed well during our inspection and were noted for good practice.

#### **5. Complaints, Compliments and Comments**

JF advised that 3 Stage 2 complaints had been received:

- Complaint regarding youths in the block of flats on Langdale Road. New handles have now been fitted and no further incidents have occurred.
- Complaint from a couple who had received a Notice Seeking Possession and felt they were being treated unfairly due to their medical conditions.
- Complaint regarding a final warning letter that was sent. The customer felt unhappy with the letter. Following an interview with a staff member, the customer accepted that the case had been dealt with correctly.

A complaint is currently with the Ombudsman regarding noise nuisance and repairs. BCH have tried to resolve but customer has not been allowing access for staff to deal with, despite numerous appointments. All information has been provided to the Ombudsman to investigate.

2 compliments have been received:

- An ASB staff member attending a Resident Association open meeting (Ingthorpe North).
- A thank you to the team for sorting out ASB issues for a customer.

## **6. Satisfaction Results**

The results from the ASB Customer Satisfaction Survey were discussed. Part of the results had already been discussed as part of the quarterly report.

Over the quarter, 84 surveys had been sent out and 26 responses had been received. This is a 30% response rate which has improved since free post return envelopes were being used.

ST explained that each quarter, an Impact Assessment is carried out on the survey to identify what improvements have been made to the service as a result of the activity. Over this quarter, no service improvements had been identified, however officers had responded to individual issues raised by customers regarding their cases. It was agreed that Impact Assessments would be brought to the Panel to for future meetings.

YJ advised that the team are going to begin surveying other agencies involved in cases and to gather their feedback about the service. Surveying perpetrators of ASB is also being looked into.

## **7. Customer Involvement Activities**

ST and YJ discussed the Buddy Service with the Panel and advised that currently, there isn't much take up on the service from customers. A leaflet had been designed and was passed round to the Panel. Some members commented that the Buddies should not need to have experience with ASB. It was agreed that the criteria for Buddies will be reviewed at the next meeting, however the leaflet the Panel were reviewing at this meeting was aimed at customers to use the service, not recruit Buddies. The leaflet was agreed and will be distributed by Housing Officers on a case by case basis.

Articles for Viewpoint were discussed. It was agreed to do provide info on the Buddy Service, do a Buddy/Victim case study and there should also be a feature about dog fouling on the ASB page of the next edition.

## **8. Value for Money**

YJ and JF explained that savings had been made within the service on the following aspects:

Court Documents are now being served by Fraud Investigators from the Council. This has significantly reduced costs and BCH are not charged again for any return visits.

The postal contract of using pre paid envelopes has reduced the cost of postage.

Members raised concerns with regards to the cost of taxis for meetings. It was agreed that future meetings would be held at 2pm to enable customers to use the bus if they wish to do so. ST also advised that any public transport costs would be reimbursed and customers who use their own vehicles can claim mileage and parking expenses.

## **9. Customer Issues**

The following queries were raised with regards to the service:

Have the cuts within the Police had an affect on the ASB Service?

YJ – No, BCH still work very closely with the Police and have regular partnership meetings with them and other professionals.

Could the types of ASB be put into a league table that highlights what the top 5 complaint types are each quarter?

YJ- The top complaint type is always likely to be noise nuisance. We will look at listing what other frequent complaints there have been to see if any trends can be highlighted. We will bring this information to the next meeting.

Could staff who are off on long term sick not be replaced by temporary staff?

JF- When a member of staff is off sick their post remains open and they are still paid their salary for the first 6 months. Due to budgets, particularly in the current financial climate it is not possible to pay another salary on top of this for a temporary member of staff.

Could customer volunteers be used to help out the ASB team to help when there are staffing issues?  
JF- Due to data protection and confidentiality, insurance and the level of training required, it would not be possible for volunteers to perform Housing Officer duties.

Can shutters not be used when properties are empty to prevent break ins?

JF- Shutters were used in the past and are not cost effective. They can also make areas look worse.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

A Panel member requested that staff members wore their BCH ID at all times.

It was requested that Panel members are provided with a Jargon Buster to help with terms and phrases associated with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

Date & Time of next meeting Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2pm at Coastal House.