MINUTES OF HOUSING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY TASK GROUP

26TH JANUARY 2011

PRESENT:

Councillors Mahoney (Chairman), Cranham, Lewis, Mrs New, Mrs O’Rourke and Miss Watts.

Liz Dunlop (Operational Housing Manager), Emma Rolfe (Estates Management Team Leader), Paul Ansell (Scrutiny Officer), Claire Waleczek (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer (Team Leader)).

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2011 were approved subject to the following amendments:

(i) the reference to CRASBOs in the penultimate paragraph of minute 4 being amended to read ASBOs; and

(ii) the second paragraph of minute 7 being amended to refer to the Council’s Environmental Services team rather than Housing Options team.

Clarification was sought on the removal of ‘no ball games’ signs. Officers informed the Task Group that this arose from an operational management instruction. No new signs were being erected and damaged or broken signs had been removed. An audit had yet to be undertaken to establish if all signs had now been removed, it was emphasised that the issue had been discussed in great depth with the Council’s Legal Services team and the signs were unenforceable under any legislation.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Councillor Srivastava.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs New declared a general personal interest by virtue of being a Warwickshire County Council employee.

4. CASE STUDIES

The Task Group considered five case studies of anti-social behaviour which had been circulated with the agenda. The cases reflected all criteria within the anti-social behaviour procedures and showed examples of partnership working.

Case study 1 – minor

The tenant’s partner bred working dogs. A neighbour alerted the Council as they were concerned about the welfare of puppies being kept in a shed during the extreme weather during the winter. The Council advised the RSPCA of the situation. A joint home visit was made with the dog warden. Following the visit,
a number of actions were agreed. The action was undertaken within 7 days and the case was closed.

The Task Group queried whether the breeding of dogs was acceptable in a Council owned property and whether it should be a prohibitive condition of a tenancy agreement. Officers reported that, as part of the development of tenancy agreements, positive pet ownership should be promoted, with guidance being given to tenants on the keeping of pets where possible.

Case study 2 – serious

A neighbour had complained about a specific incident of noise nuisance arising from a party held at an adjacent property. The tenant had attempted to talk to the perpetrator but they had become aggressive. Officers visited the perpetrator with the agreement of the complainant. They agreed that the incident had escalated. Evidence sheets were left with the complainant. Community Safety Wardens were alerted to the incident in order that extra monitoring of the area could be undertaken. The complainant was contacted a fortnight later and was satisfied that no further incidents had occurred. It was agreed with the complainant that the case be closed.

Case study 3 – serious

Two youths on a Council housing estate were causing anti-social behaviour. There was no motive for targeting the victim. Following the complaint, the victim was visited by a housing officer. A fireproof shroud was fitted to the letterbox of the property. The tenant was referred to Victim Support. Following visits to the youth’s parents, warning letters were sent outlining the issues of tenancy conditions.

The Task Group was concerned that, in this case, the criteria was set as serious rather than very serious. It was agreed that in cases involving fire, the criteria be reviewed and amended.

Case study 4 – very serious

The Council was made aware of this case by the Police following a complaint of racial abuse. The Council did not receive a direct complaint. Statements had already been taken by the police. A representative from Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership (WREP) also visited the complainant and offered support. Following further investigations, it was established that the complainant had mental health issues which her husband had been attempting to cope with, with no agency support. The complainant was sectioned under the Mental Health Act and received appropriate support. The case was closed.

Case study 5 – serious (escalating to very serious)

This case related to a longstanding council tenant with a history of drug abuse, resulting in mental health issues. The tenant had refused to engage with the Mental Health service due to issues relating to his family history. The tenant had made continuous complaints of noise nuisance against his neighbours arising from his sleep patterns and psychosis. Neighbours had also made complaints against the tenant. Following liaison with the police, it was agreed that the tenant be located to a high rise flat. The tenant caused technical problems by telephoning the concierge scheme persistently. Further to ongoing monitoring of the tenant’s situation, an employee was threatened at a home visit. Court proceedings were instigated and an interim injunction was granted. The situation has now reached such a point that the tenant cannot longer be managed by the Council. An application had been made to the court for possession proceedings and a full injunction.
With reference to the cases considered, the Task Group was very impressed with the excellent positive efforts with partnership working.

5. PROGRAMME OF WORK

The Task Group considered its future programme of work. It was agreed that the Group apply the best practice model from the Housing Quality Network checklists with regard to anti-social behaviour. The Task Group would also receive feedback from the Tenants Readers’ Panel and the Estates Management Service User Group on the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Findings from the two groups would be available in late February 2011.

Information from these sources would be collated and referred to Cabinet as part of the Task Group’s report and recommendations.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Task Group be held in late February/early March 2011 on a date to be arranged.

CHAIRMAN