

REPORT TO: Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 11th June 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Petition concerning Anti-Social Behaviour at Upton Rocks Park

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To make the Board aware of a petition that was submitted by a resident of Ascot Gardens, Widnes in April 2019. The petition asks for robust action to be taken around the anti-social behaviour that residents are experiencing in Upton Rocks Park. The petition was supplied by 67 residents of Ascot Gardens.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) **The petition be noted; and**
- ii) **The Board consider and discuss the information presented and raise any questions of interest or points of clarification following the presentation.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The petition submitted by the residents referred to and gave evidence of action by “a minority of youth who are causing mayhem and unhappiness in the area”. The petitioners made reference to a recent meeting that had taken place between representatives of the Council, the Police and local residents. Discussions took place at that meeting about efforts that were being made to deter and prevent the anti-social behaviour in the area and the petition present details of the type of experiences local residents had witnessed.

3.2 What follows in this report are details of the action that have or will be undertaken by the Council and its partners in order to ensure that such incidents are avoided in the future. The Ward Councillors are very aware of the issues involved and have been working with the residents and police to address the issue identified by the petitioners.

4.0 **ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN**

- 4.1 Problem solving measures previously implemented at the location have included hedge cutting in the park and surrounding areas, an ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) Camera installed in the park, increased police activity and meetings with local elected members and the community. Local authority monitored CCTV coverage has been improved on the carpark (shop area). A further prototype camera was installed within the park area at the beginning of May.
- 4.2 Overt and covert Police resources continue to be deployed at weekends and school holidays where resources allow. Dispersal powers are regularly authorised and utilised by Police to target those causing or encouraging anti-social behaviour. Widnes Beat team will continue working on this issue with partners and the local community.
- 4.3 Work continues with the Fire service and partner agencies to reduce the number of deliberate fires. The community has been asked to support this by securing their bins where they cannot easily be accessed, to reduce the opportunity of the bins being targeted.
- 4.4 As a reassurance measure, a Community Knife Sweep and litter pick was held at Upton Rocks Park on 16th February. Local residents, Councillors and partners attended the event and articles recovered during the sweep included a knife and a small quantity of other articles that could be used as improvised weapons.
- 4.5 There is an established escalation process for those identified as involved in ASB. In addition to dispersal powers, home visits are conducted to speak with parents and highlight the issues their children have been involved in. Consideration is given to arrest, prosecution and the use of orders where necessary to manage those who persist in this behaviour.
- 4.6 Over the last six months, an appeal has been made for Home-Watch Coordinators. The PCSO has now secured an increase in volunteers to six accredited schemes. This provides an additional means of community surveillance and importantly an alternative means of communication with local residents.
- 4.7 '*Operation Sanction*', has been introduced as part of the safeguarding and policing response in order to address the issue of youths engaging in poor behaviour at the location, exploring potential issues with alcohol/drugs/nitrous oxide and a lack of parental supervision. The Operation runs on Friday evenings and involves other agencies such as fire, schools and outreach workers. In addition to challenging and dealing with those engaged in ASB, the Operation also aims to improve intelligence on those attending the area and identify the minority who engage in criminal behaviour.

- 4.8 Meetings continue between partners including Police, Local authority, Local Councillors, Fire and other supporting agencies as well as community representatives. The meetings provided an opportunity to discuss the work being done and direct areas for continued action. The latest meeting was on 23rd April 2019.
- 4.9 An environmental survey to review the design and layout of the park and surrounding areas has recently been conducted by the Local Authority and partners to identify opportunities for reducing the likelihood of anti-social behavior. Improved LED lighting and landscape works will be undertaken. Fencing/closing off the park was considered but deemed not feasible.
- 4.10 Liaison has taken place with taxi companies and local authority licensing in relation to the use of taxis by youths accessing the area. British Transport Police are also supporting in identifying if any youths are travelling from outside of the area using the rail network.
- 4.11 The Schools Officer continues to work with schools to educate and raise awareness around anti-social behaviour and the impact on the local community. *For more information see @CheshireSSYP on Twitter.*
- 4.12 A number of opportunities for long term youth engagement are being explored to provide sustainable resources / places where the youths can go. Working is continuing with the local community to identify volunteers and to provide ideas for youth engagement and diversion as well as exploring opportunity to enhance the local communities use of the park at affected times.
- 4.13 The support of the local community is essential in securing long-term sustainable improvement for the area. Parents are being encouraged to talk with their children to understand where they are going in the evenings, encourage them to behave responsibly and not to place themselves in a position where they become involved with this type of behaviour or become vulnerable due to the behaviour of others. Those directly responsible for engaging in criminal behaviour are thankfully in the minority, but anyone with information about offences committed in the area are being encouraged to contact the Police.

5.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None identified.

6.0 **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policing, Local Authority resources and funding are limited, however the location will remain a priority and the Police and Local Authority

will continue to work closely with partners and the community to ensure long term measures are in place to reduce the number of incidents being experienced.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is an important priority as is ensuring that there are activities available for young people to take part in.

7.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None identified.

7.3 A Healthy Halton

None identified.

7.4 A Safer Halton

A key priority for the Council is to provide a safe environment for those who live and visit the Borough. The Council, through the Community Safety Partnership is committed to deliver on this priority.

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1 None identified.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

9.1 None identified.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.