

Meeting of:	<b>Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Wednesday, 12 May 2021</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and Social Cohesion - Joint Working between Social Landlords and Community Safety
Purpose of Report:	To note the development of joint working protocols between the Community Safety Team and Social Landlords in the Vale of Glamorgan.
Report Owner:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Deb Gibbs - Principal Community Safety Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report will affect all residents and therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken. The report has been reviewed by Officers from the Legal and Finance teams.
Policy Framework:	This report is within the Policy Framework and Budget.
Executive Summary:	<p>This report shares progress on the joint working between the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team within Community Safety, and social landlords with properties in the Vale of Glamorgan.</p> <p>The report sets out the key challenges and developments between the Community Safety Team and social landlords in working together and jointly responding to social cohesion issues across the Vale. The report also sets out some of the challenges faced by the team during the Covid-19 pandemic and looks at some of the key achievements that have come out of this period when working with social landlords.</p>

## **Recommendations**

1. That Scrutiny considers the developments in joint working between the Community Safety team and social landlords
2. That Scrutiny considers how the ASB and Community Cohesion team has been impacted by the effects of Covid-19 and how the team continues to support the Council's response to the pandemic.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To provide Scrutiny with the information needed to exercise oversight of the council's function within the Safer Vale Partnership.
2. To provide Scrutiny with information on the impact of the pandemic on ASB and Community Cohesion across the Vale and the flexible response by the Community Safety Team to the rapid and unexpected change in demand and service provision.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The control and management of ASB and ensuring Community Cohesion are functions carried out by the Community Safety Team within the Council. The team is responsible for dealing with antisocial behaviour and community cohesion issues across the whole of the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.2 The team work in partnership with a range of agencies both internally and externally to ensure that the most appropriate response is implemented. The team are co-located with Police Officers in Barry Police Station to support more effective partnership working. The team comprises of a Community Cohesion Officer, a Community Safety Support Officer and a Community Safety Support Assistant who work under the direction of a Community Safety Manager.
- 1.3 The team is accountable to the Safer Vale Partnership and provide updates to the Safer Vale Partnership Strategic Board to show the progress made on the Safer Vale Partnership Strategy Action Plan.
- 1.4 The team is responsible for receiving, recording and responding to instances of antisocial behaviour that are reported to South Wales Police, along with referrals made by external partner agencies.

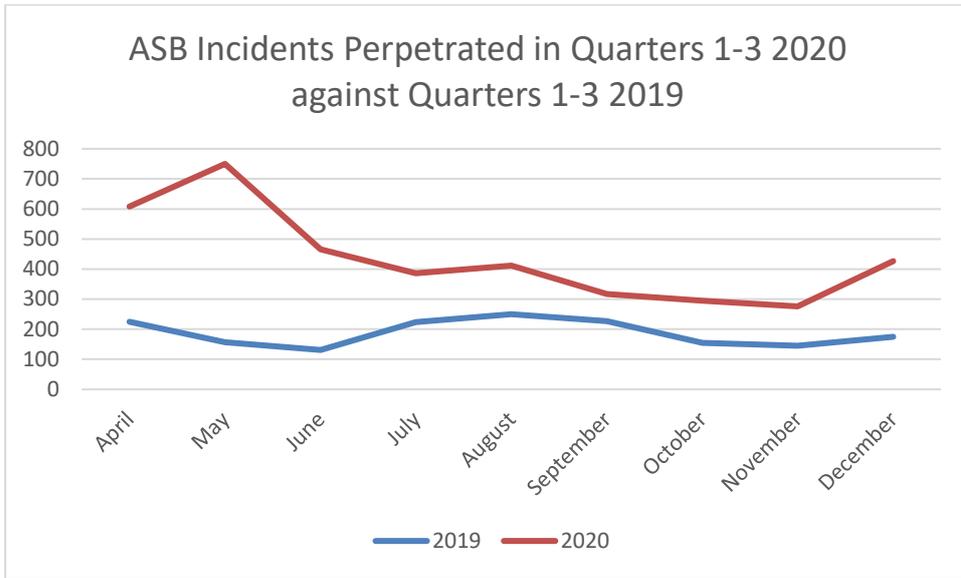
- 1.5 Complex or recurring issues are taken to the team's problem-solving group, which uses a multi-agency approach towards finding joint solutions to any ongoing anti-social behaviour.
- 1.6 In addition to the problem-solving group, the team work flexibly and closely with social landlords in the Vale of Glamorgan to maximise joint working and promote open, clear communication.
- 1.7 This means that in the Vale, the Community Safety Team work closely with the Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing Service, Wales and West, Hafod, Newydd, and United Welsh Housing Associations, along with third sector support providers commissioned to provide support by the Council through the Housing Support Grant.

## 2. Key Issues for Consideration

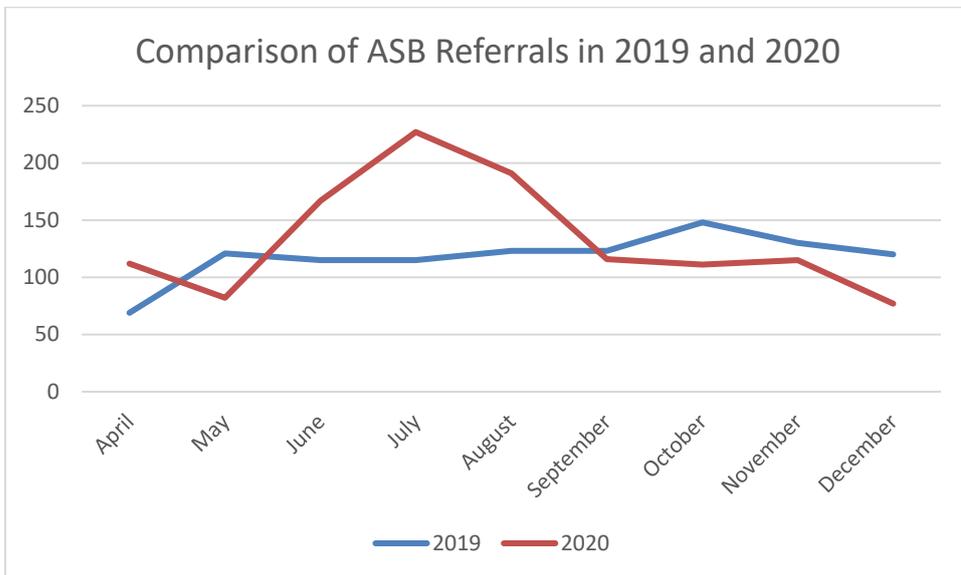
- 2.1 In the first quarter of lockdown (April-June 2020) the team dealt with 1,824 ASB incidents. This was a significant increase of 1311 (256%) from the 513 incidents that were received during the same period in the previous year. The table below shows the number of these received by housing provider, where this information is available.

REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORD	NUMBER OF ASB INCIDENTS
Hafod Housing Association	27
Newydd Housing Association	56
Rhondda Housing Association	1
United Welsh Housing Association	29
Vale of Glamorgan Council	179
Wales and West Housing Association	26

- 2.2 This increased demand created a large resource pressure on the team which was also having to adapt to new ways of working with most of the team working from home and only a small number in the police station to manage and coordinate demand.
- 2.3 The increase was a direct reflection of the impact of Covid-19 regulations for the lockdown with a large number of the incidents relating to gatherings that exceeded the authorised number, or other breaches of the restrictions that were in place. A large number were also as a result of reporting of Covid-19 breaches between neighbours. This type of reporting has also been responsible for an increase in tensions on some housing estates. The graph below shows the number of ASB incidents received in the first three quarters of 2020 compared with the same time period in 2019.



**2.4** As a reflection of this, most of these incidents were recorded as 'environmental ASB' and did not result in referrals being made. However, ASB referrals also saw an increase from the previous year with 361 referrals processed between April - June 2020 compared with 305 in the same quarter of the previous year. The ASB referrals continued to rise until the third quarter of 2020 when a decrease occurred. The graph below shows the ASB referrals received across the first three quarters of 2020 compared with the same time period in 2019.



**2.5** This graph demonstrates the high levels of ASB perpetrated by individuals who are tenants of social housing landlords, which in turn highlights the importance of a close working relationship between them and the Community Safety Team in order to identify effective and swift solutions to complaints of ASB.

- 2.6** Protocols were established several years ago for joint training to be carried out between Community Safety and the Vale's Housing department in order to maximise the delivery of effective and timely services to residents of the Vale of Glamorgan. These protocols have continued but the team has also increased the different ways in which they interact with Registered Social Landlords.
- 2.7** Joint working practices have been embedded in core day to day business activities in response to ASB reports. These include joint Acceptable Behaviour Contracts; co-ordinating multi-agency meetings and task and finish groups to resolve complex cases; for complex and persistent cases, installing and reviewing deployable CCTV cameras to capture evidence to pursue enforcement actions
- 2.8** The ASB and Neighbourhood Housing Teams with supporting statements from South Wales Police successfully obtained a partial Closure Order in the Vale of Glamorgan for a council property. The rationale for this enforcement was to reduce the high risk of harm to the tenants and local community from drug activity. This type of action has a positive impact and helped the Council and local RSLs to manage complex tenant behaviour and sustain tenancies.
- 2.9** The ASB and Housing teams have also developed a process whereby joint letters are sent, and joint visits are carried out to show a unified and robust response to issues. Joint working also ensures shared intelligence and better communication and to develop and implement best practice to break the cycle of ASB.
- 2.10** Operationally, Covid-19 meant that, as with most service areas, face to face engagement and interactions ceased and meetings were held online. The Problem Solving Group (PSG) and task and finish groups met via Teams on Office 365 to enable attendance and joint working. This method has been shown to work especially well and will continue to operate in this manner post pandemic.
- 2.11** Visits to ASB perpetrators homes stopped between March 2020 and June 2020 for safety reasons, however since June, visits have recommenced because of the availability of PPE and following the completion of a risk assessment to ensure staff safety.
- 2.12** The majority of the community tensions that have been brought to the attention of the team have been regarding parking, cannabis use and neighbours reporting neighbours for Covid-19 breaches. It has become evident that the combination of everyone locked in the home, people having to work from home and children home schooling has resulted in less tolerance to noise, which is not necessarily anti-social behaviour, but is a level of noise that individuals were previously unfamiliar with.
- 2.13** These concerns have been raised at Safer Vale Operational and Strategic Board level and remain areas that are monitored through the risk register. Much of the work regarding community tensions is carried out by the Community Cohesion Officer in the team. Funding for this role was awarded in 2019 to support cohesion around Brexit and was due to end in June 2021. It has recently been

announced that this funding will be extended to the end of March 2022 which will greatly support the demands created as a result of Covid-19.

- 2.14** An example of successful joint working between the Community Safety Team and a social landlord was in Caerleon Road, Dinas Powys. The area had experienced several historic incidents of ASB which increased following the completion of a new housing development in the vicinity. Issues included riding bikes across lawns, snapping branches, congregating on resident's walls, dragging guttering and building rubble across the estate, swearing at residents and being loud at unreasonable hours. There were also complaints in relation to off road bikes and quads, fly tipping and speeding. A case study showing this positive joint working is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.15** In response to the increasing ASB issues, a request was also made for some funding, from a Capital Award previously agreed for the upgrade of CCTV, to be released for the purchase of five re-deployable CCTV cameras. The intention was for these cameras to be positioned in hotspot locations to provide targeted surveillance as a prevention tool until the crime or disorder in the area was resolved or under control.
- 2.16** Five cameras were purchased in September 2020, one of which was installed in Caerleon Road. The camera was monitored for any displacement of antisocial behaviour and to date, no displacement has been evidenced.
- 2.17** An area of significant concern for both Community Safety and social landlords, is the impact of the increased instances of neighbours reporting neighbours for ASB and Community Cohesion issues. In line with national trends, overall levels of social cohesion have been affected by the pandemic and the nature of ASB and community cohesion predict that this is more likely to have ongoing and escalating negative repercussions which will extend beyond the societal changes brought about by the pandemic.
- 2.18** A further area of future development for the improvement in joint working between social landlords and the Community Safety Team is around formalising information sharing. The lack of a shared system mean that most information sharing is reliant on the good relationships that have been formed between individuals in each of the teams. Whilst this is currently a working arrangement, it lacks the future proofing needed to ensure a system that will continue to progress.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Long Term: The ASB team and social landlords working together actively seeks to reduce crime and disorder in the long term and to create sustainable solutions for those who are victims of crime and disorder in the Vale.
- 3.2** Preventative: The ASB team and social landlords working together have a particular focus on the prevention of ASB and disorder. The teams work together and with partners, including the community to target areas for prevention and to share information to create effective responses.
- 3.3** Integration: The ASB and Community Cohesion Teams work in accordance with the Safer Vale Partnership Strategy 2020-2023 that has been adopted by all partners and integrated within the existing programmes of work.
- 3.4** Collaboration: The ASB and Community Cohesion Teams work in collaboration with social landlords and in a partnership with South Wales Police and through many multi-agency settings to develop joint responses to dealing with ASB and disorder in the Vale of Glamorgan. The team are accountable to the Safer Vale Partnership Operational and Strategic groups who monitor collaborative working and progress.
- 3.5** Involvement: Residents of the Vale of Glamorgan are frequently consulted, and routine involvement of residents is ensured through collaboration with Neighbourhood groups throughout the Vale.

### **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 4.1** The Community Safety and Community Cohesion Co-ordinator teams are funded by the Council's general fund, Police and Crime Commissioner Funding and Welsh Government funding.
- 4.2** The funding from both Welsh Government and the Police and Crime Commissioner is annually agreed, which presents challenges for longer term planning and sustainability.

#### **Employment**

- 4.3** There are no specific employment implications as a result of this report.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.4** There are no specific legal implications that arise as a consequence of this report
- 4.5** The ASB and Community Cohesion Teams work across all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan.

### **5. Background Papers**

None.

## **Community Safety and United Welsh Housing Association Joint Working Case Study**

The first incidents regarding neighbour tensions were reported to the Community Safety Team in the Summer of 2019 in Caerleon Road, Dinas Powys. There had been general historic anti-social behaviour (ASB) within the existing housing estate, however a new housing development built within this community had begun to cause tensions between the residents of the new and existing developments.

The majority of complaints were from residents in the new estate reporting issues with youths. These included, but were not limited to, youths riding their bikes across other people's lawns, snapping branches, congregating on resident's walls, dragging guttering, and building rubble across the estate, swearing at residents and being loud at unreasonable hours.

Concerns were also raised in relation to off road bikes and quads, fly tipping and speeding.

The Community Safety Team worked in partnership to develop solutions to the issues. A multi-agency task and finish group was set up, including United Welsh Registered Social Landlord (RSL), Community Safety, South Wales Police, Youth Services, Youth Offending Team to develop joint solutions to the problem. Following this, fortnightly catch ups were held to report progress and communicate next steps. A range of actions were agreed, and progress was managed through these fortnightly meetings:

- The Community Safety Team conducted a leaflet drop with information regarding ASB. This leaflet detailed what type of behaviour would not be tolerated and clearly communicated how residents should report ASB.
- United Welsh (RSL) arranged for skips to be hired so that residents could dispose of their rubbish without it being fly tipped and to improve the environment.
- Re-deployable CCTV was installed by the Council on the 14th September 2020.
- United Welsh (RSL) obtained a Civil Injunction for the most problematic adults.
- Multi agency engagement events took place using The Reassurance Engagement Vehicle (TREV) as a base to speak with the community to try and bring people together. This provided some success in breaking down misconceptions between the two estates and provided a platform upon which they were able to talk to each other. During the time there we asked if they would like some further joint engagement events, and they confirmed that they were keen for this to happen.
- Police increased patrols of the area.

There are early indications that reports to the Police and United Welsh Housing Association have reduced. Therefore, at present agencies are monitoring this area and will look to reduce their presence and remove the deployable CCTV when its agreed that it is appropriate to do so.

United Welsh (RSL) has submitted details of this joint work for an award in recognition of the good partnership work undertaken and the result is currently awaited.