

Report subject	Make Ashley Road Safe Petition
Meeting date	15 December 2021
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>At the Council meeting on 14 September 2021, a petition was presented entitled "Make Ashley Road Safe Petition". The petition stated that "Drug use, drug dealing, theft, fighting, intimidation, abuse and public indecency on Ashley Road has been causing residents, shoppers and shop workers misery over the last few of years."</p> <p>The petition called for "BCP Council and Dorset Police to take action and end the serious anti-social behaviour issues and illegal activity that residents witness every day on Ashley Road, Poole."</p> <p>This report sets out the Community Safety Partnerships approach to tackling place based anti-social behaviour and the specific work that has been done in Ashley Road to date</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>Cabinet notes the contents of the report and the further actions being undertaken to address crime and anti-social behaviour in the area</p>
Reason for recommendations	To respond to the petition presented to Full Council on the 14 th September
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Bobbie Dove, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services
Corporate Director	Kate Ryan, Chief Operating Officer
Report Authors	<p>Andrew Williams, Head of Safer Communities</p> <p>Sophie Sajic, Head of Street Based Response</p>
Wards	Alderney & Bourne Valley; Newtown & Heatherlands; Parkstone; Penn Hill;

Classification	For Decision
----------------	--------------

Background

1. At the Council meeting on 14 September 2021, a petition was presented entitled "Make Ashley Road Safe Petition". The petition stated that "Drug use, drug dealing, theft, fighting, intimidation, abuse and public indecency on Ashley Road has been causing residents, shoppers and shop workers misery over the last few of years."
2. The petition called for "BCP Council and Dorset Police to take action and end the serious anti-social behaviour issues and illegal activity that residents witness every day on Ashley Road, Poole."
3. The petition was considered by Full Council and the meeting resolved that the petition be referred to the Cabinet for a joint report, to be commissioned between the Council and Dorset Police, and that all Councillors will be invited to attend the meeting when the report is presented.
4. This report details the approach taken to place based anti-social behaviour within BCP whilst also outlining the action and delivery for Ashley Road, the responses by relevant agencies and stakeholders to date, and considers potential next steps following the petition.

Community Safety Partnership Approach to Place-based Issues

5. The BCP Community Safety Partnership, membership of which includes the Council, Police, Probation, Fire and Health services, oversees the partnership work and projects to tackle anti-social behaviour. ASB is a strategic and operational priority of the CSP and a new multi-agency Safer Communities Strategic Group has been established to oversee this work and the development of an ASB Strategy (Terms of Reference attached).
6. The Safer Communities Group also oversees the work of the Partnership Co-ordinating Group (PCG) which is a monthly multi-agency tactical group to oversee hotspot areas relating to crime and disorder across BCP.
7. The PCG also has oversight of the deployment of the Council's Community Safety Accredited Scheme (CSAS) as well as police led targeted operations. At present there are four main areas of focus for the CSAS service: Bournemouth Town Centre, Boscombe, Poole Town Centre and Ashley Road. At Cabinet on 29 September, £500,000 investment was approved for the CSAS team, meaning expansion from 14 officers to 24 officers. New officers will be recruited in the new financial year and tasked on an evidence-based approach to areas with street related ASB.
8. Police targeted operations are also reviewed by the PCG. Operations are generally area focused but can also focus on specific behaviours. For example, in Summer 2021 there have been area focused operations in Bournemouth Town Centre (Operation Fireglow,) Sandbanks and Canford Cliffs (Operation Sandman,) Ashley Road (Operation Nova). These operations are police led, however, attract support from the wider partnership organisations based in the areas or behaviour of focus. Operation Relentless is the force wide response to anti-social behaviour, initiated by the Police and Crime Commissioner. The operation looks to have a visible uniformed presence, multi-agency approach and targeted focus on many forms of

anti-social behaviour. This also includes the development of a “toolkit” for all Police Officers to use to manage incidents of anti-social behaviour, which are prioritised based on risk.

Ashley Road

9. Ashley Road is designated as a secondary shopping area, containing a mix of retail, service sector premises and hospitality venues. The area contains a number of national retailers, alongside many smaller independent stores.
10. As in many areas, incidents of anti-social behaviour in Ashley Road are not always reported through to the Council or Dorset Police. Between April 2021 and September there were 12 reports, relating to street drinking and associated anti-social behaviour, came directly into the Council's ASB Team. Police data shows a 12.03% reduction in crime and ASB reports since 2019, with total recorded ASB and Crime between 1 January 2019 and 30 September 2019 as 449 records compared to 395 records for the same period in 2021. (2020 data is not included as large numbers of reported Covid breaches were recorded as ASB and therefore the figures are not comparable.)

Action to Date

11. In 2019 a community and traders group was established to provide a platform for discussing and tackling issues of crime and disorder with Police and Council Officers. Regular meetings were held, pre-Covid, which were successful in co-ordinating actions amongst agencies to reduce the problems in the area.
12. Subsequently the Ashley Road Traders Association were instrumental in developing a successful bid for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for a dedicated Community Safety Accredited (CSAS) Officer for the area. This officer was appointed in late 2020, and following their training and induction, regular patrols of Ashley Road commenced in January 2021.
13. The CSAS officer covers the Ashley Road area to act as a uniformed presence and address street based anti-social behaviour. This Officer is now funded by the Council and has been made permanent, following the initial period funded by CIL. Since January 2021 the officer has undertaken 575 engagements (many of these will be repeat engagements). 477 of these engagements were self-generated through visible uniformed pro-active patrols. Demonstrating the effective nature of this response, on only 27 occasions has there been a requirement for police escalation, when the behaviour being addressed has warranted this intervention. The Officer has made 25 separate referrals to support services, which include mental health services and St Mungos.
14. In cases of street related anti-social behaviour, many of those committing such acts are vulnerable. Vulnerabilities can range from mental health, street homelessness or addiction and it is important to address the root cause of the behaviour as well as the behaviour itself, in order to establish long term interventions. The balance of enforcement and support is key to this, with outreach and referrals as much of a requirement as enforcement methods. The CSAS role also includes a significant amount of community and business liaison, with officers regularly visiting to encourage correct reporting and to address key nominals and their behaviours.

15. Other work to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the area in recent months has included:

- 2 ASB Injunctions have been granted by the court for individuals causing ASB in the area.
- Recently BCP Council has replaced 2 CCTV cameras in the Ashley Road area with new high-definition cameras. These are now linked to the BCP public spaces CCTV system, which is monitored 24 hours a day.
- Multi-agency meetings with Housing, CSAS, Pivotal, Police, Street Pastors, Ashley Road Traders Association and Economic Development to discuss concerns and share the actions to target crime and ASB. The importance of reporting issues in the correct way has been a regular message from all agencies.
- Working specifically with supported housing providers to ensure they are providing appropriate support to their residents
- A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covers the area and allows CSAS and Police Officers to remove alcohol from anyone acting, or likely to act, in an anti-social manner.
- Dedicated days of action from Dorset Police (Operation Nova) has seen both overt and plain clothes policing targeting those causing disorder or committing crimes.

16. The Council and the Police recognise the community concerns expressed in the Make Ashley Road Safe petition and there is additional work planned to ensure that the issues of anti-social behaviour are dealt with and reassurance is provided to the local community. This planned work will include:

Action	Who	When
Deliver a reporting campaign and engagement with the Ashley Road community to raise awareness of the importance of reporting, how to do so, what the Police and the Council can do to address issues and how to engage with agencies through the existing community groups in place.	BCP Council – ASB/CSAS Teams Dorset Police	November 2021
Further engagement with the Traders Association and local residents. The CSAS Officer will be producing a local newsletter and visiting businesses in the area. Community engagement will be key to addressing issues around under-reporting of anti-social behaviour to the Police and BCP Council.	BCP Council – ASB/CSAS Teams Dorset Police	November 2021

An Environmental Visual Audit by Police Crime Prevention Officers and promotion of the StreetSafe app by which members of the public can report areas where they don't feel safe.	Dorset Police	December 2021
Additional days of action & joint patrols between Police, CSAS and ASB Team.	BCP Council – ASB/CSAS Teams Dorset Police	Monthly
Consideration of the removal of benches, closing of alleyways in ASB locations and other environmental improvements, subject to the outcome of the visual audit.	BCP Council – Environmental Services/ASB team	January 2022
Deployment of addiction support workers into the area to engage with street drinkers.	BCP Council – ASB/CSAS Teams We Are With You	November 2021
Continue to monitor ASB incidents and crimes through the Partnership Co-ordinating Group (PCG)	BCP Council – ASB Team Dorset Police	Monthly
Review of SARA groups & agreement as to which carry on or if any new groups are needed	PCG	November 2021

17. This links to our Cleaner, Greener, Safer programme to reignite pride in our high streets and create spaces that are welcoming to all who visit and enjoy. It is also in line with the new Police & Crime Plan outlined in the attached response from the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Options Appraisal

18. Do nothing – this would gradually see an increase in crime and disorder, if no further activities from the Council or police were undertaken.
19. The PCG could review existing multi-agency area based groups.
20. Undertake planned work as detailed in paragraph 16 above.

Summary of financial implications

21. A dedicated CSAS officer is already funded within the Communities Directorate at a cost of around £40,000 per year, which is now included in the base budget. As there is no additional dedicated resource requirement within the actions proposed, there is no financial implication to this report. If an enhanced response is required at a future date, additional resource may be required.

Summary of legal implications

22. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that all local authorities have a duty to consider the impact of all their functions and decisions on crime and disorder in their local area. Through ongoing work of the Council and the Community Safety Partnership, BCP Council can clearly demonstrate how it meets this duty.

Summary of human resources implications

23. The implementation of Smarter Structures within the Communities Directorate will see an investment in two additional ASB Officers, with one Senior ASB Officer and one Youth ASB Officer being recruited. This is alongside the continued expansion of the CSAS scheme previously approved by Cabinet. Posts are currently subject to recruitment.

Summary of public health implications

24. Some of the anti-social behaviour complained about in the area is caused by street drinking and the use of illegal substances. Many of those who street drink will be dependent alcoholics, where removing alcohol may pose a medical risk. Any enforcement action of this type will always take a balanced and proportionate response.
25. Under the new structures being developed by the Community Safety Partnership a new Reducing Harm from Substance Misuse Strategic Group has been convened to ensure there is a cohesive system wide approach to meet the wide-ranging needs of drug and alcohol misusers and people in recovery across the BCP area, which addresses the community safety implications as well as health issues in relation to substance misuse

Summary of equality implications

26. As the work being proposed within Ashley Road is effectively business as usual, it is not considered necessary to undertake a full Equalities Impact Assessment. An initial Conversation Screening Tool has been completed which records no negative impacts from the proposed actions. The Screening Tool will go the Quality Assurance Panel on 25th November 2021 and any recommendations will be implemented as this work progresses.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Terms of Reference for the Community Safety Partnership Safer Communities Strategic Group

Appendix 2 – Response from the Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner

Background Papers

None