

GRAVESHAM ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY 2019-23



CONTENTS

Foreword	04
Introduction	06
Understanding the Issue	08
Anti-Social Behaviour – What Is It?	
• Definitions	
• Key Legislation	
• Local Policies and Procedures	
The Local Picture	14
• Kent Police recorded ASB	
• Fires – Kent Fire & Rescue Service	
• Fly-tipping	
• Noise Nuisance	
• What local people tell us	
A New Perspective	20
• Prevention	
• Early Identification and Intervention	
• Support	
• Enforcement	
• Communication and Reassurance	
Delivering the Strategy	24

FOREWORD TO THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY



Gravesham Borough Council, and in particular, this Administration, have made a commitment to be a listening council, in touch with its residents. One of the key messages that have come through our consultations and engagement with individuals, families and communities in recent months is the need to ensure we keep people safe particularly in regard to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). The need to tackle ASB and the damaging consequences it has on individuals and families affected, on communities, on perceptions of our town centre and on the local environment, has been clearly identified as a very high priority not just by residents but also by people working here and businesses operating in the Borough.

That is why in October 2019 the Council agreed our new Corporate Plan entitled *'Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of'* would include a key commitment to 'Create Stronger Neighbourhood's' which focuses on the need to prevent, detect and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and safeguard our local residents, businesses and communities. Key to realising this ambition and generating pride in Gravesham is creating a Borough that is consistently clean and well-maintained; neighbourhoods where residents are part of strong, safe communities that are resilient and where people work together, feeling that they

have ownership of their areas.

I am very pleased, therefore, to introduce this Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy which has been developed by Gravesham Borough Council so that we are clear about the detailed approach we are going to take to prevent, detect and reduce ASB over the period of this Council. My thanks go to all of the individuals, families, businesses and communities that helped feed ideas and concerns into this document and the Action Plan that will follow it and also to the Officers of the Council in putting this together and who will be working with the people of Gravesham to help deliver the Strategy.

The Council is committed to improving our services in regards to tackling ASB and investments are already being made so that we can be responsive to the different needs of communities and areas in our Borough.

Tackling ASB to achieve sustainable change is neither a five-minute job nor one that can be accomplished without taking a thorough and robust approach. It needs not only to improve the response to ASB but to take steps to help prevent it from happening in the first place. We need to be clear as a Council and a community about what ASB is and what it is not and who is responsible. That is why this Strategy takes into account how all Council departments (working with partner agencies as necessary) will address ASB right from its root causes through to taking firm enforcement action using all the powers we have under the law against those who repeatedly fail to change their behaviour. We want to make sure we act as quickly as possible when a problem first comes to our attention and very importantly, that we fully support those affected, particularly vulnerable people who find themselves targeted and need additional help to protect themselves.

We hope to resolve many problems without having to take formal action but we must be clear - the Council under this Administration will use all its legal powers to take action against perpetrators where necessary – there needs to be an unequivocal message that Gravesham is not a place where ASB will be tolerated.

Arising from this Strategy, an Action Plan will deal with the issues identified and my Cabinet Committee will be receiving regular updates on its progress. This

Action Plan will be an evolving document, changing to meet the needs of the community and any changes in the law or powers the Council has to tackle ASB.

Communicating with local people is crucial but it is a two-way street ensuring that we feed back on our progress to those affected and the wider community. This Strategy recognises the importance and need to communicate and have ongoing consistent dialogue including between our own departments so that the best and coordinated service is provided to victims and also with the public so that people are kept informed about the work being carried out and the impact that it is having.

Delivering the rounded approach to tackling ASB outlined in this Strategy will make a significant contribution to improving perceptions about Gravesham. It will help raise awareness about the tremendous amount it has to offer and to make it a place where people choose to live and work or spend their leisure time. Importantly, we want to fulfil our Borough's potential and establish it as a safe place where people treat each other and their environment with respect – ultimately, a place to which once people come, they will want to stay and a place with which they will be proud to have a connection.



Councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox
Cabinet Member for
Community and Leisure

INTRODUCTION

Tackling anti-social behavior (ASB) is one of the most important and biggest challenges that we face in our Borough. Gravesham has a great deal to offer: a rich cultural heritage and diversity of population, affordable housing, good schools, a sound local economy and a geographical position that provides excellent links to both London and Europe. However, ASB (both actual and perceived) is probably the single factor that significantly undermines all of these positive features of the Borough.

Local people repeatedly tell us that crime and ASB are amongst their biggest concerns. Residents in urban or semi-rural areas and people who live or work here, may experience different types and levels of ASB but ultimately, whether it is rowdy or drunken behaviour, irresponsible behaviour such as littering or lack of respect for local communities and the environment, the effect is negative and has a considerable impact on quality of life. Everyone should be able to feel safe in their own homes and neighbourhoods, including those operating businesses and visitors to our Borough.

This Strategy includes some basics: clarifying what falls within the definition of ASB and what does not. Some activities are frequently reported to the Council as ASB, for example, drug dealing and drug use on the street, that are criminal acts not ASB and issues that the Council does not have the powers to address – these are matters for the Police and law enforcement agencies. The Strategy also demonstrates that our commitment is to address ASB in all its forms and at all levels. This is in recognition of our understanding that some forms of ASB, sometimes seen as low-level and especially when persistent, can have a devastating impact on its victims. This is particularly the case when that ASB is targeted at people who are vulnerable and are often least able to defend or protect themselves.

Gravesham Borough Council has made a clear commitment to reducing ASB through preventative work, providing support to victims and communities where ASB is more prevalent and using enforcement powers where necessary. Our primary approach will be to reduce ASB by educating people to recognise the impact of their behaviour and where possible, making changes to the physical environment to 'design out' the opportunity for ASB to occur in the first place. However, we will also take a robust stance on enforcement where preventative steps and interventions have failed to change behaviour. We will make full use of powers and tools available to us if that is what is necessary to tackle persistent problems and deal with repeat offenders.

This four-year Strategy has been developed following a review of how the Council deals with ASB in order that different Departments can work more closely together to take a more coordinated approach. This will make the best use of our available resources, ensure that important information is shared between Departments in a timely fashion and ultimately, that the best outcome is achieved for those we are seeking to support. In developing the Strategy, we have taken account of residents' responses to several recent local consultation exercises that have helped to identify ASB priorities and the ways in which we can work better together.

The implementation of the Strategy will be managed by an ASB Strategy Delivery Group comprised of appropriate Department representatives that will be established in Year 1 (2019-20). This will bring together the different service areas across the Council in order that there is a tied-up and cross-departmental approach to addressing ASB. This issue is one that cuts across or affects almost every service that the Council provides, absorbing a huge level of resources both financially and in officer time. At the heart of this approach to dealing with ASB is the recognition that its detrimental impact costs not just time and money, it can cost those affected their health and quality of life and can tarnish neighbourhoods with a poor image that can take years to dispel. It is imperative, therefore, that a unified approach is taken that sees services working in conjunction with each other to achieve the best possible outcomes for our residents and others with a vested interest in the Borough.

The ASB Strategy Delivery Group, with clear Terms of Reference, will create an Action Plan to ensure that this Strategy is fully implemented and that will:

- **Identify initiatives and activities that support each of the stages of the new approach detailed in this document;**
- **Ensure that progress is regularly and fully monitored so that we can easily track what is working well and what needs to change, be transparent and accountable;**
- **Identify gaps in resources necessary to meet the objectives of the Strategy and seek to fill them, including through new investment where possible.**

Reversing the trend of ASB and environmental crime is not impossible and a real commitment to tackling these issues can pay real dividends. People feel safer when their local streets, parks, town centres and wider neighbourhoods are clean and maintained and when they feel reassured that, if they experience ASB, there is support and assistance available to them. By taking a key role in leading work to tackle ASB as quickly as possible, the Council will increase public confidence and trust which will also encourage local communities to develop a sense of pride in their area and a willingness to look after their neighbourhoods.

Recognising that tackling ASB as a corporate priority, this Strategy has been developed to link specifically with the Council's new Corporate Plan 2019-23 and will contribute directly to the achievement of the Plan's objectives by the end of its term.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

Anti-Social Behaviour – What is it?

One of the challenges in defining ASB is that behaviour deemed by one person to be antisocial, distressing, intimidating or causing a nuisance, may be perceived quite differently by another. Additionally, an individual's circumstances may mean that the impact of behaviour is exacerbated e.g. where they have experienced similar problems in the past, have been a victim of crime or have personal characteristics that may increase their vulnerability. Whilst legislative definitions can be used as a rule of thumb and for evidence building, it is important that individual cases circumstances be taken into account.

Definitions

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 defines ASB as an act which *'causes or is likely to 'cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not in the same household'*.

The Home Office Anti-Social Behaviour Research Team has provided some further guidance in stating that it includes *'any aggressive, intimidating or destructive activity that damages or destroys another person's quality of life'*.

The Team also suggested that it is helpful to separate strands of ASB under the following headings:

- **Misuse of public space;**
- **Disregard for the community or personal well-being;**
- **Acts directed at the person;**
- **Environmental damage.**

This Strategy uses these categories to help us define and monitor incidents of ASB that occur in the Borough with the following issues falling under each of these headings:

Misuse of public space	Environmental damage
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Street drinking• Non-aggressive begging• Abandoned cars and other vehicles• Irresponsible cycling• Trading without a licence or permission• Irresponsible disposal of business/ trade waste (other than fly-tipping)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Littering• Irresponsible disposal of household waste• Fly-tipping• Graffiti• Dog fouling• Disregard for planning regulations

Disregard for the community or personal well-being

- Nuisance caused by neighbours or those they allow to occupy their home
- Rowdy, noisy behaviour in otherwise quiet neighbourhoods (especially night-time noise)
- Excessive noise nuisance from pubs, clubs, music or vehicles
- Inappropriate use of fireworks
- Irresponsible lighting of fires

Acts directed at the person

- Intimidation and harassment towards any individual or group including verbal abuse (i.e. rather than directed at the wider community)

The above is not an exhaustive list; any behaviour that is regarded as a nuisance and that has occurred repeatedly may be considered as ASB. It is important that reported incidents are assessed individually taking particular account of the impact on the victim. In some cases, the particular form of ASB or the circumstances in which it is perpetrated may also constitute a criminal offence.

What the Council will not investigate

Gravesham Borough Council is committed to developing and supporting cohesive communities across the Borough but this commitment has to run alongside a reasonable level of tolerance between neighbours and others within neighbourhoods. Residents are encouraged, where possible, to try to resolve their disputes themselves without the need for the Council to become involved. Officers will seek to make a fair evaluation on whether complaints reported are reasonable and determine whether they constitute alleged ASB. There are certain issues that may be reported that the Council will not investigate as ASB. These include:

- Actions that are considered to be normal everyday activities or common household noise e.g. children playing inside or outside their property, doors closing, footsteps;
- Children playing ball games, unless the children are also engaging in associated ASB e.g. verbal abuse or causing damage to property;
- Actions which amount to people being unpleasant to each other but that are not sufficiently serious when considering the likely harm caused, to justify the Council's intervention e.g. people speaking with raised voices;
- Noise disturbance from moving traffic/noise only audible because of poor insulation;
- Cases of illegal drug use, production and supply when there is no associated ASB – these are criminal matters and residents will be advised to report these incidents to Kent Police;
- Parking disputes where there is no associated ASB.

KEY LEGISLATION

Anti-Social Behaviour, Policing and Crime Act 2014

In October 2014, tools and powers available to Local Authorities and partner agencies to address ASB changed with the coming into force of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Policing and Crime Act. This introduced new powers that can be utilised by local Councils, Police, housing providers, the Environment Agency and the National Health Service. Particularly relevant powers include:

- **Civil Injunction**

This injunction can offer speedy and effective protection for victims and communities and set clear standards of acceptable behaviour for offenders whilst preventing their behaviour from deteriorating. The civil injunction, in effect, replaced the formerly used Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

- **Criminal Behaviour Order**

The Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) replaced the Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Order (CRASBO). The Crown Prosecution Service and Local Authorities can apply for it on conviction for any criminal offence in any criminal court. The Order is aimed at addressing the behaviour of the most serious and persistent of offenders with whom other interventions have failed to result in a change in behaviour and where they have consequently been prosecuted before a criminal court.

- **Community Protection Warnings and Notices**

Community Protection Warnings and Notices can be issued by either the Police or Local Authorities. These are measures designed to deal with specific on-going problems or nuisances which negatively impact a community's quality of life by targeting those responsible.

- **Closure Order**

The Closure Order is a fast and flexible tool that can be used to protect victims and communities by quickly closing down premises that are causing nuisance or disorder. This is a two stage process involving the issuing of a Closure Notice (which can be applied for out of court by a Council and the Police) followed by an application to the courts for a Closure Order. If awarded, the Order can require that a property be closed for up to 3 months initially (with a possible extension to 6 months if necessary).

- **Dispersal Power**

Dispersal powers can be exercised by the Police in a range of situations to essentially break up groups and move away individuals engaging in ASB. Whilst only a short-term measure, dispersal arrangements can be put into effect swiftly and provide

some immediate respite to those residents and communities affected.

- **Community Trigger**

The Community Trigger provides victims of ASB who have reported ASB to their Local Authority on three separate occasions and who feel that the response received has been inadequate, to demand action. If the locally defined threshold is met, the Local Authority must then review the steps taken and if necessary, have those steps checked by a peer Authority.

- **Public Space Protection Order**

A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) may be an appropriate tool to address a place-based ASB issue where a problem has been persistent and there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the impact on the quality of life of local people.

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

This legislation provides Local Authorities with effective powers to tackle poor environmental quality and ASB. Many of the provisions relate to powers rather than 'duties' i.e. Councils have some discretion over which powers they choose to use. For the purposes of this Strategy, the key areas covered by the Act include powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices or require remedial action to address:

- Abandoned and nuisance vehicles;
- Littering;
- Graffiti and fly-posting;
- Fly-tipping and irresponsible disposal of waste;
- Dog fouling;
- Noise nuisance.

LOCAL POLICIES

Our Corporate Focus

Gravesham Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2019-2023

The Council's new Corporate Plan has one overriding ambition: to deliver a Gravesham to be proud of by creating:

- **A Borough that is safe, attractive and full of life;**
- **A place where, building on our commitment to tackling climate change, we are considerate of our historical living environment; and,**
- **A Gravesham where local people are put first, ensuring that residents are safe, healthy and active.**

Commitments contained in the Corporate Plan that dovetail with this ASB Strategy include:

- **Creating stronger neighbourhoods:** work with Kent Police on the prevention, detection and reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour and the safeguarding of local residents;
- **Enforcing high regulatory standards:** put customer and employee safety first by ensuring commercial businesses and licence holders are fully compliant with expected legislative standards;
- **Improve the local environment:** deliver projects and initiatives to further increase levels of household recycling and actively address contaminated land and noise, flood and oil pollution in the borough;
- **Creating clean, welcoming neighbourhoods and parks, and an attractive town centre:** a comprehensive programme of street cleansing and high standard of horticultural maintenance;
- **Actively enforcing environmental standards:** use available powers to pursue anyone committing environmental crime or damaging the local environment;
- **Enforce a high quality of private housing:** work with landlords to tackle property standards, empty homes and homes in multiple occupation;
- **Safeguarding residents:** put in place a package of housing measures and creative interventions that support the most vulnerable;
- **Developing a cohesive and resilient community:** implement a leading programme of engagement initiatives, showcasing the Borough's diversity and enabling greater participation in civic life.

Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Strategy 2019-2022

The work of the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is underpinned by a Community Safety Strategy 2019-22 developed following a detailed analysis of local levels of reported crime and ASB and a public consultation exercise to help determine local priorities. Over 40% of respondents to a CSP Community Safety Survey in early 2019 identified ASB as their most serious community safety issue and partner agencies agreed that tackling ASB is one of the most resource-intensive features of their services.

The CSP's key aims in tackling ASB are to:

- Achieve a reduction in recorded levels of ASB (including criminal damage);
- Increase enforcement action against those responsible for environmental crime such as fly-tipping to create cleaner, safer neighbourhoods;
- Reduce the number of deliberate fires that contribute to environmental damage;
- Ensure that people are encouraged and know how to report ASB to reduce repeat victimisation;
- Develop better partnership responses to tackling ASB.

Other key Council Policies and Strategies include, with lead service areas in brackets:

- Accessibility for All (Customer Services);
- Environmental Protection and Animal Control Enforcement Policy (Environmental Protection);
- Empty Property Strategy (Housing Services);
- Equality Objectives (Customer Services);
- Homelessness Strategy (Housing Services);
- Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (Housing Services);
- Planning Enforcement Policy (Planning);
- Safeguarding Policy (Communities);
- Statement of Licensing Policy (Licensing).

THE LOCAL PICTURE

Recorded Levels of ASB

Information and ASB statistics are collated annually as part of the completion of the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership's Strategic Assessment. The information provided below is taken from the most recent Assessment completed at the end of 2018.

Police recorded incidents

Considerable decreases have been in recorded levels of ASB in every Kent District and Medway. In the year ending 30 September 2018, 2,271 incidents were recorded in Gravesham, a reduction of 22.3% compared to the previous year. However, despite this decrease, Gravesham's rate of ASB incidents per 1,000 population remained the second highest in Kent at 21.4 incidents compared to a Kent average rate of 17.6 incidents.

Area	Oct 16- Sept 17	Oct 17- Sept 18	% +/-	17-18 rate per 1,000 pop.
Ashford	2,106	1,691	-19.7%	13.3
Canterbury	3,545	2,753	-22.3%	16.8
Dartford	2,568	1,881	-26.7%	17.5
Dover	3,015	2,201	-27.0%	19.0
Gravesham	2,923	2,271	-22.3%	21.4
Maidstone	3,295	2,782	-15.6%	16.6
Medway	8,309	5,815	-30.0%	20.9
Sevenoaks	1,729	1,433	-17.1%	12.0
Shepway	2,420	1,753	-27.6%	15.7
Swale	3,534	2,844	-19.5%	19.4
Thanet	4,744	3,852	-18.8%	27.3
Tonbridge and Malling	2,150	1,522	-29.2%	11.8
Tunbridge Wells	1,936	1,325	-31.5%	11.2
Kent	42,365	32,209	-24.0%	17.6

As in other Districts, those Wards in Gravesham covering the town centre experienced a higher level of ASB incidents: the greatest number was recorded in Pelham Ward (373 incidents or 16.4% of the total) whilst Riverside and Central recorded 199 and 354 incidents respectively. Northfleet North, was the single primarily residential Ward recording a higher than average level of ASB (233 incidents).

Environmental Incidents

Fires – Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS)

Total fires

In the year ending 30 September 2018, Gravesham recorded a total of 321 fires in the Borough – 21 more than the previous year or an increase of 7.5%. This compares to an average decrease of 2.5% seen across Kent.

Total Fires recorded by KF&RS			
Area	Oct 16- Sept 17	Oct 17- Sept 18	% +/-
Gravesham	300	321	7.0%
Kent	4,600	4,486	-2.5%

Riverside Ward alone accounted for 88 (or over a quarter) of all fires recorded in the Borough. This was also twice the number of fires recorded in the Ward in the previous year and Riverside Ward has continued to have the greatest number of fires recorded in any Ward across all Kent Districts. Fires in the Ward have been mainly deliberate rubbish fires or firesetting linked to ASB with a heavy concentration of incidents occurring in and around the Denton area. Other Gravesham Wards experiencing a higher number of fires are: Northfleet North (44 fires) and Shorne Cobham and Luddesdown (26 fires).

Deliberate fires

In respect of deliberate fires, Gravesham has seen a 15.8% increase (25 additional fires) compared to a Kent-wide average reduction of 9.4%. A third of all deliberate fires in Gravesham took place in Riverside Ward (62 fires) and other key Wards were Northfleet North (21 fires) and Pelham (16 fires).

Deliberate Fires recorded by KF&RS			
Area	Oct 16- Sept 17	Oct 17- Sept 18	% +/-
Gravesham	158	183	15.8%
Kent	1,953	1,770	-9.4%

Fly-tipping

'Fly-tipping' is the common term used to describe waste illegally deposited on land under s.33 Environment Protection Act 1990. Local and Central Government narrow this term down to represent any waste dumped that is too large to be removed by a normal hand-sweeping barrow. In simple terms, a single full bin bag upwards may constitute a fly-tip.

Fly-tipping information has been extracted from data published by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and relates to the financial year 2017-18. Fly-tipping is seen as a key manifestation of ASB and potentially, a factor in crime and fear of crime and is frequently linked to deliberate fire-setting. It has an adverse effect on the quality of life of local residents and also affects economic development/tourism, making areas less attractive to potential investors and visitors.

Total Fly-tipping Incidents 2017-2018		
Area	Volume	As a % proportion of the total
Ashford	1,249	6.3%
Canterbury	1,044	5.2%
Dartford	2,366	11.9%
Dover	1,077	5.4%
Gravesham	2,122	10.7%
Maidstone	1,041	5.2%
Medway	3,525	17.7%
Sevenoaks	852	4.3%
Shepway	746	3.7%
Swale	2,610	13.2%
Thanet	1,940	9.7%
Tonbridge and Malling	507	2.5%
Tunbridge Wells	819	4.2%
Kent	19,898	100.0%

There are two key elements involved in fly-tipping: cases in which traders will collect waste for a fee but then dispose of it illegally and irresponsibly; and, cases in which householders do not use civic amenity sites or do not want to pay for the disposal of waste and choose to fly-tip instead. Bona fide operators are required to have a licence and waste transfer

certificate and members of the public should be encouraged further to ask to see these documents before contracting someone to remove waste for them.

The most common action taken where evidence is forthcoming is the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs). During the financial year 2017-18, Gravesham issued 28 FPNs.

Environmental Protection – Noise Nuisance

The Council's Environmental Health Officers will often be the first point of contact when there is ASB occurring that involves noise nuisance. In 2018-19, there were 543 reports of noise nuisance with a significant proportion (over a third) being disturbance caused by loud music.

Noise complaints 2018-19 – Environmental Protection		
Noise Category	No. of complaints	As % of total
Alarm	25	4.6%
Alarm (intermittent)	11	2.0%
Animals (other than dogs)	10	1.8%
DIY	27	5.0%
Dog barking	93	17.1%
Fireworks	1	0.2%
Machinery	15	2.8%
Music	193	35.6%
Other	35	6.4%
Party	23	4.2%
People	72	13.2%
Plant (Construction)	15	2.8%
Public house	1	0.2%
Shooting	1	0.2%
Street noise	7	1.3%
Television	11	2.0%
Vehicles	1	0.2%
Vehicle repairs	2	0.4%
Total	543	100.0%

WHAT LOCAL PEOPLE TELL US

Corporate Plan Consultation

Gravesham Borough Council recognises that effective consultation helps build trust and public confidence and, ultimately, leads to better-informed decision making. Over 800 Gravesham residents, businesses and community groups took part in our Corporate Plan consultation exercise, providing over 2,500 individual pieces of information and intelligence relating to community requests for Council provision and intervention.

Leading themes identified from the consultation process that are particularly relevant to this ASB Strategy include:

- **Positive enforcement:** whether in regards to littering, planning conditions, housing tenancies or private housing standards, the clear message was for the Council to take a proactive stance to enforcement;
- **A local 'green' offer:** management of parks, accessible green spaces, greater horticultural coverage and improvements to play sites and the town centre street scene;
- **Economic regeneration:** a clear message was for the Council to take a more hands-on role in shaping Gravesham as a 'place' and to set out our economic plans for the future;
- **Clean environment:** a commitment to cleanliness in all forms; refuse, littering, flytipping, graffiti, parks. The Gravesham environment was the highest scoring theme.
- **Tackling homelessness/vulnerable residents with a focus on increased Council support.**

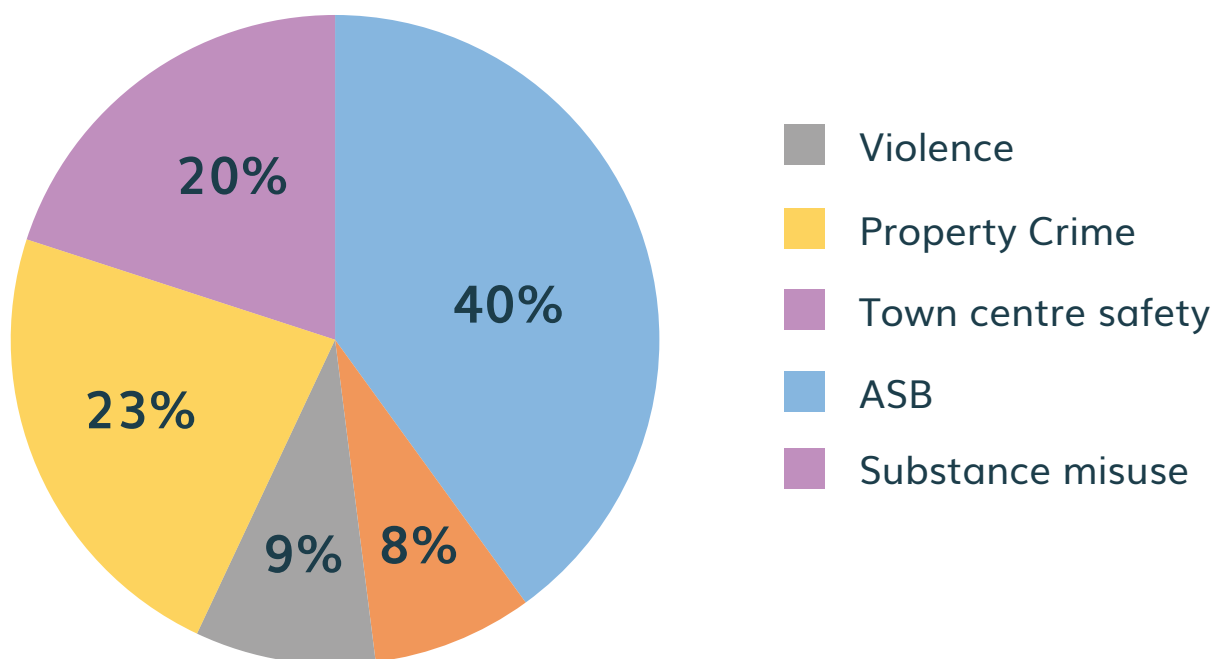
Community Safety Survey 2019

The need for local people to be given an opportunity to voice their views and opinions is recognised as crucially important in achieving long-term change and improving community safety. Whilst statistics can provide a good foundation in identifying priorities, relying on them alone may result in issues that are key concerns in local neighbourhoods being missed.

A public opinion survey was conducted between 18 February and 3 March 2019 which was made available on both the Gravesham and Dartford Borough Council websites and via each Borough's social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. People who either live or work in Dartford or Gravesham were invited to complete the survey which asked them to identify those community safety issues that, in their experience, were of the greatest concern in their neighbourhood. A total of 420 people responded – 299 (71.19%) of these either lived or worked in Gravesham and 121 (28.81%) of respondents either lived or worked in Dartford.

Respondents were asked to select the **single MOST important issue** in their local area. 407 people answered this question and the vast majority stated that ASB was their main concern – 163 (40.05% of all respondents).

Single most important concern in local areas



Once people had identified what they felt was the most important issue in their area, they were also asked to choose their top three concerns within that category. Of those who had selected ASB, the top three issues were: fly-tipping (42.0%); ASB associated with drug use and supply (40.0%) and noisy/rowdy behaviour (39.0%).

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

All Local Authorities, including our own, have been working with partner agencies to try to reduce ASB for a number of years. Reviewing our approach has allowed us to take stock of what works well but more importantly, helped us to identify ways in which we can be more effective. We believe that a balanced approach should begin with prevention and community involvement as our primary objective is to stop ASB from happening at all. Where ASB is already occurring, early identification, supportive intervention and ultimately, enforcement when necessary, are all key to finding long-term and sustainable solutions.

Investing in one type of intervention alone will not necessarily address the wider causes or manage the consequences of ASB, therefore, the model being adopted is more comprehensive with 4 different stages. These stages are applicable to all forms of ASB but there does not always have to be a linear progression from one stage to the next. Cases should be considered on an individual basis and not all stages may be necessary or appropriate all of the time e.g. whilst we would want to prevent fly-tipping from happening, in the event of a perpetrator being identified and evidence being sufficient to support a prosecution, we would proceed directly to the enforcement stage.

A structured Approach



Prevention and Community Involvement

Ideally, we want to stop ASB before it happens. A systematic approach to prevention will include the following:

- Educating people and raising awareness of the forms and consequences of engaging in ASB, making clear what is acceptable and what is not acceptable behaviour and promoting respect for others and environments;
- Taking into consideration opportunities to design-out opportunities for ASB through minor changes to the physical environment and to ensure that new developments take into account features to prevent ASB e.g. adequate lighting, CCTV;
- Providing a visible and uniformed presence (and increasing visibility through joint work with partner agencies) in areas where ASB is more prevalent;
- Ensuring that children and young people in particular have access to facilities and activities that will encourage them to spend their leisure time constructively;
- Working with local residents in areas where ASB is a concern to bring them together through community development initiatives to create a sense of ownership and pride in their local neighbourhoods;
- Working with schools/education providers to make clear that bullying and ASB is unacceptable by encouraging citizenship and social responsibility;
- Working with Council Members and community and faith leaders to address ASB in Council Wards where it is most prevalent.

Early Identification

When ASB does occur, our objective is to act quickly with informal interventions to 'nip it in the bud', minimise impact and prevent the particular problem from escalating. This work could include:

- Providing advice and support to the victim, taking account of any particular vulnerabilities and signposting to other agencies and services as appropriate;
- Considering the option of using restorative justice or facilitating mediation between the offender/s and victim/s;
- Issuing initial warning letters to identified offenders;
- Using Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs);
- Encouraging young people as at risk of or having begun to engage in ASB to take advantage of diversionary activities available;
- Using Parental Control Agreements;
- Issuing Community Protection Warnings.

Supportive Intervention

Our approach recognises that some perpetrators may have certain personal characteristics or support needs that are influencing their behaviour and that also make them vulnerable. The Council and partner agencies have safeguarding responsibilities that apply equally to victims and to those who may be causing ASB inadvertently due to complex needs. When initial investigation into complaints of ASB establish this to be the case, concerted efforts will be made to encourage the individual/s concerned to get the help and assistance they need to modify their behaviour. Supportive intervention may include (with consent where appropriate):

- Referral to local drug and alcohol treatment service providers;
- Referral to the Gravesham multi-agency Vulnerability Panel;
- Intervention provided by the Homelessness Prevention and Outreach Service;
- Direct referrals to statutory agencies and services e.g. Kent County Council's Social Services, Mental Health Services, Kent Police;
- Referral to Gravesham's multi-agency Youth Engagement Panel;
- Working with Kent County Council's Early Help and Preventative Services Team to support families as a whole in which there are children/young people who are perpetrating ASB;
- Where ASB is related to domestic abuse, ensuring that victims are made aware of and encouraged to access specialist domestic abuse support services available locally.

Enforcement

In many cases, enforcement will be a last resort and the Council will take all necessary steps to ensure that enforcement action is justified and proportionate to the type of ASB that has occurred. Formal action may include:

- Use of legislative powers e.g. Injunction, Community Protection Notice, Closure Order;
- Exercising sanctions against those responsible for licensed premises;
- In our capacity as landlord, the Council may terminate introductory tenancies or take ASB possession proceedings against tenants who persist in breaching tenancy conditions resulting in ASB;
- Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecuting those identified as responsible for environmental crimes that also fall with the criteria of ASB e.g. littering, damage, flytipping;
- Use of legislative powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to address ASB linked to noise nuisance e.g. Noise Abatement Notice;
- Exercising rights using the common law of trespass to deal with unauthorised tent encampments that cause nuisance and ASB;
- Taking appropriate action against private landlords who fail to meet their responsibilities in maintaining their properties and managing their tenants which then results in ASB to the wider community.

Communication and Reassurance

Communication with the public

Information is key to strengthening communities and communication with local people and businesses, as well as wider publicity, is an essential part of tackling ASB and creating a positive profile for our Borough. Having a dialogue will be crucial if we are to improve public perceptions about levels of ASB and community safety in the Borough.

Each of the stages discussed above will need to be fully supported by an effective and consistent drive to improve the way we publicise the actions we are taking and the impact of our work in reducing ASB. The aims of the Communications and Reassurance strand of the Strategy are to:

- **Demonstrate to the public that the Council takes reports of ASB seriously and that different Departments work collaboratively to respond to complaints of ASB effectively;**
- **Regularly and widely publicise successful action taken to tackle ASB – both to act as a deterrent for potential offenders and to reassure individual victims and communities affected;**
- **Underline the Council's stance on ASB – to raise awareness, educate and foster respect for others and local environments as a primary objective but to take formal action against persistent offenders of ASB when necessary;**
- **Ensure that more targeted information is provided to communities where ASB is prevalent;**
- **Ensure that the public have access to information of how to report ASB through a variety of mediums and that they are encouraged to report early on;**
- **Entrench a message of 'shared responsibility' to reducing ASB across Council departments, partner agencies and local communities through an effective media campaign.**

Communication and information sharing between Council Departments

Responding effectively to reports of ASB from the point of contact through to the management of a case, relies on effective communication and information sharing between the Departments and Teams involved. Lack of communication can lead to an unnecessary duplication of effort but more importantly, can mean that a vulnerable victim of ASB may not be provided with the appropriate support and advice that they need. One of the key components of the Action Plan to be developed will be to investigate the potential for introducing a Council-wide ASB Case Management System accessible by relevant officers to help us in having a fully 'joined-up' approach in responding to reports and in improving the way in which records of actions taken are kept.

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Governance

ASB Strategy Delivery Group

A corporate ASB Strategy Delivery Group will be established to develop a detailed Action Plan to ensure that this Strategy is delivered. This will focus on the 4 stages discussed earlier and the overarching theme of Communication and Reassurance.

The core membership of this Group will include senior representatives from relevant Council Departments and service areas including:

- **Community Safety Unit (CSU)**
- **Waste Management**
- **Housing Services (including Private Housing, Housing Needs and Tenants' Participation)**
- **Environmental Protection**
- **Licensing Team**
- **Planning Enforcement**
- **Communications Team**
- **I.T. Services**
- **Digital Team**
- **Sports Development**
- **Community Engagement**
- **Customer Services**

Dependent upon the work carried out, the membership of this Group may be extended as appropriate to colleagues in other service areas or to external partner agencies with which collaborative working will be necessary to address certain issues.

Members of the Group will be expected to have an active role; they will need to have sufficient experience and authority to play a constructive part in building the Action Plan, have an input in respect of their service area, take ownership of the tasks allocated to them and be responsible for overseeing delivery.

This Group will meet initially on a monthly basis whilst the Action Plan is being developed and throughout its preliminary delivery stages and may then choose to adopt a bi-monthly schedule.

The coordination of this Group and the administrative tasks associated with its' meetings will be undertaken by existing staff within the CSU.

Performance Monitoring and Reporting Progress

The Action Plan will have clear objectives and will include performance indicators to be monitored on a regular basis to demonstrate the impact of work being carried out. The SARA problem-solving approach (Scanning-Analysis-Response-Assessment) will be used as will SMART guidelines (Specific-Measurable-Achievable-Relevant-Time Bound) in creating the Action Plan. Reports will be provided twice yearly (mid-year and year-end to the Council's Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee).

It is also expected that these reports will be shared with Gravesham's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee, with the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership and progress fed back to the Council's Management Team as appropriate.

Community Safety Unit October 2019

Email: community.safetyunit@gravesham.gov.uk

Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of