
OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

Purpose of Report

1. The following were the main areas of work under my Community and Public Protection Portfolio:

Housing Support for Young People

2. Two housing projects are currently being developed to further support young people:

(a) Hostel Capital Improvement Programme

We have received a grant from the Communities and Local Government of £260,000 to fund capital works to Darlington's YMCA Scheme to enable an expansion of existing services. This will provide a small Community Centre adjacent to the current building which will be used to help integrate YMCA residents with the local community, provide activity space for residents and also hopefully enable small social enterprise through, for example, providing catering for events. Some of the funding will also be used to extend the existing training room.

(b) Homeless Intensive Support Initiatives

The Council is providing additional grant funding of £8,000 to First Stop Darlington to work in partnership with our Housing Options Team in providing a support service to those with persistent homelessness and accommodation problems, particularly those with other related issues and chaotic lifestyles. Initially two hard to place people will be identified who have significant support needs and daily support will be provided from First Stop working in close liaison with the Housing Options Team. The pilot will run for 12 months and be continually reviewed and evaluated.

Darlington Private Landlords Forum

3. The Housing Renewal Team hosts four Landlord Forums every year for private landlords and other interested parties to attend, with some attracting over 100 landlords depending on the topics covered. The Forums are designed to be both an educational and training opportunity for landlords and a chance for the local authority to strengthen existing relationships with private landlords. The last Landlords Forum took place on 23 January 2007. The meeting was well attended by over fifty landlords and other guests and a wide range of topics were covered at the Forum. The Forum opened by providing landlords with an update on the work of the Housing Renewal Team over the last twelve months. This was followed by a presentation on the Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

Guest speakers included, representatives from Warm Zone and the local Rent Service. During the Warm Zone presentation, Forum Members were provided with some information about how landlords can get help for their tenants to improve the heating and insulation in their properties. The speaker raised awareness of the range of grants and assistance that are currently available and the positive steps that can be taken to reduce household fuel bills.

The final speaker was from the Rent Service who provided an overview of how local market rents are determined throughout the Borough. This provided Forum Members with an indication as to how local housing benefit assessments are determined in respect of rents charged. Representatives from Housing Benefits were also on hand with an information stall and to answer any queries.

Anti Social Behaviour Act

4. In particular the following actions have been taken in respect of recent anti-social behaviour activity:
 - An Anti Social Behaviour Injunction was secured against a single male tenant in a flat on Parkside. He subsequently breached his ASBI so was sentenced to prison and terminated his tenancy.
 - An Immediate Possession Order was awarded against a female tenant at Firthmoor.
 - An ASBI with a Power of Arrest was awarded against a male tenant at Minors Crescent.
 - In response to requests from local residents in Middleton St George, additional lighting has been arranged for the walkway between Pounteys Close and Thorntree Gardens.

Anti Social Behaviour/Warden Service

5. Work continues within the Anti Social Behaviour Section and officers have dealt with a variety of cases and successful prosecutions within recent months, as follows:
 - Two successful prosecutions have taken place under the Bikes on Open Land Byelaw, which forbids the riding of any motorised vehicle on any grassed area within Darlington, for riding of an unregistered motorbike on a grassed area and riding a quad bike in North Park.
 - An individual has been successfully prosecuted under the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1982 for the dumping of several large tree stumps, garden cuttings and refuse on a footpath on Staindrop Road.
 - A successful prosecution took place under the Environmental Protection Act for the disposal of waste, following the failure of the individual to pay the initial fixed penalty notice that was issued. The prosecution was in respect of unauthorised disposal of household waste to the rear of a property in Gurney Street.

- An individual has been successfully prosecuted for applying graffiti to a telephone kiosk and a showroom window on Corporation Road.
- The Dispersal Order in Nightingale Avenue continues. There has been a significant reduction in calls relating to anti social behaviour since the Order was agreed in October 2006. 59 formal warnings have been sent to parents of youths gathering in the location as a first time misdemeanour. 11 young people who have returned to the location on more than one occasion have received home visits to their parents by an Anti Social Behaviour Officer and a Police Constable to warn of the consequences of breaching the Order conventions. 10 individuals have breached the Dispersal Order and have been reported for summons.
- A private rented property in Bartlett Street has been shut down for a three-month period following the issuing of a Crack House Closure Order to provide respite for residents and to enable the Police and Anti Social Behaviour Team to carry out wider investigations relating to evidence of Class A drugs being used and sold from the premises. An injunction is currently being sought to prevent the residents from returning to the property.
- A full 4-year Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) has been issued to a 15-year-old youth relating to persistent harassment, alarm and distress caused to staff at Central House and Eastbourne Sports Complex.
- A full 5-year ASBO has been issued to a resident of Barningham Street relating to noisy parties, littering and abusive behaviour.

Youth Offending Service – Offending Analysis October to December 2006

6. During the period 1 October 2006 to 31 December 2006, 120 young people (1.2 %) of Darlington's 10-17 year old population received a Police Reprimand, Final Warning or Sentence at Court as a result of committing 174 offences. This represented a decrease in the number of offences on the same period in 2005 -06 this being 197, however, represents an increase in the number of young people committing those offences this being 105 during the same period in 2005-2006.
7. 97 (80.8 %) young people were white British male and 21 (17.5 %) white British female. 2 (1.7 %) young people, female, were from the Asian/Asian British minority.
8. 1 young offender, white, male was convicted of a racially aggravated offence. This incident involved insulting remarks made to an individual. There was no physical injury involved.
9. During the period 32 Police Reprimands and 27 Final Warnings were issued, 20 without intervention in accordance with recent YJB guidance.
10. The majority of offending remains consistent with previous reporting periods namely, males of between 15 and 17 years of age, most dominant at 16 yrs. Females most prevalent age for offending being 14 to 17 years and most dominant at 16 years.

11. Changes in offending by offence category compared to October – December 2005 include:-

Offence Category Decreased:

- Convictions for Motoring Offences down 12 from 28 to 16
- Convictions for Criminal Damage down 28 offences from 58 to 30
- Convictions for Drug Offences down 5 from 7 to 2
- Convictions for Theft and Handling down 14 offences from 41 to 27

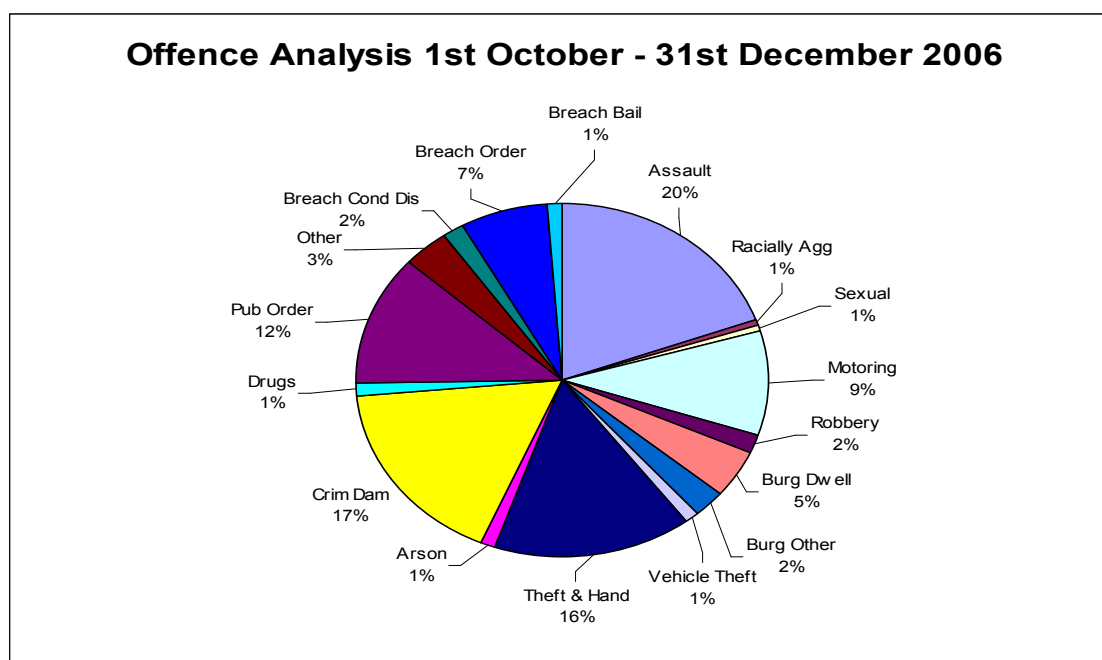
Offence Category Increase:

- Convictions for Assault up 3 from 31 to 34
- Convictions for Robbery up 3 from 0 to 3
- Convictions for Arson up 1 offence from 1 to 2

Main Category of Offending:

- Criminal Damage- 30 Offences
- Handling stolen goods- 27 Offences
- Common Assault- 34 offences
- Public Order- 21 offences

Table 1 shows Offences by Category and Percentage:



Court Outcomes

12. The Courts imposed 88 sentences, 23.9% of which were orders with a community-based penalty. Referral Orders remain the most popular disposal used by the court accounting for 21.6% of all outcomes. Fines, Conditional and Absolute Discharge, Compensation Orders account for 54.5% of court outcomes.

Custodial Outcomes

13. 1 young person (white, male) received a custodial sentence of 4 months, aged 14 yrs and a persistent offender, with a total of 12 previous court outcomes. Offences for which a custodial sentence was given were Violence Against the Person x 2.
14. 7 young people currently remain in a secure custodial environment, 5 on a long-term sentence. 6 young people are currently on Detention and Training Order (DTO) licence and released in the community.

Councillor Bill Dixon
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Community
and Public Protection