

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND THE MEDIA: POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Gosport Borough Council is committed to dealing with anti-social behaviour. As part of that commitment the Housing Service believes that dealing with anti-social behaviour effectively includes using media sources to highlight action that is being taken, with particular emphasis on the successes that have been achieved, both in preventative and enforcement action.
- 1.2 Positive media coverage of the Council's actions against anti-social behaviour can help to establish a good reputation and encourage the public's confidence in reporting incidents.
- 1.3 This policy is consistent with the principles of proportionality, consistency, transparency, and targeting which underly the Housing Service commitment to tackle anti-social behaviour.

2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- 2.1 The Council will consider appropriate media action in full consideration of the legislation covering the release of such information; in particular the Data Protection Act 1998 and Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 2.2 Reporting restrictions may be imposed by the Court in some cases, such as an ASBO secured against a juvenile, and Housing Services will naturally respect such restrictions.

3.0 UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The key aims of the policy are as follows:
- To constantly remind the community of the commitment of Gosport Borough Council to deal with anti-social behaviour
 - To use various media methods in establishing Gosport Borough Council's reputation for dealing with anti-social behaviour in a 'firm but fair' way
 - To publicise enforcement action, only if appropriate, and in the interests of the community or individuals involved
 - To publicise or report on diversionary activities to promote preventative measures and encourage social inclusion
 - Media tools adopted will be proportionate to the action taken against the perpetrator of anti-social behaviour, or the severity of the anti-social behaviour
 - Multi-agency partners will be consulted in the decision to use media resources where appropriate

4.0 PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE POLICY

- 4.1 Media reporting is encouraged to publicise preventative action or diversionary activities wherever possible. Reporting on such activities can reinforce the message that the Council is committed to dealing with anti-social behaviour in ways other than taking an individual to court; and assist in helping to reduce the fear of crime or anti-social behaviour.
- 4.2 Enforcement action taken by the Housing Service Council will only be publicised in general

terms and without reference to individual perpetrators. However, it may be appropriate (where the perpetrator is subject to a court order such as an ASBO or Injunction) to consider reporting in order to monitor a breach of an order. Careful consideration should be given to the effects of publicising such action on the individual perpetrator, the witnesses and the community as a whole.

- 4.3 Gosport Borough Council acknowledges the respect and privacy of perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, and recognises that any negative publicity against an individual can have an impact on that person's ability to amend their behaviour or engage with their community. The Housing Service believes that media reporting against an individual perpetrator should be considered as a last resort and only if there is a reasonable case for doing so, and only with the approval of witnesses and partner agencies.
- 4.4 The identity of complainants or witnesses of anti-social behaviour will not be revealed, unless it is with their express agreement. The Housing Service recognises the need for complainant/witness confidentiality in all cases of anti-social behaviour.
- 4.5 The Housing Service will not reveal details of informal action taken or agreements that have been made with the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour (for example Acceptable Behaviour Contracts).
- 4.6 The most appropriate elements of the media to be used will be considered, depending on the circumstances of a particular activity or case. The media tools available to the Housing Service include the following;
- Reports to Housing Board
 - "At Your Service" tenants' newsletter, subject to Editorial Panel approval.
 - Press release for local and national newspapers, and local or national radio or TV
 - Professional Publications such as Nuisance News, Inside Housing, Housing Today
 - Tenants or Residents Organisations newsletters (subject to approval from Customer Services Manager)
 - General letters to residents within a street, block or area to update them about an issue within their neighbourhood
- 4.7 In addition, the Housing Service will publicise relevant action internally (either within the Council or Housing Services) and this can include:
- E-mails/briefing notes to staff
 - Briefings to Ward Councillors on particular issues within their wards or advise about diversionary activities or projects
 - A report included within the Members Information Bulletin (MIB)

5.0 OTHER REFERENCES

- Housing Services Statement on Anti-Social Behaviour
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Enforcement Policy and Procedures
- Racial Harassment Policy and Procedures
- Domestic Violence Policy
- Policy and Procedure for Supporting Complainants, Witnesses and Perpetrators of Anti-Social Behaviour
- Anti-Social Behaviour and the Media: Policy and Procedure
- Police and Housing Joint Protocol

- **Joint Protocol on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders**
- **Gosport Borough Council Equal Opportunity Policy**
- **Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002-2005**
- **Housing Strategy**