

Minutes for ACTION on ASB! meeting

Thursday 30th November 2023 at Lambeth Town Hall

Attendance:

Chair:

- Ayesha Hazarika, resident

ACTION on ASB!

- Peter Impey, Chair, Dalyell Area Residents' Association

Panel:

Metropolitan Police

- Superintendent Gabriel Cameron
- Chief Inspector Ashlee Gomes
- Inspector Simon Blondell

Lambeth Council

- Cllr Mahamed Hashi, Lambeth Cabinet Member for Safer Communities
- Sean Biggart, Head of Public Safety
- Trevor Virtue, Head of Regulatory Services
- Apologies: Nigel Lambert, Director of Community Safety & Resilience

Acknowledgment to San Marino for providing refreshments.

Meeting minutes:

1. Opening remarks from Helen Hayes, MP for Dulwich and West Norwood

- Helen offered apologies for the other MPs who serve the Brixton area, Florence Eshalomi MP for Vauxhall, and Bell Ribeiro-Addy for Streatham and mentioned that she had been in touch with them, and they are entirely supportive of the campaign aims of ACTION on ASB!
- Helen said that she felt that antisocial behaviour (ASB) was the worst that she's ever known it, and that this surge came following the COVID-19 lockdowns.
- This hadn't been helped with a reduction in funding to authorities and the cost-of-living crisis.
- An approach that brings together residents, council, addition and mental health services, and police is hugely important and is the right step.
- Drug and alcohol services are designing their offer in the New Year and should be providing more to the local community.
- The ASB situation affects all those who live and work in Brixton and no one should be subject to intimidation.

2. Campaign update from ACTION on ASB!

- Outlined the campaign charter and working principles of ACTION on ASB!
- Mission of the campaign is to unite the community to call for action from the police, council and relevant organisations, to reduce antisocial behaviour in Brixton, making sure the community is involved.
- The campaign covers the four wards of Brixton.
- In 11 weeks, it has gained the support of over 20 community organisations and has over 100 members.
- The campaign is independent and not affiliated to any political party, and is independent from the police and local authority.
- It is community-led, action focussed and everyone is welcome to get involved.

- Its goals are to make dealing with ASB a priority for the police, council and relevant agencies and to hold those organisations to account, as well as to lobby for more resources.
- From community feedback, the following priorities have been identified:
 - Dealing and use of drugs in public
 - Trespassing on private property
 - Shoplifting and intimidation of businesses
 - Intimidation and harassment of residents and visitors
 - Public defecation and urination
 - Homelessness and begging.
- The campaign has developed principles on how it would like to work with the police, council and other relevant agencies that include:
 - The creation of a plan to deal with ASB across the four wards of Brixton that takes a joined-up working approach between Lambeth, the police and other relevant agencies
 - The plan should contain targets; progress against these targets to be presented back to the community
 - The plan should be developed with community input.

3. Update from Sam Kamara, Brixton Terrace

- Brixton Terrace have attended all ACTION on ASB! meetings
- It was the coming together of Brixton Terrace and the Dalyell Area Residents' Association that launched ACTION on ASB!
- Tragic murder of Stockwell Park Walk goes to show the urgent nature of action
- Brixton Terrace have been traumatised by daily ASB and drug dealing on the estate
- Brixton Terrace TRA hopes there will be better relationships with the police and local authority to allow us to control our own doorsteps
- It's particularly affecting those with disabilities, elderly and those with young children who should be able to do what they need to do without being scared of aggressive begging, public defecation and intimidation
- Energy and skill used by the police should be used to end the scourge of ASB and Brixton Terrace TRA appeals to the local health services to up their game and improve facilities for those with substance and mental health issues
- Youth projects, council and health services need to work closer with the police
- Concluded that the public meeting is a true reflection of the community

4. Update from the Metropolitan Police

Superintendent Gabriel Cameron

- Last ACTION on ASB meeting was very powerful.
- Since that meeting, we've had an uplift in the policing plan in Lambeth, and we now have an inspector in charge of the Brixton area – Simon Blondell.
- We have also been putting in 'action days' and hopefully the audience have noticed an increase of resource.
- Lots of vulnerable people who need help, with the right care and the right plan and we're working with NHS partners on mental health.
- We have to have a collaborative approach with the Local Authority and Lambeth.
- Lambeth have provided wardens to support the police in goals to reduce ASB, Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), and ensure the vulnerable are protected.
- We have also forged new partnerships with Southwest Trains and the British Transport Police.
- Policing in Lambeth is difficult, it is home to 8 out of the 50 top gangs in England.
- We need the community to keep reporting ASB when they see it – it is crucial for us to increase resource.

- We need outreach services and the NHS in discussions like this and for a joined-up plan.

Chief Inspector Ashlee Gomes

- My daily commute from Brixton Underground Station to Brixton Police Station encapsulates all that is wrong, from encampments of rough sleepers to beggars, to people with addition problems, public urination, and defecation in less than a 3-minute walk.
- It can't just be Police and enforcement to fix the issue, it must be worked in conjunction with the Local Authority and Partner agencies.

Superintendent Gabriel Cameron

- We have been in discussions with the Local Authority over drafting a plan.
- We do need NHS to be involved and outreach services to be part of it.
- Should we criminalise people unnecessarily?

Questions for the Police:

- It takes too long to get through to 101.
 - **Action** – Metropolitan Police to share details for Inspector Simon Blondell.
- We need to get all health services involved – psychiatric care is less prevalent now.
 - **Action** – ACTION on ASB! to identify and reach out to health services.
- Are you working on your policing plan or are the community?
 - **Action** – Metropolitan Police to work on the plan with the Local Authority, community, and outreach services.
- Why have you moved officers from Rushcroft Road?
 - **Action** – Metropolitan Police will re-instate provision of officers to Rushcroft Road.
- Why have Community Police Neighbourhood Groups not been used? We want to see more people on the 'beat', and we need to increase community support workers and youth support workers.
 - **Action** – Police to note in their strategy.

5. Update from Lambeth Council

Cllr Mahamed Hashi, Lambeth Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

- Been in portfolio for a year and have done lots of walkabouts.
- Lived here since 1989
- The way residents are having to live is completely wrong and unsustainable.
- We are going to see businesses with their shelves empty – Boots and Greggs, saw this happening.
- We've put in operations in isolation, and just seems to push the problem to another area.
- Essential that we work together – must be every organisation and partnership.
- Impose our perception of what we think our problem is – we need insight and direction - must encourage reporting.
- Still are lacking resources – wide range of problems and wide impact on the community and right we start being held to account.

Sean Biggart, Head of Public Safety

- The issues that are dear to your hearts are dear to my own – resonates deeply with me – been with Lambeth for 20 years.
- The reason why I got in the role is to make a difference. Challenge that faces all of us is a difficult one.
- Nigel Lambert and Gabriel Cameron are putting together a specific action plan – you would have seen that this plan has started to take place this week.
- More resources through more reporting.

- Since August we have done 36 weapon sweeps.
- I've noted when I get the bus into Brixton that you see the aggressive begging and rough sleeping and I have tasked a specific officer to lead on this. Since August he's undertaken 51 patrols, removed encampments and tents.
- Those who need the support and we're working with public health - put in an additional resource of wardens to engage with those individuals.
- I'll ensure those wardens come to the next meeting.
- Working with regulatory services regarding the nighttime economy - and VAWG and patrolled every day since the Summer until March 24.
- We are developing an app based reporting system.

Trevor Virtue, Head of Regulatory Services

- We don't have infinite resource, so when we do it has to be intelligence led and when / where we can be most effective.
- When we're talking about bringing in other services – NHS has had 7 interactions with people in the street and more sharing and more linking.
- Ritzy cinema doors will be sorted – Lambeth will attend a residents group meeting as required.

Questions for the Council

- I have tried to speak to Nigel four times around Rushcroft Road and have heard no reply?
 - **Action** – Cllr Hashi will personally intervene.
- Where is this app to report ASB?
 - **Action** – Lambeth to circulate details of app when developed to ACTION on ASB!
- Streets are so dark at night – not safe with the new lighting equipment, especially around Brixton Hill.
 - **Action** – Lambeth to follow up.
- When you report, nothing happens, even if there is CCTV and why haven't the Council been engaging with the NHS already?
 - **Action** – Cllr Hashi happy to escalate but stressed the need to keep reporting, no comment on the NHS engagement.
- Where is the resource for the community? We need a strategy from you as to how you can get us involved, and not just an app or drop-ins.
 - **Action** – Lambeth to update with a community engagement plan.
- We need mental health and addiction services to be involved in the community and they need to be part of the plan.
 - **Action** – Lambeth to work with ACTION on ASB! to link up with mental health and addiction services.

6. Next steps for Police and Lambeth Council

- A joint plan will be presented in March 2024 to ACTION on ASB!
- Police would like one or two residents to volunteer to be part of the development of the plan.
- Bring in NHS, mental health, addiction services to the campaign.

7. Priorities from the audience

- Engagement with mental health.
- Resources for young people.
- We need a mechanism where there is an evaluation framework.
- Engaging statutory agencies to work.
- Improve community confidence of safety – often psychological concerns.
- Address concerns emanating from the night-time economy, for example greater provision of toilets, stricter licencing conditions, such as seen in Camden.



- Address the number of empty shops which attract ASB.
- Determining the impact on fortnightly refuse bin collections on ASB.
- Getting Lambeth Health and Wellbeing Board to engage on issues related to ASB.
- Improving safety for children travelling to and from school.

8. Closing remarks

- Chair thanked panel and attendees.
- Call from ACTION on ASB to spread the word and for volunteers – contact aoasb@outlook.com or call 07956 941 701.