

ACTION on ASB! community meeting

Monday 24 March 2025, Pop Brixton

Facilitated by co-chairs Peter Impey (*ACTION on ASB!* organiser) and Ayesha Hazarika (resident).

1. Introduction to the meeting and its purpose:

- a. Opportunity to update on progress of the community campaign.
- b. Opportunity to hear from you on what else the campaign should focus on.
- c. Explanation of how the evening will work – workshops on priorities and shaping the campaign.
- d. Ayesha noted that the meeting will be recorded and minuted.

2. Recap and overview of the last community meeting in March 2024:

- a. Was frustrating for many, but it was a wake-up call for various agencies, including the police and the Lambeth Council—people were talking about it, and the press reported on it.
- b. There was constructive engagement with the Police and Council following the meeting who have tried to work harder and more closely with the community since then.
- c. Ayesha noted that service cuts are happening across London, but Brixton is particularly badly off, so the Council needs to work harder to ensure that the local economy thrives.
- d. Brixton is suffering due to the amount of antisocial behaviour (ASB) happening in and around this area.

3. ACTION on ASB! – update on activity:

- a. Peter reminded the meeting who *ACTION on ASB!* was and provided an overview of the group's purpose and aims:
 - i. An independent, community-led group who want to make reduction of ASB in Brixton a priority
 - ii. Aim 1: To make ASB in Brixton a priority for the Police and Council
 - iii. Aim 2: To hold the Police, Council and relevant agencies accountable for delivering services to deal with ASB
 - iv. Aim 3: To lobby for more resources to deal with ASB.
- b. Provided data that showed the Brixton wards have the highest levels of ASB and drug offences in Lambeth (from the Metropolitan police's Safer Neighbourhood Team quarterly chairs' meeting; Jan 2025).
- c. Noted that *ACTION on ASB!* is calling for a published ASB reduction plan dedicated for Brixton that brings together the right agencies who are held accountable for delivering it—currently dealt with on a Lambeth-wide basis.
- d. Noted key problems include under-reporting, police getting moved to other areas, and no dedicated Brixton joint agency team.
- e. Presented the resources for how people in Brixton can report various incidences of ASB and other crimes – from fly-tipping, property damage to emergencies (<https://actiononasb.org/how-to-report/>).
- f. Covered police priorities in the area:
 - i. The police priorities are violence against women, ASB and serious violence
 - ii. Since the last *ACTION on ASB!* meeting, the Brixton Town Centre police team has been reinstated—according to the Police they have made over 80 arrests in 3 months
 - iii. More police have been deployed to Windrush Ward
 - iv. Home office-funded police operations to address organised crime

- v. Crimestoppers campaign rolled out in the area to encourage people in Brixton to report crime anonymously
- vi. The Police want to hold quarterly joint agency meetings with the Council, key agencies and community – waiting for Lambeth Council to agree – first meeting had been due to take place in March.
- g. Noted that the Lambeth Street Engagement Team (SET), which engages with street drug users to help them receive support and treatment, has dedicated 80% of its resource to Brixton. They have found that of the people the SET talk to, 60% have no relation to the local area.
- h. Lambeth has increased the street wardens in Brixton who can issue various notices, warnings and orders (which eventually can lead to people being banned from the area). There has been an increase in the number of Community Protection Notices/Warnings/Orders that have been issued.
- i. The Police, Council and other agencies have a soup kitchen initiative to help with engaging street drug users.
- j. The Police and Council have been conducting days of action in Brixton where there is an increase in enforcement activity coordinated between the two agencies.
- k. Councillors sent a joint letter to the Borough Commander that was signed by over 400 local people calling for:
 - i. Visible police patrols
 - ii. Hotspot mapping for key areas in Brixton affected by crime and ASB with action plans for each area
 - iii. Monthly police drop-in surgeries
 - iv. Active Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNPs)
 - v. Responsive community email inboxes
 - vi. Community engagement following key incidents
 - vii. Regular communication
 - viii. Joint walkabouts with residents and police Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT)
 - ix. Consistent police teams.
- l. Plenty of media coverage for the campaign's efforts, which does result in Lambeth Council responding.
- m. Noted that Ayesha made a recent speech in the House of Lords about what is happening in Brixton. It was raised to Yvette Cooper and Sadiq Khan. The Policing Minister, Lord Hanson, has agreed to come to Brixton and do a walk around. Will meet shop workers (shoplifting is a major issue in the area) and speak to others in the area, to feed back to the Home Secretary.
- n. Noted that the police in the local area are working hard in difficult circumstances, but they need us to keep reporting in order to ensure that the data supports the need for more police resources in Brixton.
- o. We also need to keep them here in the local community—there is no point for the police to stay for one year and then move on.
- p. Brixton Business Improvement District (BID)—working to get the phone boxes removed. They are not fit for purpose and are instead used as toilets and drug-taking facilities. One key phone box has been removed recently on Atlantic Road.
- q. Reminded the meeting that the ACTION on ASB! annual survey is live.

4. Update from Ros Griffiths, Chair of Friends of Windrush Square:

- a. Friends of Windrush Square is focussed on taking action in a way they refer to as 'Radical Action' – they want to see love back in the Square as the people on the Square currently don't love the Square.
- b. Aiming for more cultural events and art installations – all being put forward to the council, including repurposing the toilets etc.

5. Introduction of workshops

- a. First session is a chance to voice concerns and issues
 - i. What are your views on how agencies have responded since March 2024?
 - ii. What should agencies prioritise and why?
- b. Second session is to plan action
 - i. What can we do to keep the pressure on the authorities to take action either individually or collectively?

6. Summary of workshop findings (see appendix for detailed themes and insights)

- a. The workshop reveals significant community concern centred on drug-related activities in Brixton, with this issue emerging as the overwhelming priority requiring immediate attention.
- b. While participants acknowledge some increase in police presence since March 2024, there's widespread dissatisfaction with the overall response from agencies, particularly regarding:
 - i. Ongoing openness of drug dealing/use in public spaces
 - ii. Complex reporting systems that discourage community reporting
 - iii. Poor communication from agencies about actions taken and their effectiveness
 - iv. Environmental and safety concerns affecting community pride and wellbeing.
- c. In response to these challenges, workshop participants favour a strategic, focused campaign specifically targeting drug-related issues rather than diluting efforts across multiple priorities. This approach would unify community action and would be supported by formal accountability mechanisms (FOI requests, audits), political engagement, and media involvement.
- d. For agencies, the workshop clearly prioritises a zero-tolerance approach to public drug activity, supported by visible policing, simplified reporting systems, and transparent sharing of data about interventions and outcomes. There's a strong desire for a place-based strategy that addresses both the symptoms and causes of problems in key locations like Windrush Square and Brixton tube station.
- e. The detailed location information provided throughout the workshop (identifying specific streets, buildings and hotspots) offers a potential framework for targeted, coordinated intervention that addresses the community's most pressing concerns and attempts to rebuild trust through visible action and transparent communication.

7. Closing remarks

- a. We love Brixton. We need to reclaim these streets from people who don't care and we need to come together. We have to write our own story – keep putting on the pressure – but do it ourselves. We need to make noise, be active, don't let anyone get away with not treating Brixton with love and respect.

APPENDIX

WORKSHOP ANALYSIS: KEY THEMES AND INSIGHTS

The following key themes and insights are taken from post-it notes and verbal responses from the workshop.

QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON HOW AGENCIES HAVE RESPONDED SINCE MARCH 2024? THEMES

Drug-related issues are not being dealt with

- Overwhelming concern about open drug dealing and use (consistently mentioned).
- Specific hotspots repeatedly identified and are more acute: outside Brixton Station, Electric Avenue, Brixton Rec, Windrush Square, Loughborough Junction, behind M&S, outside William Hill, entrance to Arcade, St. Matthew's Church and neighbouring streets, Tulse Hill Road, behind M&S, outside the Post Office, Nursery Road, and behind Brixton Academy,
- Strong community perception that people can "use and deal with impunity" and that residents have become "desensitised" to street drug use and dealing, and associated forms of ASB.
- Feeling that drug-related behaviours are the cause of other ASB e.g. shoplifting, aggressive begging, theft, public urination, etc.
- General sentiment that tackling drug use and supply has been insufficient.

Increased ASB

- Overall sentiment that ASB has worsened this year and has been particularly bad since COVID, particularly in residential areas, with drug use, shoplifting and aggressive begging and behaviours specifically mentioned as worse than March 2024.
- There are urgent concerns about "professional beggars" and aggressive beggars. The approach taken by agencies to deal with beggars who are causing harassment and distress is ineffective.
- Public urination is repeatedly highlighted and needs resolution by the Council with the implementation of public toilets/urinals.
- Safety concerns, particularly around transport hubs and Windrush Square.
- Concerns that as the weather improves through Spring and Summer, ASB will increase further.

Improved police response

- Mixed feedback on police visibility depending on location.
- Some note "more police on the streets" but perceive no reduction in ASB. There is a need for more street-level police.
- More willingness and engagement of police with the community (Brixton Windrush's Sergeant Martha Jacobs' approach was highlighted as an example of how engagement with the community is working well)
- Inadequate response to specific crimes like car break-ins, but overall, better police response times noted.
- Significant concerns remain about safety outside Brixton tube station.

Poor and neglectful council response

- "Don't know what they've done" in the last year.
- Council is "impossible to reach" (6-7 notes).
- "Defensive PR" approach deemed "unhelpful" and "a waste of time".
- Perception that the Council is neglecting deeper issues.
- Lack of transparency about actions taken and spending priorities.
- Reduced services, like waste collection and street-sweeping, contributing to area decline.
- Community feeling "gaslit" with no clear strategic action plans shared.

Environmental and housing issues

- Concerns about “slum landlords” and problem housing.
- Numerous environmental issues e.g. reduced bin collections, street waste.
- Continued concern over e-bikes blocking pathways.
- Need for proper investigation and enforcement of housing standards.
- Increasing problems with graffiti not being addressed or removed.
- Decline in area's appearance contributing to increased ASB and lack of pride in area affecting ASB and businesses.

Ineffective reporting systems

- Significant frustration with all reporting mechanisms.
- Current systems described as complex and inaccessible, especially outside office hours or for those with dyslexia/second language English/little time. The onus is on the reporter to work out which system to use and a lot of detail required.
- Confusion about which agency handles different types of reports, with many resorting to 999 due to lack of effective alternatives.

Poor multi-agency coordination

- Perception that coordination between agencies is lacking or ineffective.
- British Transport Police identified as “key” to dealing with issues at Brixton’s transport hubs, with insufficient visible presence.
- Specific concerns about TfL's lack of input on transport areas/stops that are hotspots for ASB.
- Brixton BID noted as “visible but less in the last couple of months” with questions about enforcement effectiveness.

Summary of question 1 findings:

Feedback on agency responses since March 2024 was predominantly negative. Drug-related issues remain the primary concern, with participants reporting open dealing at numerous hotspots where people operate “with impunity.” ASB has worsened, particularly shoplifting and aggressive begging. While there are some positive mentions associated with the Police and BID (slightly improved 999 response times for specific incidents, some increased police visibility and cleaning initiatives like the “Brixton BID’s Bubbles cleaning vehicle”), the overwhelming sentiment is that core problems persist or have worsened, particularly around drug activity and ASB. The Council faced criticism, with participants stating environmental decline, ASB and housing issues that remain unaddressed. Additionally, participants perceive communication from the Council on these issues to be opaque. Reporting systems continue to be frustrating and inaccessible. Overall, coordination between agencies is perceived as ineffective.

QUESTION 2: WHAT SHOULD AGENCIES PRIORITISE AND WHY? THEMES

Zero tolerance drug enforcement

- Overwhelming priority on addressing public drug dealing/use.
- Clear desire for “zero tolerance” approach to drug activities in public spaces.
- Need for coordinated strategy across agencies focused specifically on drugs.

Visible policing and security

- Requests for more consistent street-level police presence (8-10 notes).
- Focused use of CCTV in known hotspots.
- Targeted approach to areas where people feel most unsafe e.g. around Brixton tube station, Windrush Square, Electric Avenue, etc.
- Police to take shoplifting more seriously.

- British Transport Police involvement and presence.

Simplified reporting systems

- Major emphasis on making reporting more accessible, "faster and easier", a "one stop shop" e.g. Fix My Street equivalent for ASB.
- Physical reporting locations where people can speak directly to officials.
- Clear and simple drug reporting mechanisms.
- Evidence that reporting leads to meaningful action, not just arrests or warnings.

Place-based strategy and community pride

- Environmental improvements (better waste management, maintenance etc) by the Council to foster community pride.
- Address issues like public urination with fines.
- TfL and Council management of hire bikes blocking pathways.
- Focus on Brixton/Windrush Square as "a place we care about".

Transparency and accountability

- Data collection and impact measurement.
- Public acknowledgement from Council when things aren't working.
- Less Council "propaganda" and more factual information sharing.
- Regular updates on how identified hotspots are being handled.
- Consistency and leadership from authorities like the Council.
- Clear information on what agencies (Police / Council etc) can do.

Multi-agency coordination

- Coordinated approach to address both symptoms and root causes, include TfL and British Transport Police too.
- Improved communication between different agencies and teams.
- Information sharing between agencies.
- Long-term sustainable solutions rather than quick fixes.
- Need different levels of intervention.
- Engagement with schools.
- Work with mental health and addiction services, support services for victims of crime.

Summary of question 2 findings:

Workshop participants identified six key agency priorities with an emphasis on Council accountability. They strongly advocated for zero tolerance drug enforcement through a coordinated place-based strategy. Visible policing was deemed important, with requests for consistent street-level presence and strategic CCTV in hotspots. A simplified joint reporting system ranked highly, with calls for "one-stop shop" mechanisms where community members could easily report issues. Council-led environmental improvements were recommended to foster community pride. Participants emphasised the need for transparency, with the Council acknowledging issues. Participants called for improved coordination between the Council, police, transport stakeholders and other agencies to address both symptoms and root causes of community problems.

QUESTION 3: WHAT CAN WE DO TO KEEP THE PRESSURE ON AGENCIES TO TAKE ACTION - AS INDIVIDUALS & COLLECTIVELY? THEMES

Focused strategic campaign on drugs

- Proposal for "6 month focus on drugs" - "All Eyes on Drugs" strategic campaign (appears as a significant theme in the notes).
- Community aligning on one priority, expecting agencies to match this focus.
- Making drug reporting "clear and simple".
- British Transport Police involvement requested.
- Zero tolerance approach to drug dealing/use.
- Tool to make reporting easier with ad campaign.

Community organisation and visible action

- Emphasis on collective, high-profile community responses.
- Suggestions for "big protest/big clean up outside Lambeth Town Hall".
- "Clean the Streets" as an "uplifting moment" for dynamic community action.
- Using unified community voice for greater impact.
- Join community groups, e.g. Neighbourhood Watch.
- Broad leaflet drop to raise awareness.
- Making the community feel included in actions.

Formal accountability mechanisms

- "Audit Lambeth on spending" with requests for detailed breakdowns.
- Strategic use of FOI requests eg for current spending on drug enforcements and prevention activity versus other expenditures.
- Checking where funds are being spent relative to community priorities.
- Launch formal complaints where appropriate.
- "Name & shame" approach when agencies fail to deliver.

Political and policy-level engagement

- MP letter writing campaign specifically on drugs issue.
- More engagement from local councillors.
- Request for visits from Commissioners to understand their strategies.
- Proactive engagement with elected officials.

Coordinated communication strategy

- Ramping up media activity and coverage to maintain momentum.
- "Use the community voice" – speaking as one unified community voice eg in a community meeting.
- Consistency across communications to public or agencies.
- Understanding what information to share with community that's most useful.
- Clarity about the specific "asks" from each agency.

Knowledge building and information sharing

- "Listen from others in similar positions" and research what has worked in other communities.
- Ensure there are regular meetings with relevant agencies/departments.
- Understand what motivates each agency.
- Mapping of hotspots with regular updates on targeted interventions.
- "Physical reporting station/surgery where people can go to report".

Summary of question 3 findings:

The workshop identified several key strategies to maintain pressure on agencies. Participants supported a focused drugs-focused campaign to maximise impact. They recommended visible community action through protests, clean-up events, and neighbourhood watch groups, alongside formal accountability measures, including FOI requests, spending audits, and formal complaints.

Media and political engagement strategies featured prominently, including MP letter campaigns and driving media coverage. Throughout all approaches, participants emphasised the importance of coordinated communication—speaking with one unified voice and maintaining clear, consistent messaging. They highlighted the value of knowledge-sharing through researching successful approaches in other communities and understanding agency motivations.