

Information/Discussion Paper

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Monday 9 January 2012

Anti-Social Behaviour Update – Focus on Impact of Youth Centre Closures in the Borough

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 At the request of the Chair, Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Anne Regan

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 Earlier in 2011 Gloucestershire County Council made the decision to cease funding across various areas of their work which unfortunately included the closure of Youth Centres across the county including those located in Cheltenham which has now been implemented. The question has now been raised as to what impact these closures will have on anti-social behaviour committed by young people.

3. Summary of evidence/information

- 3.1 Research carried out in respect of the current trend re anti-social behaviour indicates that in my opinion, it is a little premature to link the closure of youth centres to any changes there may be in offences of anti-social behaviour committed by young people. The way ASB is recorded by all police forces in England and Wales changed in April 2011. Therefore forces cannot compare ASB incidents totals before and after this date. On monitoring current ASB levels in Cheltenham, only 7 months worth of data can be compared and by the very nature of ASB having seasonal variations (higher in summer) it is impossible from the information available to determine whether ASB is increasing or decreasing. The same can be said for all police forces in England and Wales. Once two years worth of ASB incident data is collected it would then be possible to monitor levels against the previous year to give an indication if ASB is increasing or decreasing. Currently, Gloucestershire Constabulary do not accurately record if ASB is youth related. To measure the impact a reduction in youth service has had on youth crime (and in the light of the issues surrounding ASB), using the alternative measure of “numbers of offences committed by young people” as a proxy will give a better understanding of whether youth crime levels are increasing or decreasing as a result of a reduction in youth services. There is no evidence at this stage to support any suggestion that offending by young people has been affected by the closure of youth centres in Cheltenham.

4. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider eg potential witnesses, further report, site visit etc.

- 4.1** Although I will continue to have an 'overview' in respect of anti-social behaviour, In view of the circumstances involved I suggest that a further updated report be called for in 12 months time when recording systems will be much better placed to indicate if the closure of youth centres has had any effect of youth crime/anti-social behaviour. In the meantime projects and initiatives around various interventions funded by the County Council, Borough Council and Cheltenham Community Safety Partnership over this current financial year to reduce anti-social behaviour will continue and be monitored accordingly.

Background Papers	None
Contact Officer	Trevor J Gladding, Community Safety Manager, Tel No:- 01242 264368, Trevor.Gladding@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Klara Sudbury, Cabinet Member Housing and Safety
Scrutiny Function	Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee