

To: Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

On: 20 May 2024

Report by: Lead Officer

Heading: Neighbour Disputes

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the meeting on 22nd August 2022, members of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed an annual programme of activity for the Board for 2022/23. This included an investigation into neighbour disputes in Renfrewshire.
 - 1.2 Following the Board in March 2023 there was a change in Lead Officer. This has brought about a change in timescales due to handover.
 - 1.3 The review had initially been focusing on Category B and C antisocial behaviour and neighbour nuisance complaints. In the course of the review, and in particular speaking with those with lived experience of neighbour nuisance and antisocial behaviour, a focus on Category D incidents (classed as estate management) has emerged. These incidents relate to issues including dog fouling, waste, communal spaces and other common issues that can lead to neighbour disputes, or can escalate tensions.
 - 1.4 As a result of this, a need was identified for a focus on this area of complaints in order to explore in further detail and identify and optimise opportunities for early intervention. An updated timescale is included in Section 4 within the report for approval, in order to allow time for this deeper exploration to take place.
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2. Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- note the progress contained within the report; and
 - approve the updated timescale as outlined in Section 4 of this report.
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3. Background

- 3.1 At the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board in August 2022 it was agreed that the review of Neighbour Disputes be looked at in the widest sense and should also include anti-social behaviour. It was agreed that the purpose of the investigation into neighbour disputes would be fourfold:
1. Try to establish the scale and nature of neighbour disputes in Renfrewshire,
 2. Set out the current arrangements and approach the Council and other stakeholders have for responding to neighbour disputes,
 3. Review the current disposals/actions that are available to the Council and others to resolve neighbour disputes, and
 4. Identify any other approaches, policy changes or mitigating actions that could be available to the Council within existing resources.

4. Updated Timetable for Neighbour Disputes Investigation

- 4.1 The review has progressed through 2024, following a change in Lead Officer. The review has included interviews with a range of stakeholders – internal Officers, local Housing Associations, Police Scotland, a range of other Scottish Local Authorities and residents with lived experience of neighbour nuisance and/or antisocial behaviour.
- 4.2 The review had initially been focusing on Category B and C antisocial behaviour and neighbour nuisance complaints. In the course of the review, and in particular speaking with those with lived experience of neighbour nuisance and antisocial behaviour, a focus on Category D incidents (classed as estate management) has emerged. These incidents relate to issues including dog fouling, waste, communal spaces and other common issues that can lead to neighbour disputes, or can escalate existing tensions.
- 4.2 As a result of this, a need was identified for a focus on this area of complaints in order to explore in further detail and identify and optimise opportunities for early intervention to prevent escalation. A workshop is proposed, with all key stakeholders represented and a collective approach being undertaken to identify:
- the key challenges and issues and the scale of the problem, including trends and patterns
 - potential areas for process and/or service improvements, including opportunities to improve data
 - how we can approach and resource improvements
 - clear procedures which can be put in place to contribute to improved outcomes
 - cross-departmental commitment to take forward and embed proposed changes
- 4.3 In order to allow time for this work to be undertaken, an updated timetable is proposed below:

Date of Board Meeting	Stage of Investigation
23 rd January 2023	Scoping paper to initiate investigation - Complete

13 th March 2023	Continuation of investigation - Complete
22 nd January 2024	Continuation of investigation - Complete
18 th March 2024	Continuation of investigation - Complete
20 th May 2024 - Revised	Continuation of investigation – to enable focus on Category D incidents
19 th August 2024 - Revised	Draft Final Report to Board
26 th September 2024 - Revised	Final Report to Full Council

5. Progress Update

5.1 The investigation has been progressing well and research has now been completed across the 4 main areas within the scope of the review, which will then form the identification of any other approaches, policy changes or mitigating actions that could be available to the Council within existing resources.

5.2 Research to date has involved communications with a number of other Scottish Local Authorities, Local Housing Associations, Police Scotland and key internal stakeholders, as well as speaking with residents with lived experience of neighbour nuisance and/or antisocial behaviour. It has been through this research that the value of a focus on Category D incidents (classified as estate management) was identified.

5.3 In addition, there were an outstanding query from the March Board, whereby there was a requirement to clarify with the relevant Services in order to respond. This is confirmed as follows:

5.3.1 Numbers of Officers with Mental Health First Aid training:

To enhance support for employee health and wellbeing, Renfrewshire Council have a trained group of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) in the workplace who act as a first point of contact for any employees experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. This measure is primarily for the mental health of staff and those who are experiencing difficulties. Mental wellbeing can also be impacted by the increase in complex issues in cases frontline staff are experiencing. However, this learning can also be used in relation to cases within the community as principles are transferable and can be applied in community settings, for example while Officers are awaiting advice from community nursing teams.

There are currently 67 trained Mental Health First Aiders across the Council, covering all service areas. The full list of MHFAs along with contact details are on the Staff Info pages of the internal website and they can also be recognised in the workplace by their purple lanyards.

6. Next Steps

6.1 To ensure the broadest review based on information to date, the next steps will include a workshop with all key services and departments in attendance, in order to take a collective approach with a focus on estate management.

This will highlight approaches and opportunities for early intervention in order to prevent escalation. This will help to identify any potential gaps in service provision or areas in the process where improvements could be made from both a departmental and a service user point of view.

- 6.2 The next report to Board in August will provide a final summary of the overall review and seek approval for its submission to full Council.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - None directly arising from this report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None directly arising from this report.
3. **Community/Council Planning** - None directly arising from this report.
4. **Legal** - None directly arising from this report.
5. **Property/Assets** – No current implications.
6. **Information Technology** – No current implications.
7. **Equality and Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it relates to carrying out an investigation on behalf of the Board. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health and Safety** - No current implications.
9. **Procurement** - No current implications.
10. **Risk** - No current implications.
11. **Privacy Impact** - No current implications.
12. **COSLA Policy Position** - No current implications.
13. **Climate Risk** - No current implications.

List of Background Papers:

Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Annual Programme
Neighbour Disputes Paper - Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board, January 2023
Neighbour Disputes Paper - Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board, March 2023
Neighbour Disputes Paper - Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board, January 2024
Neighbour Disputes Paper - Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board, March 2024

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