

Urgent Update – Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Item 12 – Safety Review – Internal Stakeholder Consultation

As outlined within point 2.4 of the report, the Housing Associations operating within the Town Centre were contacted and asked to provide a written response to the following questions:

1 – 'How do you (as an organisation) deal with Anti-Social Behaviour issues in relation to enforcing your tenancy agreements?'

2 – 'Whether they would like to consider setting up a specific email response system for MPs and Councillors'

Further details are shown in the table below, followed by the responses received:

Housing Association	Response received
Medway Housing Society	Yes
Paramount Housing	Yes
West Kent Housing Association	Yes
Hyde Housing	No
Optivo	No

1 – 'How do you (as an organisation) deal with Anti-Social Behaviour issues in relation to enforcing your tenancy agreements?'

As a responsible social landlord, MHS Homes take Anti-Social Behaviour very seriously. We know that if Anti-Social Behaviour is not tackled effectively, it has a major impact on the quality of life of the customers and communities we serve.

In practice, we adopt a 'fair but firm' approach to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and are committed to working with other partners to help achieve this. Our approach to tackling ASB includes:

- All new tenants of MHS Homes/Heart of Medway Housing Association are given a 'starter tenancy' for 12 months. The starter tenancy will only be converted to an assured tenancy if the new tenant complies with the tenancy agreement and shows consideration to their neighbours.
- We adopt a visible approach to housing management so that the first signs of ASB are identified and tackled at the earliest stage. We will visit tenants to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and receive all the support needed to maintain their tenancy. This often results in low level issues of ASB being successfully addressed before they can escalate. We will also take other preventative measures, such as mediation and working with the local community, to enable different parties to address disagreement and to achieve a more harmonious way forward.
- Over the coming months, we will be training our staff to improve their understanding of how to tackle ASB effectively. We also have specialist officers to tackle the most serious ASB cases.
- We take a 'zero tolerance' approach to serious incidents of ASB or hate crime. We are also always mindful of our safeguarding responsibilities and that, in some cases, the alleged perpetrators can themselves be vulnerable persons that require support in order to stop ASB continuing.
- We work closely with Maidstone's Community Safety Partnership to review responses to incidents of ASB, share information and to develop multi agency solutions that will reduce further incidents of ASB. This includes responding to Community Trigger reports.
- We attend weekly meetings with Maidstone Task Force. This is a police lead multi-agency community approach to dealing with community issues including ASB, domestic abuse, safeguarding etc.
- We will take proportionate action and use the full range of tools and powers available to us, including warnings, acceptable behaviour agreements, Notice of Seeking Possessions, Injunctions and, where necessary, action for eviction. We will work with other key agencies such

as Maidstone Borough Council and the Police where other measures such as Community Protection Warnings/Notices etc may be appropriate.

2 – 'Would your organisation like to consider setting up a specific email response system for MPs and Councillors?'

Yes – we have a dedicated email inbox for all MP and councillor enquiries. Casework enquiries from MPs and councillors should be sent to MPandC@mhs.org.uk and we will ensure that they are directed to the most appropriate colleague to respond to. Our service standard for replying to MP and councillor enquires is 3 working days. The Chief Executive is also always willing to respond to any feedback or comments of a wider strategic nature and can be contacted directly on ashley.hook@mhs.org.uk . We are committed to being a valued partner to Maidstone Borough Council and local councillors.

1 – 'How do you (as an organisation) deal with Anti-Social Behaviour issues in relation to enforcing your tenancy agreements?'

Paramount Independent Property Services LLP are a very experienced and trusted provider of accommodation exclusively for local authorities in Kent, with a fantastic relationship with Maidstone Borough Council. We take our responsibilities in relation to matters of antisocial behaviour and community cohesion very seriously, and have invested heavily in the correct infrastructure to robustly provide both preventative and reactive measures.

We have a dedicated Paramount Control Room that continually monitors 24/7 all of our accommodation via extensive bespoke CCTV. We also have an evening Paramount Task Force that has dedicated outbound officers that provide a range of services, from welfare checks to prompt antisocial behaviour management if required, dispatched by our Control Room. Our organisation also has a very experienced Client Management Team to deliver all aspects of tenancy management to ensure the high-quality service delivery and advice to the those using our accommodation.

In response to anti-social behaviour, Paramount work hand in hand with our local authority clients, to take appropriate and balanced action on a case by case basis. These measures include warnings, direct intervention (working with local authority partners), or the ending of accommodation if the circumstances require. All the household's placed with Paramount are allocated via a shared Risk Assessment process in conjunction with the Council to ensure the suitability of the households being allocated.

Paramount have an experience and trained Support Team that deal with issues such as Domestic Abuse and early intervention, along with reporting of safeguarding issues to professionals and police as required. We also have very active professional attendance to Kent-wide homelessness meetings so best practice can be discussed in placing clients that may potentially have anti-social behaviour or related complex histories.

Paramount also take great pride in how we work with strategic partners locally to ensure community cohesion and integration, which is particularly important for town centre schemes such as the ones we operate in Maidstone. Our senior staff attend a weekly Maidstone Task Force Meeting comprising of Kent Police, Maidstone Borough Council, and other local stakeholders. There is also daily dialogue with the local Community Policing Team to ensure that information flow is prompt and effective for the purposes of any tackling anti-social behaviour. Paramount have also invested in Maidstone's Local Town Centre Radio Network (known as Made Safe).

2 – 'Would your organisation like to consider setting up a specific email response system for MPs and Councillors?'

Paramount believe that our organisation has an excellent track record or engaging with the appropriate communication channels in this regard, with the correct contacts being highly visible. If further lines of contact are required, Paramount are happy to explore this as appropriate.

West Kent Housing Association

1 – 'How do you (as an organisation) deal with Anti-Social Behaviour issues in relation to enforcing your tenancy agreements?'

Over the last year West Kent has reviewed its approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour. Every resident has terms within the tenancy agreement around behaving in a manner that does not cause anti-social behaviour in the community.

We recognise that anti-social behaviour takes various forms and is dealt with proportionally to the evidence that is gathered. To help us obtain evidence from our residents more effectively we have introduced the "ASB APP", where residents can upload videos, photos, sound recordings and traditional diary sheets straight to us.

We recognise that those who engage in anti-social behaviour may be vulnerable and we support them to change their behaviour via signposting to services, such as mental health, drug and alcohol services. We also look at what other factors may be impacting on the residents' day-to-day lives and look to support them via our Tenancy Sustainment Service and also our Employment & Training team, helping residents to obtain employment.

We encourage residents to take ownership in resolving their anti-social behaviour report jointly with us. This may involve taking part in mediation, certainly in cases where clashes of lifestyle occur.

We have also provided education when dealing with residents who have disposed of household items incorrectly in Tennyson Lodge to create a cleaner environment.

We use the full range of tools and powers available to social landlords to enforce the terms of the tenancy agreement. These include, but are not limited to warning letters, acceptable behaviour agreements and recharging for damage.

Over the last year we have strengthened our working relationship with the Community Safety Team at Maidstone Borough Council. This has seen the issuing of Community Protection Notices and in one case a resident received a fixed penalty notice. We also follow up with our residents when a Community Protection Notice has been issued.

We have also obtained four Civil Injunctions under Part 1 of the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 following violent offences. Since these Injunctions have been obtained there has been no further ASB in these cases.

Our Community Safety Manager would be very happy to deliver a session on how we manage ASB for Councillors and MPs if they would find this helpful.

2 – 'Would your organisation like to consider setting up a specific email response system for MPs and Councillors?'

We have a Customer Resolution team who manage and respond to all complaints from customers plus enquiries from MPs and Councillors. They have a team inbox and we have specific timescales for responding to Members enquiries.

We will respond to enquiries received from an MP or Councillor within **ten working days**. These will be managed outside of our complaints process. Where the enquiry is about an open complaint, any information will be added to the complaint and the MP or Councillor will be kept updated on the progress of the complaint.