

Anti- Social Behaviour Issues in South Queensferry – Joint Action Group Meeting

Minutes of Meeting Held Tuesday the 14th March 2017 , Rosebery Hall, South Queensferry

Attendees: Neil McKinlay (NMck) (Chair) Community Council/High School Community Partner, David Flint (DF) , Community Council, Sgt. Richard Homewood (RH), Police Scotland, Jim Loosemore (JL), Police Scotland Graeme McKinley (GMck), Community Council, Jenny Smith(JS), Deputy Head, Queensferry High School, Graham Philip (GP), Manager Scot Mid Store South Queensferry Branch.

Apologies: Anne Mitchell (AM), Parent Teachers Group, Aidan Douds (AD), Community Police Officer.

Licensed Retailers Representative

GP outlined the incidents of alcohol shoplifting that had taken place the previous weekend at his store. The perpetrators have been identified and details are being passed to PC Aidan Douds. It is thought that the more stringent steps being taken by local retailers of alcohol to check ID following visits from the police may have had a part in driving this shoplifting.

GP explained the Community Alcohol Partnership initiative which he had been a part of as manager of the Scot Mid Portobello store which involves alcohol retailers , the local police and members of the local school leadership team working together to tackle underage drinking. RH explained that this initiative could roll out to our area however in the interim steps are being taken to address local issues which are covered in the Police Scotland section below.

Police Scotland

RH ran over the reported incident stats in South Queensferry for the previous 3 weekends: 25/2 – seven 4/3 one and 11/3 – seven. He volunteered the actual incidents may be more if residents have not formally logged an incident. RH asked us to remind residents of the channels they should use to report incidents. GMck is already doing this via the “Only Way is the Ferry” Facebook site and other similar sites and will continue so to do.

RH went to describe the steps that are being taken to tackle the issues of vandalism/rowdiness which are primarily being caused by youths in the 12- 16 age range including breaking up house parties that have gotten out of hand and basically moving on groups of youths where trouble is anticipated, all very labour intensive . In particular RH outlined the process for pulling in extra resource from other specialised teams/command areas when necessary but explained that other more serious incidents in other parts of the West can impact on being able to summon additional resource.

The Police are of the opinion that the vast majority of the vandalism and related anti-social behaviour is being cause by a very small number of youth perhaps 3 to 4 in number. JL advised that evidence is needed before these individuals can be charged and he has examined CCTV recordings in some trouble spots but due to the incidents taking place at night the culprits to date cannot be

identified which is frustrating. A larger number of youths do operate on the periphery and are not directly involved and all agree that these are the ones where their behaviours/mind sets need to be changed through various means including education.

RH explained what criminal proceeding can and can't be taken against offenders depending on their age . It is clear that the authorities where at all possible do not want younger children to have criminal records and cases are very often passed to the Childrens Recorder to deal with (lower end sanctions). In more serious cases it is possible for the Council to be engaged and parents of offending youngsters can run the risk of their tenancies being terminated.

Alcohol is a major driver of anti -social behaviour and local retailers (one hot spot in particular) are being targeted to hit home the message of ensuring adequate ID checks are taking place. The Licensing Authorities will also be conducting spot checks to reinforce the message.

RH added that is members of the public have good reason to think that retailers are selling alcohol to underage youths they should report this to the Police through the various channels.

ACTION In terms of communicating with the officers on duty at weekends RH has agreed to provide GMcK with details of the officers names so that via the 101 Police phone line DGMcK (or 2 of his trusted colleges) can ask to speak to them if they are free to pass on information of actual/impending issues. RH did explain that their ability to act on this information will very much depend on how the level of incidents across the wider area.

ACTION GMcK suggested DashCams might be used to identify vandals e.g. the cars that were damaged in Morison Gardens. RH though this might help depending on their field of vision but he will check with his colleges first and revert to GMcK to ensure this will not infringe on any legislation.

In summary RH stated that Police Scotland are committed to having 4 officers available (subject to other demands of a more serious nature) to patrol the town over weekends in combinations of uniformed and plain clothes to try to address the problem and also keep on top of any retailers selling alcohol to under age children.

Parents

It is accepted that a key driver of bad behaviour amongst youths is poor parenting/controls. NMcK suggested a "round robin " letter be sent to all parents warning them of the risk of their child/children being involved in anti -social activities. RH did not think this was the best approach and a more targeted approach would be better and will be considered perhaps to parents of known perpetrators or those operating on the periphery.

Queensferry High School

JS outlined the various interventions that the school have run for pupils and parents to highlight the risk of drug taking and these have been well received. JS was disappointed to hear that there is "noise" from some quarters that drug dealing/taking is rife within the school. She was at pains to point out that the school staff make regular checks during breaks /lunchtime of the school and surrounding areas and there has been no evidence of such activities taking place.

In terms of the anti-social behaviour , the High School are aware of the issues out with school and confirm there is a cohort of 3rd year pupils who seem to move about in larger groups and efforts have been made to break them up.

Action JS emphasised that she and the senior leadership team are totally committed to do whatever they can to help address the issues of anti-social behaviour. Following the meeting she will speak to her senior colleagues with a view to developing suitable classes/workshops with input from Police Scotland to raise awareness of the impact and consequences of these type of activities. The plan would be for all pupils to attend one of these sessions and if possible more “robust” ones for any age groups/cohorts deemed to be at risk of being involved. The idea of some form of “Victim Statement video from say an elderly victim was mooted by NMCK and all agreed this could be an effective tool. RH said they could assist here. JS would hope to run some classes before the Summer break and look to develop a more strategic based programme of classes for post Summer. JS will keep us posted of developments.

JS emphasised that it is only a very small minority of pupils who are causing the issues (supported by the views of the Police) and the vast majority of local children are perceptively well behaved . She would be keen to run some open sessions so residents can see this for themselves.

Social Media : “Only Way is the Ferry” Facebook Page and other similar sites

GMCK will continue to log/filter incoming reports of anti- social activities and pass information as appropriate as part of an “early warning system” to the Police as outlined above.

GMCK will also reinforce the need for incidents to be reported through proper channels and not assume others will have done it. He will also communicate the outcome of this meeting and the actions that are going to be taken to ensure residents are comforted that the matter is being taken very seriously and that we are adopting a co-ordinated strategy with all stakeholders playing their part

Pupils Council and Parents/Teacher Groups

DF will raise awareness of the meeting and outcomes at the next Pupils Council meeting and NMCK will do likewise with the Parent Teacher Group via Anne Mitchell.

Next steps

It was agreed that we would as a group meet again towards the end of May to review progress and the crime situation at that time. RH highlighted that the Easter holidays will be a testing time as the holidays combined with the better weather usually results in a “spike” in anti social activities.

NMCK thanked all those for attending and all parties agreed it had been a valuable meeting.

Neil McKinlay (Working Group Chair)

15th March 2017