

Appendix 3 Cabinet Adviser Report on Resident Engagement on Anti-social Behaviour and Community Safety

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE: Cabinet Adviser Report on resident engagement on anti-social behaviour and community safety	
REPORT OF: Councillor Edmund Frondigoun, Cabinet Advisor on resident engagement on anti-social behaviour and community safety	
FOR SUBMISSION TO: Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee	DATE Monday 15 th September 2025
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report explores and sets out recommendations on what the Council can do to engage with residents on anti-social behaviour and community safety. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: Hannah Bennai Cabinet Officer Corporate Services 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Telephone: 020 7974 1750 Email: hannah.bennai@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATIONS The Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee is asked to: a) Note and comment on the report and recommendations ahead of the report being considered by the relevant Cabinet Member and submitted to Cabinet.	

Signed:



Councillor Edmund Frondigoun

Date: 03/09/2025

1. Report Outline:

- 1.1. The Leader of the Council has established Cabinet Adviser roles to provide evidence-based policy support to make recommendations for Cabinet on areas of work within the Council. The Cabinet Advisers are appointed by the Leader for the period of a year and the 2024/25 Advisers were appointed in May 2024.
- 1.2. Cabinet Advisers are not members of Cabinet and do not have decision making powers. They report to the Cabinet and relevant portfolio holders on their evidence-gathering and conclusions. They present their findings in a report to the relevant Scrutiny Committee for comment, after which their report goes to Cabinet alongside a response from the relevant Cabinet Member.
- 1.3. Councillor Edmund Frondigoun has been appointed as Cabinet Advisor on resident engagement on anti-social behaviour and community safety. This role has encompassed a range of primary and secondary research to explore Camden's current approach to resident engagement and sets out recommendations to support the Council to build on their ongoing work.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Camden is shaped by the people who live here- our residents who are at the heart of everything we do. The Council has always prioritised ensuring the decisions we make are representative of our constituents. Without active listening, engagement and involvement- we lose sight of our true purpose. In a community as diverse as Camden, meaningful engagement is essential. The Council must ensure that every voice is heard, every perspective valued and every group represented in some capacity.
- 2.2. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) has a damaging impact on our communities, not only through serious large-scale incidents, but also through the everyday actions that may be considered "smaller" but accumulate to impact the crime climate of an area. Despite reduced Council funds and £260 million budget shortfall in the police, the Council and Met continue their determined work to make Camden communities safer; actioning and responding to incidents of crime, as well as forward planning hot spot areas. However, more often than not smaller every day actions go unreported. From vandalism and intimidation to public disorder, these behaviours can create environments where residents feel uncomfortable, unsafe and disconnected. Camden's comms campaign (launched during the writing of this report) led to a 42% increase in reporting, which proves a significant level of under reporting. It is clear that some of our most deprived communities are living with ASB as part of their lives and we must do all we can to tackle that.
- 2.3. Crime, specifically ASB, has significantly increased over the past year. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for year ending (YE) September 2024 showed that nationally 36% of people experienced or witnessed ASB, slightly up

from 34% the previous year. The CSEW also asks about people's perceptions of ASB in their local area. In YE September 2024, 24% of people thought ASB was a fairly or very big problem, and 8% felt their area had a high level of ASB. These trends have stayed consistent since YE March 2014, with little change each year.

- 2.4. It is essential that Camden not only tracks and actions such incidents but encourage the reporting of them. We Make Camden's ambition is to "actively tackle injustice and inequality" while one of the challenges the Council hope to overcome is creating a Camden where "everyone is safe at home and safe in our communities". In order to do this, it is imperative to look beyond how residents engage with us as a Council, but rather how we engage with our residents.

3. Recommendation 1: The Council and Police should work in partnership to issue proactive targetted communications on Community safety to Camden residents, providing an update on Council and police activity and providing information about meetings and support. Proactive communications should update residents on police activity, meetings and support using language tailored to suit all while also promoting/encouraging an open attitude to reporting ASB.

3.1. Our comms team play a critical role in engaging with residents across the borough who would not otherwise usually be in contact with their local Council. It is clear upon review that there is a significant amount of work taking place to reach out to residents on a variety of issues including community safety. Over the past few years the Council have increased community safety comms within the safer communities portfolio, however, the current reach is limited and primarily reactionary, through social media channels with restricted reach, and not tailored to be all encompassing of all Camden's unique and diverse communities.

3.2. Most of the residents interviewed for this report were unaware of the various activities the police and Council undertake against ASB. Some could recall specific communications (comms) received in the aftermath of serious incidents (for instance issuing letters issued to residents in the immediate vicinity), but most were unaware.

Private residents, and Street Properties.

3.3. This lack of engagement was particularly prevalent amongst residents who did not live on Council managed estates, which is to say private renters and tenants in street properties in particular noted feeling disengaged from the community safety process.

3.4. The Council sends a borough-wide magazine to all households, which includes a full-page piece on ASB. However, private tenants expressed that they felt that the language in Council comms (for instance 'Camden residents') felt tailored specifically to Camden Council tenants and leaseholders. Therefore,

there is often an assumption such comms are not intended for them-leading them to dispose of the Council magazine or leaflets and discount that they can use the services advertised too.

- 3.5. Additionally, due to the remit of the Responsive Security Patrols not extending beyond Council and select Registered Social Landlord estates (for instance Origin properties in St Pancras and Somers Town), private residents were not altogether aware what duties and responsibilities the Council has with regard to prevention of ASB (and how this interacts with the Police's area of responsibility).
- 3.6. As such there is a high level of risk that private tenants 'suffer in silence' when it comes to ASB. "Private renters" could vary from those living in privately owned buildings, to those on estates with apartments that are privately owned.

Council Tenants and Leaseholders

- 3.7. The Council's Housing and Community safety team work very hard to make their presence known to the community using a variety of methods such as door knocking and patrolling. Due to capacity, they often must prioritise communities experiencing the worst forms of ASB (e.g. drug related, threatening behaviour, harassment). Their work has increased satisfaction amongst tenants with 2024/25 showing a 11.6%pts increase in ASB handling compared to 2023/24.
- 3.8. Although Camden Council tenants and leaseholders were more aware of routes to report ASB such as using the main Council contact number to be transferred to the responsive security patrol (020 7974 4444), there was significant concern that their calls were not followed up on.
- 3.9. Additionally, there was some confusion amongst some participants as to where the boundary lay between reporting ASB and crime (and indeed different types of ASB). When there have naturally been some instances where it is not suitable for Responsive Security Patrol officers to intervene, residents have felt the message was not appropriately communicated (for example persistent drug dealing and gang-related activity or violent behaviour). In instances where different levels of responses are required, communication needs to be clear whether the police or the Council will be actioning.
- 3.10. The absence of pro-active comms and appropriate closing off from the Council appears to be creating something of a negative feedback loop amongst Council tenants and leaseholders. Due to the perception that no action is taken as a result of their reports, there has been a decline in trust in Council services and the police to act on reports. Consequently, there is increased resistance towards reporting instances of ASB with the residents believing that very little will happen as a result.

3.11. Officers recognise the need to update residents on the outcome of the ASB incidents they raise, so that the community are assured their reports are responded to, encouraging them to continue reporting. As a result in the Council's ASB Review, the community safety team codified their commitment to updating residents who report using the reporting form. Once the process moves to a new digital process there will be a resident portal where those who submit reports can track their case progress.

3.12. The ASB review also set our various Council commitments regarding community safety:

- contact you within 7 working days
- carry out a risk assessment with your safety in mind
- complete an ASB action plan with you
- investigate the report and review the evidence objectively
- put in place any reasonable adjustments needed and offer you support
- work with the police or other agencies where needed

Current Challenges in reporting.

3.13. Both Council officers and police who took part in this report demonstrated a strong commitment to tackling ASB while recognising the different forms that it manifests, and the harm it presents to residents in Camden. The Council's neighbourhood safety officers as well as the police also demonstrated their dedication to acting on ASB reports, in particular more persistent and disturbing manifestations (for instance public drug abuse and threatening and intimidating behaviour). It was also noted that due to the both the limited resources available to both Council and police and the transient nature of much ASB in the borough (particularly relating to public substance abuse and vagrancy) under the old system it was difficult to demonstrate where direct action has been taken as a result of a specific report.

3.14. While it would be a significant challenge, and indeed likely impossible, to demonstrate action taken for every specific ASB report made, failing to demonstrate action causes a tremendous loss of public confidence in the services that counter and deter ASB, particularly when areas are faced with sudden rushes of public ASB.

3.15. Both Council and police officers are clear about how valuable reporting ASB in volume is to their services. Both noted that building up a volume of reports helps to target proactive action and resource against persistent offenders making the most of the limited resources available, and both officers and police have

expressed that they are keen for residents to keep reporting instances of ASB, irrespective of how minor reportees may believe them to be.

- 3.16. It should be noted that even where Camden citizens have been told this by police and officers there remains a significant degree of scepticism from citizens of the value of reporting and a belief that no consequential action will be taken as a result of their reports. Additionally, some Camden residents calling the 4444 number have reported being told by call handlers that their reports are not important enough to qualify as ASB and that they should not expect a response. This is disappointing as it both contradicts the stated policy and attitude of Camden officers with regard to ASB and further adds to the lack of confidence in the Council's ability to tackle ASB.

Ongoing Activity to tackle the comms gap.

- 3.17. Noting the challenges expressed in the previous section around reporting it is worth examining what activity is already being taken to rectify the comms gap.
- 3.18. Several residents spoken to as part of this report were aware of the practical obstacles on officers to respond individually to specific reports of ASB. A frequent request made by residents was to explore the possibility of using an app-based system to both report instances of ASB and also provide an automated response back. Residents noted that this would provide some conclusion to their report as residents were not aware of the new ASB commitments under the ASB Task force.
- 3.19. The Met say only 5% of crime is reported to them in person at a counter, the rest is via telephone or web. During the writing of this report, the Metropolitan Police have launched a new app 'Met Engage', which is a crime reporting tool and provides users with updates and information on activity in their area as a result of reports. This is a welcome step and the report notes the optimism with which residents who are aware treat this app, although the launch comes too late for any assessment of its usefulness in addressing the reporting issue to be included in this report.
- 3.20. During the process of this report, the Council have also migrated to an online reporting system which is a form that can be found through navigating the main Council website. This will also encourage more reporting while making it easier for residents to track the outcome of their report.
- 3.21. Camden Council should work along with the police to track the use and feedback of their individual apps and forms make use of any findings and work collaboratively to do so.

Recommendation

- 3.22. There is a clear need to proactively demonstrate the ongoing work undertaken by the Council and police to tackle ASB.
- 3.23. This is for two primary reasons- to improve public confidence in the ability of Council services to combat ASB, and to further strengthen the ability of the police and neighbourhood safety officers to take enforcement activity by increasing the body of reports.
- 3.24. It is clear that both the Council and the police make use of social media comms to communicate community safety actions. The Council's channel strategy sets out the routes we use to maximise reach with an opportunity to reflect on the balance between channel use and cost, with a review recommended based on engagement levels across groups experiencing high quantities of ASB. However, in a borough such as Camden, with a diverse range of ages and ethnic groups, and a high number of private sector residents who otherwise would not access Council services, it should be judged that social media cannot reach every corner of our diverse communities.
- 3.25. Therefore, a sensible solution would be to use paper-based comms delivered by hand to residences in the borough alongside a mixed-channel approach. This has the advantages of both being available to all residents, and by being delivered without the need for request, would bolster confidence that the Council is taking pro-active action against ASB. The Council's comms approach is a media mix where messages are delivered both digitally and through paper communication. Cost implications of this recommendation should be considered with the budget in mind.
- 3.26. Such comms should retain a local element and should reflect priorities and actions taken within the specific local area. As discussed under recommendation 2 these should include outputs from Safer Neighbourhood forums and data from the Police and Council on enforcement activity taken.
- 3.27. Finally, by taking a pro-active approach to deliver to all households in the a targeted area, using a hand-delivered leaflet would help inform private tenants and residents the powers and responsibilities the Council has in deterring ASB in the borough, which should be committed to for a longer-term approach. It should be recognised that even once the initial cause of any prolonged ASB-social behaviour is addressed, residents will remain concerned and worried, and so longer-term reassurance that safety issues are being dealt with is needed.
- 3.28. During the development of this report, Council officers explored the potential of launching a dedicated comms campaign on ASB. Building on the Council's channel strategy, which provides valuable insights into how and where residents prefer to receive information, the campaign was designed to maximise reach and impact. Using both digital and print channels, the campaign has featured case studies from the Community Safety team to build trust, explain what ASB is and

outline how residents can report it, as well as demonstrating what happens next. Messaging has been shared widely through Housing News, the Camden magazine digital platforms and locally distributed posters and leaflets. A dedicated press release as well as resource pack for elected members has also been prepared. The campaign launched in June and by the end of the month ASB reports had risen by 42% indicating the success of investing in such campaigns.

4. Recommendation 2: The Council should take responsibility for the Camden communities ability to engage and hold the Police to account at ward level.

- 4.1. Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels (SNWPs) exist as a community engagement function of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). They set priorities that guide their Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) (that is their community based police officers), to scrutinise the work of the SNTs and to provide a community link between SNT officers and the local community, and to help guide community safety initiatives. The SNWP is the primary forum where the MPS shares ward level safety data with residents, and this data sharing should be used to guide the development of community safety objectives.
- 4.2. Each ward within the London Borough of Camden should have an active SNWP.
- 4.3. SNWPs are volunteer led. They are intended to be constituted by representatives from the local residential and business community. Typically, SNWPs will have representatives from Tenants and Residents Associations (and other similar groups covering different types of housing tenure), local businesses and community groups, educational representatives.
- 4.4. The Panel itself should be composed of tenured representatives to ensure that a balance of the community is represented at priority and scrutiny meetings. These meetings (where actions and business are voted on) are invite only, however the SNWP may also convene regular open consultative meetings open to the whole community as they see fit.
- 4.5. Although Council officers, such as Community Safety Enforcement Officers and ward Councillors may attend the Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels (and many often do) they are not the focus of the meeting and do not have voting rights and should not receive actions as a result of SNWP meetings, which are primarily there to scrutinise the work of the police.
- 4.6. However, considering the degree of overlap between crime reporting and ASB, issues raised at SNWPs will invariably require a joint response.
- 4.7. Indeed, given that the lack of a Council-run analogue to deal with a narrowly focused remit on ASB, SNWPs represent the only standing group within the London Borough of Camden for interaction between local communities, the police and Council services on Community Safety issues. There is as such a de-

facto assumption across the borough that this is the main forum at which community safety is dealt with at a local level.

4.8. SNWPs are intended to be volunteer led. And although some grant funding is available for SNWP activities through the Camden Safer Neighbourhood Board, most SNWPs operate with little external support or funding and are reliant of the capacity of their volunteer members to operate effectively.

Issues with the current Operation of SNWPs

4.9. During the course of the report, members of a variety of SNWPs in the borough were interviewed about their experiences of running their boards. This included in depth interviews of chairs and secretaries of SNWPs.

4.10. Overall, there is a great deal of variation in how SNWPs are operating across Camden. Although some are judged by their attendees to be operating well within their remit, the report uncovered some concerning examples of how Safer Neighbourhood Panels were not operating as intended, as detailed below.

- Some Panels met irregularly and much less than the recommended quarterly meetings. Other Panels had slipped fully into abeyance and had not met for more than a year.
- Members of SNWPs (including senior officers such as chairs and secretaries) were themselves not confident in understanding the remit of the SNWP.
- No training had been received by or offered to members of SNWPs on joining (or in taking up senior posts) and members of some SNWPs could not recall seeing a Terms of Reference or job description of their post.
- Some SNWPs did not keep action logs or records of setting community safety priorities and did not track progress against police actions from meeting to meeting.
- Some SNWPs recorded a lack of data sharing from the police and also a lack of knowledge that such information should be provided to members of SNWPs
- Some SNWPs had consistently low attendance and were themselves not entirely representative of the local community. Many struggled to invite representatives from across the local community, often defaulting to a small group of long-time volunteers.

4.11. In some instances, there also appeared to be a breakdown in communication between SNWPs and partners, with concerns that SNWPs were not sticking to their remits but instead focusing on other (non-community safety) areas of concern in the community and with Council services.

- 4.12. The above is not and should not be taken as criticism of the volunteers who run SNWPs. This report recognises and commends the unpaid and thankless work that SNWP volunteers have done and do to represent their community.
- 4.13. In fact, in interviews with members of SNWPs, most members themselves expressed their sensitivity to the above concerns about how SNWPs are run, and a desire to operate their SNWPs in a representative and effective manner. However, they noted that with a lack of additional support they would struggle to make necessary changes. Almost all felt that they would benefit from some form of training and mentoring in their roles but that this was at best sporadically offered by the Police and Safer Neighbourhood Board.
- 4.14. Furthermore, some SNWP chairs and secretaries reported feeling exhausted and disillusioned with their roles on the Panels. Some reported a perception that little changed as a result of running their work. Others felt a great deal of responsibility for improving safety in their communities, and that they themselves were personally responsible to their neighbours and community for the situation in their neighbourhood, and that where things did not improve that they were under a great deal of scrutiny.
- 4.15. As such this has led to a significant risk to the running of SNWPs where senior members simply walk away from their roles due to exhaustion and disillusionment, and as such panels cease to operate effectively.
- 4.16. Additionally, and due to the SNWP role being voluntary, many members simply do not possess contacts with certain parts of their communities (particularly businesses, young people and ethnic minorities) which under the current format would be necessary to build a balanced panel, and that not possessing a wide array of contacts within the community would therefore preclude one from taking on a role on the panel.
- 4.17. As discussed in the previous section, SNWPs are de-facto the only standing format local communities in Camden have to address community safety with police and representatives from the Council and should form an important feedback loop on data and actions. Therefore, the risk posed by volunteer burnout due to lack of support itself threatens the ability of the Council and police to proactively improve safety in the community.

Role of the Council and proposed changes

- 4.18. It is widely accepted amongst the Council, police and partners that the overall effectiveness of SNWPs should be improved.
- 4.19. This is both in terms of monitoring data and setting priorities, as well as ensuring that SNWPs maintain balanced representation from across their local communities.

4.20. As per the previous section, SNWP members share this objective.

4.21. However, whilst SNWPs retain a purely voluntary basis it is difficult to envisage how these objectives can be achieved. The reality is the effective operation of SNWPs is at present entirely dependent on specific personalities with the time, motivation, background knowledge and connections to fulfil their objectives, and SNWPs remain highly vulnerable to volunteer absence, burn-out or abandonment.

4.22. There are existing government platforms where the Council play a key role in supporting community meetings, however for SNWP's the Council retains a level of involvement at the overarching Community Safety Board level (the borough-wide meeting of SNWP chairs, officers and partners). However, operation of the SNWPs rest with community members. In fact, Council officers have often expressed a resistance to taking on a closer role in the operation of SNWPs, noting that they are primarily organisations to scrutinise and set objectives for the MPS and the risk in scope creep should they also begin to scrutinise Council activity.

4.23. Noting that this approach is itself correct within the current remit of SNWPs, it is the opinion that Council should lobby MOPAC for joint increased involvement where either body can help.

4.24. It should be considered that Council officers, particularly Neighbourhood safety officers can in fact offer a significant contribution to the running of SNPW given that they have:

- A permanent, locally knowledgeable staff member who is familiar with partnership working with the police and existing neighbourhood.
- The ability to provide SNWP members with necessary documents and training materials upon request, and a central document store for action plans, minutes, terms of references and membership list.
- Access to other information to help broaden the membership base of the SNWP, for instance links to VCS organisations, local businesses and other tenant groups. Although Neighbourhood safety officers themselves may not have this information, they will internally have contacts who can provide to help curate membership lists and build links.
- The ability to refer SNWP members to training and community events and to be a trusted point of contact for members of SNWPs, should they find themselves needing support or guidance.

4.25. As such the recommendation is that the Council takes responsibility for supporting secretariat duties for SNWPs. Practically this would involve.

- Advising SNWP's on how to keep document/ record of ToRs, minutes and action logs.
- Advising on membership lists, helping to broaden invite lists to ensure panels are fully representative.
- Supporting the Mayors Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to ensure members, new and existing are signposted to training and support in their roles.
- Acting as a trusted point of contact for officers.

4.26. It should be noted that this recommendation does not call for any broadening of the scope of SNWPs (and indeed does not have the power to call for any such broadening of scope), which would primarily remain focused on setting local policing priorities and monitoring progress against them, although as previously discussed there are natural synergies arising from Neighbourhood safety officers attending SNWPs.

4.27. However, it should be noted that providing support is consistent with the We Make Camden mission and that there is a shared interest between Council and police in ensuring that SNWPs operate effectively.

4.28. Furthermore, as per recommendation one, effective SNWPs are a key link in ensuring that appropriate comms on community safety can be issued and to overall improve community perception of local safety.

4.29. There is also a substantial equity point to be addressed in the improvement of representation of Safer Neighbourhood Panels. As part of the writing of this report the author met with organisations representing specific sections of the community, including groups representing mothers with young children, and the British Somali Centre. Although on specific safety issues the Police and Council do interact with these groups (and such interaction is generally positively received), it is primarily reactive work and done in seeming isolation to other community safety work in the area. In fact, representatives of both groups stated that they would very much like to have involvement in setting wider community safety priorities but did not know how they could get involved.

5. Recommendation 3: The Council should take proactive measures to tackle forms of antisocial behaviour which have a specific impact on certain lesser heard from groups and should communicate these actions to a wider audience. (tackle forms of antisocial behaviour that are not as prominent/well known but equally impact groups we do not normally hear from, e.g. young people, private renters)

5.1. Although Council involvement and action on community safety will naturally gravitate to more visible forms of ASB likely to be reported (for instance open

drug dealing and intoxication, vandalism and on-street harassment and intimidation), it should be recognised that citizens in Camden can also be left feeling unsafe by activities which do not fall under the definition of ASB, but under which the Council does have enforcement powers.

- 5.2. When meeting with community groups typically under-represented from wider conversations on community safety, namely Private renters and young people- significantly different issues were raised in comparison to the community groups the Council usually engaged with.

Reflections from residents

- 5.3. During the process of writing this report a number of community groups and residents were interviewed for their thoughts and experiences of safety in their communities. Amongst the people interviewed were the staff at the British Somali Centre in Somers Town, the Camden Federation of Private Tenants, parents and volunteers at the Plot 10 Community Play Project, and members of Safer Neighbourhood forums. Additionally ad hoc research was carried out as part of ward councillor community activity in the borough where the topic of community safety was raised. In fact, members of the public would sometimes directly contact me, being aware of my role as Cabinet Advisor to discuss community safety. Such was the interest this report provoked.
- 5.4. Although the formal interviews had a set structure of questions relating to Council communications and responsiveness, invariably conversation would wander into wider experiences in the borough and the overall perception of community safety. Many responders, without prompting, linked the issue of public safety to other issues in the public realm, such as cleanliness, and housing issues, as negatively impacting their perception of safety in the borough.
- 5.5. Camden Federation of Private Tenants, for instance raised that many private tenants faced harassment and intimidation by landlords, often in response to raising breaches of tenancy and housing law.
- 5.6. Additionally, some organisations raised that they felt younger people were not taken as seriously when they tried to report instances of unsafe behaviour and were often brushed off or given no clear assurance of action.
- 5.7. Concurrently younger respondents raised concerns about the amount of gang-related graffiti in the borough (for instance gang tags in public places demarcating territory and acting as a warning for outsiders to stay away), which led to them feeling unsafe in some neighbourhoods.
- 5.8. No doubt there are other such examples within the borough which may be anecdotally raised from time to time. Indeed, as per recommendation 2, the Council currently struggles finding appropriate forums to raise these issues.

- 5.9. Again, although these examples may not be considered the highest priority for enforcement, the Council do have enforcement powers they can administer against such activities. Furthermore, as part of the We Make Camden challenge to create a Camden where “everyone is safe at home and safe in our communities”, the Council should proactively demonstrate both that it takes reports of what may be perceived as “lesser ASB” activities seriously, and that it acts upon them. For instance the report recognises recent successes the Council has had in prosecuting rogue landlords for harassment and intimidation and that this has been communicated out widely.
- 5.10. Particularly in light of the increase in ASB experienced recently, it is important that the Council demonstrates a pro-active approach to tackling these lower-level issues as part of a wider campaign on public safety.
- 5.11. Camden’s policy is to “remove racist or offensive graffiti within 24 hours of notification and all other graffiti within 5 working days of receiving agreement to remove”. The Council responds to reports of graffiti, litter and fly tipping through their “Love Clean Streets” application as well as webpage application and Veolia telephone calls.
- 5.12. Residents raised concerns regarding gang-related graffiti within the area as it can often indicate if there are tensions between groups within the same community. It is hard to keep updated on the evolving nature of gang related graffiti without members of the community reporting it. However, given the nature of gang graffiti members of the community may feel frightened to report it to Council services. As a result, community groups felt that gang related graffiti seems to be an under-recognised issue within the Council. Although there is enforcement against graffiti and vandalism, at time of writing the Council does not have a way of cataloguing and responding to specific gang related graffiti of this sort which although not overtly intimidating, does leave young people feeling unsafe and insecure.
- 5.13. The Council uses a universal risk assessment that takes into account people’s vulnerabilities and community safety issues and how it makes them feel. As graffiti usually does not pose immediate risk it can be categorised as “lesser” and then triaged as high risk and actioned when necessary.
- 5.14. Furthermore, while these forms of ASB may be deemed “lesser” they have a real impact on perceptions of community safety which then impacts individual sense of belonging and how we bring the community together. If we can show that we take action in such instances we can demonstrate that every concern, no matter how “small”, is taken seriously by Camden. Through tangible evidence and example, we are able to build public trust and confidence.

Recommendation

- 5.15. The Council website defines ASB as “behaviour which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not in the same household” and encourages communities to “report any behaviour that makes you feel unsafe, or you feel may make others unsafe.” The webpage continues to say that this includes “graffiti or flyposting such as sticking posters on walls and other public property”.
- 5.16. Language plays a vital role in not only how the public perceives ASB, but how they report it. For this reason, it is imperative that the Council ensures that narrow definitions of ASB are not used and continue to use their standard definition consistently -especially when communicating with members of the public. This should especially be upheld when residents make reports to officers so that they demonstrate this consistency of language but are also actively listening and taking the reports they receive seriously.
- 5.17. It should also be clear that where the Council has a relevant enforcement power in this area, that it can be actioned upon as a safety issue, even where the ultimate enforcement partner is in a different section of Council services (for instance street cleanliness enforcement).
- 5.18. Neighbourhood safety officers should be able to pass on reports of this nature to the relevant departments in the Council, and return receive reports back that they can circulate to a wider audience where enforcement has been taken so that it can be reported as part of wider neighbourhood safety comms.
- 5.19. This process is particularly important when it comes to combatting gang-related graffiti. Although residents can report graffiti anonymously via Clean streets apps and other routes, it is important that specific intelligence about what graffiti is consistent with gang-related activity can be prioritised for clean up by relevant departments.
- 5.20. Above all although the cleaning of graffiti is a cleanliness issue rather than a community safety issue (ultimately from a service delivery perspective), for the purposes of resident reporting it should be treated as a safety issue. Officers should action and respond to such reports without (even if inadvertently) diminishing the significance receiving such reports by telling residents that it is not.
- 5.21. It should be considered that an approach such as this should help improve perception of community safety by not minimising the experience of residents who report non-ASB or crime incidents which still have an impact on quality of life. By responding with appropriate seriousness, it would help validate residents who otherwise would not feel comfortable reporting bad behaviour.
- 5.22. Addressing these incidents reinforces the message that ASB will not be ignored. These small visible actions contribute to a broader strategy of the

community engagement essential to fostering trust and reassurance within the local area.

5.23. This could then be adopted as an ongoing process where Council services consider what other issues should have the same referral pathway (for instance persistent fly-tipping).

6. Acknowledgements

6.1. I would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance and participation in this report: Camden Federation of Private Tenants, Sheila Sansbury, Faduma Ibrahim Arun Kumar, Khadijah Shireh, Robert Taylor, AJ Kukadia Richard Caylor, Sally Warren, Plot 10, The British Somali Centre, Members of the St Pancras and Somers Town and Kilburn Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Councillor Anna Wright and Anne Clark AM. I would also like to thank internally our officers from the community safety teams for their candour and guidance in the writing of this report and to Councillor Pat Callaghan for her support, guidance and advice. Additionally, I would also like to thank many other participants from the police and local community for sharing their experiences and thoughts and who must, by necessity, remain anonymous but without whom this report would not have been possible.

7. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

7.1. While many of the recommendations of the report relate to how existing services, partners and bodies operate and therefore do not necessarily require additional resources, the Cabinet Member and Cabinet will need to be mindful of their budgetary implications when responding to the report given the financial pressures currently facing the Council.

8. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

8.1. Legal Services have been consulted and have no specific comments on the report

9. Environmental Implications

9.1. This report demonstrates a positive impact on the environment by addressing targeted gang-related graffiti. By reducing and removing graffiti, it aims to help improve visual landscape, discourage further vandalism, and promote cleaner, safer community spaces that benefit both people and the environment.

10. Appendices

10.1. There are no appendices to this report.