

Monitoring of previous scrutiny reviews

This information is provided to assist Scrutiny Management Panel in their role of monitoring the implementation of recommendations from previous reviews.

Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny – Attainment & Achievement

In Sept 2010 the LA further increased its challenge to schools by:-

1. termly recategorisation of schools followed up by meetings with the Head and chair of Governors re LA expectations re improvement
2. new internal Schools causing concern group that reports monthly to senior management
3. greater sharing of LA concerns with School Improvement Partners

In addition the LA is increasing the scope and rigor of the Every Child Matters audit of each child in the city to better ensure early support.

In addition following a National Strategies review the LA is developing a new school vision/strategy with a more demanding trajectory of improvement. This will be supported by a new school strategy framework to better hold schools to account for their performance. It is intended that the new vision, strategy will be completed in May/June 2011

Housing & Social Care Scrutiny - Neighbour Nuisance

- 1. The manner in which the University of Portsmouth audit their processes for communicating with complainants to assure them that their complaint has been received and is being dealt with.**

Although this is a matter which is best responded to by the University Student Housing Team directly, I am able to provide

assurances that the complaint investigation processes and complainant notifications have significantly improved since the 2009 Scrutiny Review.

Upon receipt, and until resolution and closure, liaison with the complainant remains as essential as the contact with those accused of creating the problems. Officers therefore keep complainants notified of all significant actions taken during the life of their complaint. In addition, complainants are aware of their investigating officer's name, direct dial telephone number and email address. All enquiries and actions are documented upon their enquiry file. These instructions are located within the comprehensive E&PPS process 2009 Management Guidance from which all officers are trained and assessed.

Following the Scrutiny Review, a review of complaint handling processes for domestic noise took place. A procedural change was implemented to deliver timely resolutions of all student related complaints, offering an increased level of investigation and improved communication with complainants. As early interventions are the key rapid resolutions, these were the focus of the revised student procedure. Upon receipt of a complaint regarding noise emanating from a student related address, enquiries are 'activated' straight away. Effectively, this means that complainants are immediately able to access our reactive night service to report any recurrence of the nuisance. The night noise officer/duty day officer will then give a degree of priority to these complaints.

In September 2009, complaint handling protocols were formalised with the University of Portsmouth. These resolved outstanding data protection issues and enabled student information to be freely shared between teams. Upon receipt of complaints, a formal request for student information is emailed to the University. At the start of each year students are required to formally enrol and a significant percentage seek assistance from the Student Housing Team to find suitable safe accommodation. It is this information which enables us to identify those responsible for creating the noise within just a few hours of complaints being received. Alternatively, where students have chosen to secure accommodation by other means, our strong ties with PCC's Private Sector Housing Team usually enables tenancy information to be obtained relatively quickly via the registered landlord.

This improved liaison enables direct contact with the students by name. Approaching students by name is a distinct advantage as it demonstrates a cohesive approach, dissolves anonymity enabling liability and, should it be necessary, facilitates the delivery of regulatory enforcement. Pollution control officers will then pro-actively visit the premises accused to discuss the nature of the complaint with the students. We focus these visits in the early morning within a day or 2 of receiving the initial enquiry. This direct approach, to inform, educate and deliver solutions, has proven to be highly effective.

Of the **13** student related complaints received in the last academic term of 2009/2010, all were resolved as a result of this direct

visit to the student accommodation. None of these complaints resulted in a call to the night noise service to visit and witness recurring noise-related anti social behaviour. This is a testament to the quality of the officer's and the success of this procedure, although it is acknowledged such a high degree of resolution may be exceptional. Similar analysis of future data will reveal in the long term just how successful these approaches will prove to be. Of the **2,150** calls received by the night noise service in 2010 regarding recurring noise nuisance, **53** related to student properties.

Following our direct approach to the property, all the students are written to by name. This explanatory letter reiterates the investigation process, clarifies future implications of creating nuisance, confirms any agreements reached and explains our continuous liaison processes with the University and their landlord. Should recurring complaints be received and nuisance witnessed, either by the use of noise monitoring equipment or reactive officer visits, enforcement proceedings will be implemented. The enforcement process follows the procedure prescribed by legislative requirements. It is identical to the regulation of all other domestic noise complaints and follows the protocols set out within the 2009 Noise Enforcement Policy.

In addition to the quarterly University Stakeholder Meetings, the Pollution Control Manager meets with the Student Housing Manager on a regular basis to discuss processes and continually improve service delivery, communication and feedback to complainants.

Emphasis upon nuisance rather than disturbance or inconvenience is recognised throughout the investigation process, however where significant conflicts in lifestyle occur, it is possible that even reasonable behaviour may cause distress and concern to others. The University therefore works hard to educate students with regard to the negative impact thoughtless behaviour has on the community. This process aims to reduce the number of student related complaints, not only from properties but round campus, halls and within residential areas. These considerable efforts and how they can be published are constantly being explored by the University and communicated to residents.

2. That the night noise service staffing be increased to provide a more reactive service including daytime cover at weekends.

Even before the recent efficiency review there was insufficient budget provision for this extension of service. Demand for the service however remains high and the achievements of the single duty officer continue to be impressive with 2010 delivering the highest ever number of enforcement actions and interventions being made on the night to tackle the problems.

3. Recommend that the contact number for the night noise service contains a recorded message to advise the caller what will happen to their call.

This recommendation has been implemented, the message is as follows:

You have reached Portsmouth City Council's out of hours noise service. I'm sorry there is no one available to take your call at the moment, however your call is important and will be logged and recorded. Please leave your name and contact number, including your case number if you have it available, and we will contact you as soon as possible.

In addition to this message, complainants are advised in writing of hours of operation and what they should do when calling the out of hours service. The instructions are as follows:

It is vitaly important that we witness the noise created by your neighbour. To enable us to do this please follow these instructions:-

- **Please telephone us as soon as the noise that bothers you occurs and on every occasion it does so.** This will provide us with an opportunity to visit your home to gain evidence to progress your case. **Any failure to do this will considerably hinder our investigation process.**
- We are able to respond both during and outside of normal hours to investigate noise complaints. Should you be disturbed by noise Monday to Thursday 08:00 to 17:00 or 08:00 to 16:00 on Fridays please notify your case officer.
- Information is enclosed to enable you to access an officer during the evening / night. Please note that our evening / night service contact details are different to those listed above. Please always contact the evening / night duty officer via the landline first. Should there be no reply the officer will be out of the office and therefore you should make contact via the mobile number.
- Sometimes an officer will not be able to respond immediately to your enquiry, but we will contact you as soon as we can. Should you call during the evening / night and be requested by the mobile's automated answering service to record a message, please leave your name, address and contact number so that the duty officer can respond to your call as soon as they become available.

- You will note that currently we are unable to offer a daytime Saturday or Sunday service. Should you be disturbed by noise during these periods, please leave a message on the night noise answering service via the mobile to alert the duty officer of the problems when they arrive on duty.

4. That the E&PPS produce a guidance document to be published on the PCC website in relation to managing neighbour noise.

The website <http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/living/660.html> now contains comprehensive information regarding our noise investigation service including - the 2009 Noise Enforcement Policy (soon to be amended regarding the use of diaries) http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/media/Noise_Enforcement_Policy_2009.pdf and the 2009 'Disturbed by Noise' leaflet http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/media/Disturbed_By_Noise_Leaflet.pdf

Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny – Twinning & Seafront Reviews

An update on the implementation of the Twinning & Seafront Reviews will be tabled on the day of the meeting.

Traffic, Environment & Community Safety - Colas

An update on the implementation of the Colas Review will be tabled on the day of the meeting.