

Report of a meeting
on anti social behaviour in North Queensferry

Background

The meeting was organised by the Community Council and took place at the Community Centre on 1 June 2006. It was in response to an incident in which drugs may have been offered to primary school children at a village play park. This incident is the latest in a series of events, which have led parents and other residents to be seriously concerned about anti social behaviour and children's welfare.

Those attending

Fifty five village residents were present. This included a number of youngsters (some accused of misbehaviour), their parents and other parents who had complained of children's misbehaviour. To get all these people together under one roof was an achievement, as interaction and discussion can lead to resolution of problems.

In addition, the following attended:

Inspector Caldwell, Fife Police

Evelyn Wilson, Health Promotion, Fife Council

Jim Carr, Fife Community Drugs Team

Susan Reekie, North Queensferry Primary School

The first part of the meeting consisted of the retelling of residents' experiences of anti-social behaviour; the second part, of Inspector Caldwell's comments on the police position (with occasional interruptions from the floor); and the third (after Inspector Caldwell had left) of general discussion.

Village concerns

Those present believed that anti-social behaviour had reached an unacceptable level. Some recollected that the problem had always existed. But most felt that it had reached a new and unacceptable high. Problems included: verbal abuse, deflation of car tyres, other damage to cars, theft, throwing of stones (sometimes through windows), destruction of private property, the existence of a troublesome "den" next to residential property, intimidating behaviour, use of foul language, damage to church property, damage to school property, damage to private property, under-age drinking, use of drugs, threatening and destructive behaviour at the Community Centre and so on. The perpetrators appear to fall into two groups: local youngsters and those who come to the village for recreation. The police have been aware of these problems for many months, via the regular meetings of the Community Council (a representative of the Police Force

is always in attendance) and via Neighbourhood Watch, which meets regularly with community police. Residents wanted to know what further action the police would take to curb these threats to village peace and security.

The youngsters present were very open to suggestions and made sensible comments about misbehaviour in the village . They cited boredom and lack of facilities in the village as factors leading children to seek other amusements. They did not accept that they were the principal cause of anti-social behaviour in the village, indicating that outsiders come to the village to make mischief.

Police response

Inspector Caldwell's explained that the police are concerned with fighting crime. He described the model used for reporting and responding to crime at Dalgety Bay Police Station. It forms the basis for "intelligence-led policing". All complaints and reports regarding crimes are logged and entered into a database. Regular reports are made from the database by geographical area and type of crime. Police responses are based on these reports. As the reporting system shows very few reports for North Queensferry, there has been little police involvement. Inspector Caldwell mentioned the nuisance "den" which was reported to the police, but on which they were unable to act. He treated anti-social behaviour problems as village, rather than police responsibilities, but in subsequent discussion expressed a willingness to take action on anti social behaviour on the basis of suitable evidence.

He suggested the following:

the possible use of the juvenile warning system against youngsters who persistently step out of line

the need for residents to telephone the police immediately they become aware of criminal behaviour

residents should not take photos of criminal activity to present as evidence. However this advice was disputed,¹ as presenting evidence of crime at the moment it is taking place, could be regarded as a public duty

Many of those present had expected a more positive reaction from the police.

Summary and conclusion

The third part of the meeting revisited the above issues. Ideas were as follows:

¹ By Iain Mitchell QC, Vice Chairman of the Community Council

if the village provided more activities for youngsters it might help (more youth club nights at the community centre). A villager has offered to help. A multi-purpose, all-weather pitch at the Community Centre is being pursued.

mediation services between parents and children involved in issues of anti-social behaviour might be useful. Also the services of Health Promotion (part of Fife Council) and Fife Community Drugs Team could be requested

discreet steps could be taken to make the village less inviting for anti-social visitors

we should report all crime including anti social behaviour to the police immediately it occurs

we should also log our communications with the police so that we have our own record of calls to the police. Neighbourhood Watch might provide a focus

All appreciated the need to call the police once a reportable incident had taken place and there was widespread support for the idea that those making complaints to parents should do so in person, rather than by phone. Finally there was a general feeling that we should do more as a community to counter anti-social behaviour in our village.

Follow-up action

By the Community Council and Neighbourhood Watch

**Peter N. Dean, Chairman
North Queensferry Community Council
4 June 2006**