



AGENDA ITEM 7

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

8 FEBRUARY 2011

NOISE COMPLAINTS - SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL'S FINAL REPORT

Why the scrutiny panel examined this topic

1. Sound is essential to everyone's daily lives, but noise is not. Noise, which can be defined as unwanted sound, can be a source of irritation and stress for many people and, as a result, can cause disturbance and affect people's comfort and even health. The scrutiny panel sought to investigate the issue of noise complaints in Middlesbrough and the Council's involvement and responsibilities in resolving associated issues.

What the scrutiny panel found

2. The panel found that noise complaint numbers have increased by 50% in the last four years. These are principally dealt with using nuisance powers. Details of how monitoring and enforcement are undertaken were submitted to the scrutiny panel, together with information on trends and types of complaint. Complaints relating to loud music are most prevalent, accounting for almost half of complaints received. In 2010, around 1700 noise complaints were received, which accounted for over 8500 officer actions in response.
3. The scrutiny panel was also informed of work which is undertaken in relation to planning and licensing applications - stringent conditions applied at this stage can be important in preventing noise nuisance. Details were also submitted in respect of other service demands dealt with by the relevant team in Community Protection. These include work on flytipping, drainage issues and environmental enforcement.
4. The scrutiny panel also found that, in the current financial climate, service costs are likely to be closely examined. In this regard, there are proposals to train the Council's street wardens to cover some out of hours noise complaint work. In addition, a service re-structure is likely.

Summary of the Scrutiny Panel's Conclusions:

5. The scrutiny panel's conclusions are shown in full in the **attached final report** and highlight the following:

1. The adverse effect that noise can have on people's lives and the need to take action to address noise complaints.
2. The upward trend in numbers of noise complaints.
3. The role of the police in dealing with noise complaints.
4. Proposals to train the Council's street wardens to cover some out of hours noise complaint work.
5. The need to ensure that the public are made aware of the processes involved in dealing with noise complaints, particularly where more than one team of officers is involved.

Summary of the Scrutiny Panel's Recommendations:

6. The panel's recommendations are based on the conclusions outlined above. These are shown in full in the **attached final report** and relate to:
 1. Undertaking discussions with Middlesbrough Police to clarify their role and responsibilities in respect of noise complaints, particularly for 'out of hours' complaints.
 2. Supporting proposals for the Council's Street Wardens to assist with noise complaints and review the structure and staffing of the out of hours service.
 3. Officers ensuring that, where noise complaints involve more than one team from Community Protection, complainants are made fully aware of the differing roles and responsibilities involved.
 4. Progress being reported back to the Environment Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Bob Kerr

Chair of Environment Scrutiny Panel