

# **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

## **Tenant Services Management Board – 23 August 2011**

### **The Respect Charter**

#### **Report of the Estates Officer**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

#### **1. Executive Summary**

This report has been produced to provide the Board with the opportunity to comment on the merits of Taunton Deane Borough Council signing up to the Respect Charter.

It outlines the background to the Respect Charter and what the benefits to the organisation will be as a result of becoming accredited. The Respect Charter is a living document and will be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changes in legislation and the views of our tenants.

Taunton Deane Borough Council did not sign up to the Respect Standard, the fore-runner of the Respect Charter. On completion of the self assessment process for the Respect Standard there were a number of areas that required improvement before sign up. Additionally the elected member led task and finish group report identified issues that required to be addressed to improve the council's Anti Social Behaviour service. From that report two Housing Officers were recruited to deal specifically with Anti Social Behaviour. As part of the service improvement it is felt that we are now better placed to achieve the aims of the Respect Charter.

#### **2. Background to this report**

The Respect Agenda was launched in September 2005 by Tony Blair. Its aim was to help central government, local agencies, local communities and citizens to work together to tackle anti-social behaviour more effectively.

The Agenda was co-ordinated by the Respect Task Force based at the Home Office. The key policies of the Task Force were published in the Respect Action Plan in January 2006. The Respect Standard followed on from the action plan and was put in place by the Government and aimed to ensure that local agencies tackled unacceptable behaviour and its causes to improve the quality of life for residents - particularly those in the most disadvantaged communities.

The original Standard played an important role in driving up performance in both preventing and effectively tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB). With over 500 signatories signed up to the standard in 5 years being testament to its success.

The Respect Standard for Housing Management formed part of this drive and it was aimed at social landlords. It was a voluntary standard which the Government wanted as many landlords as possible to sign up to. However, it was used as an industry standard self-assessment tool. The standard provided recognition for those delivering a good service, while providing a benchmark to aim towards for other landlords.

There were 6 core commitments that formed the Respect Standard for Housing.

These 6 core commitments are:

- Accountability, leadership and commitment
- Empowering and reassuring residents
- Prevention and early intervention
- Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses
- Protecting communities through swift enforcement
- Support to tackle and causes of anti-social behaviour

In January 2011 it was announced that the Standard would be passed from the government to the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group (SLCNG) and HouseMark.

In June 2011 CIH, SLCNG and HouseMark introduced 'RESPECT - ASB Charter for Housing', the sector-owned replacement for the Respect Standard for Housing Management.

The resulting Charter (attached as appendix A) has been developed through wide consultation, and embodies best practice from around the country. As against the Respect Standard that was set by central government. Following the consultation process it was decided to retain the 'Respect' name, it being well-recognised and understood within the sector. The Charter continues to be voluntary, and is a key part of the new, co-regulatory approach within housing. It should be noted that the Charter is not intended to be a wider community safety charter - it is about landlords' ASB services. However, the importance of partnership working in improving outcomes for service users is acknowledged throughout the Charter. The Charter is intended to be a framework for us to use and adapt to our local circumstances and priorities. We recognise that there will be a wide range of diverse organisations who will want to sign up to the Charter and, as such, not all of the Commitments and Building Blocks will be appropriate. The aim is for us to work with our tenants to understand what issues are important to them, and work towards ultimately achieving this.

Housemark and SLCNG provide an ASB Accreditation service which can externally review our self-assessment against the Charter, and verifies independently whether you are meeting the Commitments and Building Blocks. We can get support from the above organisations to achieve this. More than 25 organisations have already achieved ASB Accreditation.

The Charter will be validated on an on-going basis unless there is a fundamental need to change it significantly. CIH, SLCNG and Housemark aim to work with us to ensure that the Charter remains up-to-date, outcome focused

and relevant. However, there will be no requirement to re-sign again following minor changes.

The Charter aims to be outcome-focused and not prescriptive or process-driven. Its purpose is to improve ASB services, and consists of seven core commitments:

- Demonstrating leadership and strategic commitment
- Providing an accessible and accountable service
- Taking swift action to protect communities
- Adopting a supportive approach to working with victims and witnesses
- Encouraging individual and community responsibility
- Having a clear focus on prevention and early intervention
- Ensuring a value for money approach is embedded in the service

These commitments are supported by a series of building blocks based on sector good practice. Signing up to the charter is by self-assessment. Completion of an online application and the Certificate is sent electronically within 5 days. The Certificate which can be copied and displayed around the organisation. The new Respect - ASB Charter can be used for a Housing logo. It can be used on our letterheads, website, newsletters etc to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to tackle ASB. Once we have become accredited and we are achieving the seven core commitments, Taunton Deane should apply to be externally accredited.

### **3. Approximate Costs**

The only costs will be officer time in completing the forms and any updating of Taunton Deane Borough Council paperwork with the additional logo.

### **4. Impact on Tenants**

By signing up to the Charter, Taunton Deane Borough Council are making public their commitment to provide a high quality Anti Social Behaviour service, and be accountable to tenants for its delivery.

### **5. Recommendation**

The Board is requested to support the officer recommendation that Taunton Deane Borough Council apply for accreditation to the Respect Charter.



# Respect

ASB charter for housing

June 2011



## Introduction

CIH, SLCNG and HouseMark are pleased to introduce 'Respect – ASB Charter for Housing', the sector-owned replacement for the Respect Standard for Housing Management.

Introduced by the government in 2006, the original Standard played an important role in driving up performance in both preventing and effectively tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB). Over 500 signatories are a clear testimony to its success over the last five years. ASB continues to be a key issue for landlords, tenants and communities, and when the housing minister announced in January 2011 that the Standard would be passed from government to sector ownership, CIH, SLCNG and HouseMark were delighted to be asked to take up the baton.

The resulting Charter has been developed through wide consultation, and is essentially an updating of the Standard. Indeed, following the consultation process it was decided to retain the 'Respect' name, it being well-recognised and understood within the sector. The Charter continues to be voluntary, and is a key part of the new, co-regulatory approach within housing. It should be noted that the Charter is **not** intended to be a wider community safety charter – it is about landlords' ASB services. However, the importance of partnership working in improving outcomes for service users is acknowledged throughout the Charter.

## Scope of the Charter

The Charter aims to be outcome-focused and not prescriptive or process-driven. Its purpose is to improve ASB services, and consists of seven core commitments:

1. Demonstrating leadership and strategic commitment
2. Providing an accessible and accountable service
3. Taking swift action to protect communities
4. Adopting a supportive approach to working with victims and witnesses
5. Encouraging individual and community responsibility
6. Having a clear focus on prevention and early intervention
7. Ensuring a value for money approach is embedded in the service

These commitments are supported by a series of building blocks based on sector good practice.

By signing up to the Charter, landlords are making public their commitment to provide a high quality ASB service, and their accountability to tenants for its delivery. Smaller landlords with fewer resources may need to take a proportionate view of the commitments and building blocks within the Charter, whilst maintaining their key focus on outcomes for tenants. The Charter will continue to be based on a self-assessment approach and can be used as a framework for improvement, tailored to local needs and priorities.

This Charter is intended for landlords, but it will be important for them to then consult with their tenants about what this means, locally, for them and for the services they expect from their landlord. It was very important that tenants were involved in the development of the Charter. Representatives from both TPAS and TAROE were on the steering group.

The remainder of this document sets out the Charter itself. Information on how to sign up to the Charter and a list of current signatories can be found at [www.cih.org/respectstandard](http://www.cih.org/respectstandard).

## A note on language

Several key words recur throughout the Charter and should be interpreted in their widest possible sense as indicated below:

“**Tenant**” includes all types of potential tenants, existing tenants, residents, leaseholders, etc.

“**Landlord**” refers to housing associations, stock retaining local authorities and (where appropriate) their ALMOs.

“**Complainant**” is the person reporting the ASB to the landlord.

“**Victim**” includes any person affected by the ASB.

“**Witness**” refers to any person who has seen or heard the ASB complained of; it includes but is not restricted to individuals providing evidence in support of formal enforcement action(s).

“**Perpetrator**” refers to individuals found to be responsible for committing anti-social acts or for permitting or encouraging such acts.

<b>ASB Commitments</b>	<b>Building Blocks</b>
<p><b>1. We demonstrate leadership and strategic commitment</b></p> <p>(There is strong leadership, corporate commitment and accountability about preventing and tackling ASB. This is embedded throughout our business and across key partners)</p>	<p>1.1 Our values, aims and objectives are reinforced by our approach to ASB and this approach is subject to ongoing ratification, assessment and review by both us and our tenants.</p> <p>1.2 Tackling ASB is a core strategic and operational business activity and we will ensure that we commit sufficient capacity and resources to tackle ASB effectively.</p> <p>1.3 We provide relevant training, capacity-building and support across all levels of the organisation (including staff, tenants, the governing body and relevant partners) that supports the delivery of a targeted action/service improvement plan for ASB.</p> <p>1.4 We clearly communicate to all tenants that ASB will not be tolerated. Our staff and contractors are supported to identify and report incidents where they have been subject to or have observed ASB.</p> <p>1.5 We proactively engage with relevant partners to support a joined-up approach to tackling the root causes of ASB and promoting positive behaviours.</p> <p>1.6 We have performance management frameworks in place to report, monitor and review ASB performance. These include challenging performance targets and are also reflected in service plans at a team and individual level. Our ASB targets are subject to regular review and demonstrate year-on-year improvement.</p> <p>1.7 Information on our performance against ASB targets is readily available and shared across the organisation to drive continuous improvement. It is regularly reported to our senior management, our governing body, partner agencies and our tenants.</p>
<p><b>2. We provide an accessible and accountable service</b></p> <p>(All our tenants can easily report ASB and access the service. Tenants are provided with useful and timely information and are actively encouraged to influence how we deliver the service)</p>	<p>2.1 All of our tenants can easily access our ASB services.</p> <p>2.2 We collect information which helps us to understand local demographics and the overall profile of our tenants. We use this information to tailor how the service is delivered to individuals and to demonstrate equality in service provision.</p> <p>2.3 We provide clear information which sets out what the service is, how it is delivered and how it can be tailored to meet local needs. All information about our services can be made available in a variety of formats, and translated into relevant community languages on request.</p> <p>2.4 There is a range of ways for our tenants, including marginalised groups, to be involved in shaping the service. We do this routinely and systematically to support continued service improvements.</p> <p>2.5 We publicise what we and our partners have done to tackle ASB in our communities - both our enforcement activity and the activities we do to prevent ASB occurring. Our approach balances the need to protect communities and build confidence that ASB will not be tolerated.</p>

ASB Commitments	Building Blocks
	<p>2.6 We take seriously all complaints about the services we provide. This is demonstrated in our overall approach to handling complaints which are regularly monitored against targets and contribute to the process of continual learning.</p> <p>2.7 We regularly assess satisfaction with the ASB services and gather feedback on what we could do to improve them. We publicise survey results and customer feedback to our tenants.</p> <p>2.8 We have mechanisms in place to allow our tenants to assess how we are performing. We provide our tenants with regular, robust and appropriate information in a format which has been agreed with them. Tenants are encouraged and empowered to hold us to account about the delivery and performance of our ASB services.</p>
<p><b>3. We take swift action to protect communities</b></p> <p>(We take prompt, appropriate and decisive action to deal with ASB before it escalates. In doing so, we adopt a problem-solving approach and have regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available)</p>	<p>3.1 Our staff are fully aware of the range of tools and powers available to them and our partner organisations, and know how to use them appropriately in accordance with our published policies and procedures.</p> <p>3.2 We apply consistent and robust processes for managing ASB cases.</p> <p>3.3 The actions that we take to tackle ASB are carefully considered and are proportionate to the effects of the behaviour on individuals, communities and the environment.</p> <p>3.4 We have a proactive approach to gathering evidence and utilise a variety of available sources (i.e. multi-agency, non-housing management staff and contractors) to support action to tackle ASB.</p> <p>3.5 We have strong working relationships locally and strategic links with partners (including local authority, police, and court services); we use these to investigate and tackle ASB.</p> <p>3.6 We act swiftly when a perpetrator fails to engage with support provision and their behaviour does not improve.</p> <p>3.7 We close cases appropriately, in a timely manner and, where possible, in consultation with the complainant.</p>
<p><b>4. We adopt a supportive approach to working with victims and witnesses</b></p> <p>(Our approach to case working demonstrates a strong focus on identifying and minimising risk)</p>	<p>4.1 Our management of ASB cases demonstrates a clear focus on protecting people from harm and on supporting victims and witnesses.</p> <p>4.2 We have appropriate measures in place to identify and respond to both the risk to and vulnerability of victims and witnesses, including repeat victimisation.</p> <p>4.3 Our staff are aware of and know how to access the support that is available to assess the needs of victims and witnesses on a case-by-case basis, particularly where victims and witnesses are vulnerable.</p> <p>4.4 We agree action plans with complainants, update them regularly on the progress of their case and inform them directly of all key developments.</p>



ASB Commitments	Building Blocks
	<p>4.5 We ensure that individuals attending court are supported and we liaise with the courts where necessary to minimise any distress and any associated risks.</p>
<p><b>5. We encourage individual and community responsibility</b> (We work with community groups and partners to promote tolerance and responsibility amongst our tenants and the wider community)</p>	<p>5.1 We can provide evidence of our work with tenants, tenant groups and leaders, and partner organisations to promote tolerance, balancing individuals' liberties with their impact on others and the community (e.g. good neighbourhood agreements, tenants engaging in mediation, and restorative justice schemes).</p> <p>5.2 We encourage and facilitate community involvement among tenants, including how individuals can support other members of their community to help us and our partners tackle ASB issues.</p> <p>5.3 We take steps to find out about and effectively meet our tenants' expectations of our ASB service.</p> <p>5.4 Where appropriate and safe, we encourage 'self-help' options to resolve more minor nuisance issues (e.g. encouraging complainants to talk to perpetrators, seeking to resolve the issue amicably and without recourse to the landlord).</p>
<p><b>6. We have a clear focus on prevention and early intervention</b> (The preventative measures we use are tailored towards the needs of our tenants and their families. We also provide, whether directly or via our partners, effective support to enable perpetrators to change their behaviour)</p>	<p>6.1 Our policies for allocations and lettings contribute to preventing ASB and nuisance, and promoting neighbourhood sustainability.</p> <p>6.2 Our tenancy agreements set out clearly what we mean by ASB, the standards of behaviour we expect of all tenants and the sanctions that we may apply to those who behave in an anti-social manner. We reinforce these key messages at tenancy sign-up and set them out in publicity that is available to our tenants.</p> <p>6.3 We proactively engage with partners to address the causes of ASB and to reduce the opportunities for it (e.g. through the appropriate provision of services such as warden patrols, CCTV and/or other measures).</p> <p>6.4 We work with our tenants and with partner agencies to identify ASB 'hotspots' and use the information to target resources.</p> <p>6.5 We use a range of early intervention techniques to prevent ASB from escalating.</p> <p>6.6 We proactively engage with our tenants and with partner agencies to provide diversionary activities (e.g. facilities for young people) and to evaluate their impact.</p> <p>6.7 Our staff are able to access services to provide support to vulnerable individuals.</p>

ASB Commitments	Building Blocks
<p data-bbox="105 159 384 327"><b>7. We ensure that a value for money approach is embedded in our service</b></p> <p data-bbox="105 344 392 546">(We can demonstrate a strong focus in securing efficiency and effectiveness by balancing cost and quality)</p>	<p data-bbox="429 176 1461 313">7.1 Value for money is understood and embedded in our work; it is part of our performance management framework, determines resource allocation and is widely communicated to staff who are encouraged to identify value for money opportunities. Resources are used effectively and efficiently.</p> <p data-bbox="429 344 1449 448">7.2 We understand the cost of the ASB service, including elements such as staffing costs, responding to ASB incidents (e.g. criminal damage, graffiti, fly-tipping) and of making use of various ASB tools.</p> <p data-bbox="429 479 1437 616">7.3 We know how we are performing in delivering our ASB service, and how satisfied service users are. Costs, performance and satisfaction are benchmarked against comparative providers and demonstrate value for money.</p> <p data-bbox="429 647 1477 714">7.4 There is an evidence-based approach to budget-setting and this is linked to the annual service improvement plan.</p> <p data-bbox="429 745 1433 882">7.5 We know whether we are getting value for money for procured services (e.g. mediation, support services, professional witness services) and we have, where appropriate, undertaken joint procurement and considered shared services.</p> <p data-bbox="429 913 1437 1084">7.6 Through tenant scrutiny arrangements, tenants are provided with appropriate information on comparative service costs, performance and satisfaction, enabling evidence-based value for money judgements to be made. Consultation on changes to the service includes a cost-benefit analysis, so tenants can make informed value for money choices.</p>

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