



Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1JN
www.exeter.gov.uk

Mr S

Please ask for: Community Safety Partnership
Direct Dial: 01392 265147
Email: community.safety@exeter.gov.uk
Our ref: RN/JW
Your ref:
Date: 25 May 2016

Dear Mr. S

Re: Petition received from businesses regarding criminal activities and anti-social behaviour

Thank you for your petition relating to the above received on 19 April 2016, which is addressed to the Council, Devon County Council and any relevant authority (not specified).

The Exeter Community Safety Partnership (CSP) includes Exeter City Council, Devon County Council, the Police, and other relevant authorities, and is therefore best-placed to respond to the concerns expressed in the petition. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is very aware of issues described in the petition and has been working with a number of partners to develop solutions. However the issues faced are complex in nature and require a variety of interventions to effect lasting change. Whilst enforcement action is one such intervention, it is not considered to be an effective tool to use in isolation.

With respect to the views expressed in the petition, we wish to disagree with the statement that Gabriel House is not fit for purpose. On the contrary it provides a valuable service in housing vulnerable people with complex needs and is very successful in supporting them into sustainable accommodation, rather than remain in a vicious cycle of living on the street and unsuitable short-term accommodation. Without this provision, we believe that the problems being experienced by the petitioners would be far greater.

When there has been clear evidence of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity emanating from premises, agencies have acted with determination. This includes the closure of a retail premises in South Street as a result of anti-social behaviour linked to the sale of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS's - commonly known as Legal Highs).

It is recognised that the unacceptable behaviour occurring within the city centre has been increasing over recent years, and there is a link with the growing use of NPS's. As a direct result of this, Exeter City Council has consulted widely with partner agencies, the public and other stakeholders in seeking views on a proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covering the whole of the city centre and part of St. Thomas ward. Unfortunately despite individual letters being delivered to all businesses within the area of the proposed Order (a substantial number),

the resulting engagement from the business community was disappointing. The PSPO will be discussed by full Council on 26 July 2016 and a decision whether to implement the Order, made. Details of the proposals put out to consultation can still be found at www.exeter.gov.uk/pspo.

In order to provide a comprehensive response to the petition, we have addressed a number of points individually.

- **Dog Fouling** – staff from the Council’s Community Safety and Enforcement Team will undertake further patrols of the area. We understand that there appears to be identifiable owners who regularly allow their dogs to foul the area, and therefore the Council will send advisory letters to these dog owners as a preventative measure in the first instance, which in turn may be followed by enforcement action where evidence of non-compliance is found.
- **Drug taking and discarding of needles** – at present New Psychoactive Substances are not illegal to supply, possess or take. Whilst new legislative controls come into force imminently, these will only cover the supply of such substances. However, if the Council approves the PSPO in July then this will give the Police the means of tackling the consumption of New Psychoactive Substances in public spaces.

Devon and Cornwall Police have and continue to put considerable resource into disrupting the supply and possession of illegal drugs. Only recently Devon and Cornwall Police along with other Community Safety Partners conducted a Closure Order on a property in Smythern Street due to anti-social behaviour and drug activity. Where a member of the public has information that could assist the Police’s work in this area, we would encourage them to report it to the Police directly, or anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

The Community Safety Partnership continues to work with colleagues in Public Health to reduce the irresponsible discarding of hypodermic needles. Provision has been made at pharmacies across the city where people can dispose of needles safely and pocket size needle disposal boxes are made available. Exeter City Council does treat irresponsibly discarded needles as a priority and will seek to attend a location as quickly as possible when contacted on 01392 265010. Furthermore, needle disposal bins are shortly to be piloted in 3 sites within the proposed PSPO area.

- **Noisy, rowdy and dangerous behaviour** - where such matters are reported, they will be responded to, and appropriate action taken.
- **Knife incident** – such matters are always investigated thoroughly by Devon and Cornwall Police and where evidence leads to the arrest and charging of a suspect, they will be dealt with through the criminal justice system.
- **Thefts** – criminal activity of any nature is unacceptable and Devon and Cornwall Police will pursue enforcement action where appropriate.

The business community can also have a role to play in helping to prevent such instances occurring in the first place and the CSP would encourage it to share responsibility in being part of the solution. The CSP fully supports Exeter Business Against Crime (EBAC); this partnership is an effective way of businesses working together to prevent instances of theft and other criminal behaviour occurring and to share information between themselves, the Police and Council when instances occur. Through this partnership business can be linked in via a dedicated radio link to

the Exeter City Council Control Room where CCTV can assist in monitoring situations that are occurring. In addition, the Neighbourhood Police Team are part of the EBAC partnership and are linked in to the communication network. To join EBAC, please contact Simon Lane on 01392 265528.

The CSP have been working with the management at Gabriel House to help reduce and resolve the issues associated with groups congregating in the streets around Gabriel House and causing anti-social behaviour. The people involved in these groups often have complex needs and are not necessarily residents of Gabriel House, although they may have some connection their residents. There are similar issues with groups elsewhere in the City Centre, and not just around Gabriel House - since mid-January the Police have been working closely with the City Council and it's Outreach Team from Julian House, in engaging with those sleeping rough on the streets, ascertaining the root causes for their rough-sleeping and linking them up with accommodation and appropriate services.

Exeter CSP is committed to working with Gabriel House, St. Petroc's and other providers in formulating appropriate interventions intended to weaken any 'street attachment' that members of the street community have, diverting them into more positive pathways, which amongst other things includes accommodation support, addiction support and mental health support, as well as enforcement. To put actions to words, it formed the Street Attachment Group (StAG).

The Street Attachment Group has been running now since February 2016, and is supported by attendees from a broad selection of organisations including both councils, Police, Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM), volunteer organisations, charities and the business community (e.g. Mr. C. Bulley, Chief Executive of the Exeter Business Improvement District). The group is well-supported and has achieved a number of outcomes in reducing the amount of people living and surviving on the streets of Exeter and mitigating the anti-social behaviour associated with this.

Dealing with the street attached is complex and requires a number of different approaches and solutions to manage the issue in the longer term. In its first 3 months StAG has progressed a range of positive actions:

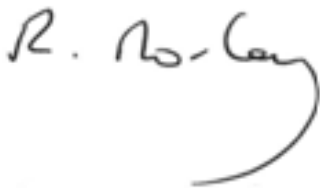
- Completed an audit of the street community, and made recommendations from the intelligence gleaned from this.
- Developed a stronger more effective approach with partners working in concert to tackle the overall issue.
- Operated monthly information-sharing meetings between partners from MEAM, St Petroc's, Gabriel House, Police and Council Housing to help identify the priority people, consider solutions and to keep a dynamic update on the current position and numbers currently living and surviving on the streets of Exeter - this has led to a number of people being housed or moved onto new areas.
- Contributed to the development of Police Operation Cornerstone which relates to policing and dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime in the city from the street attached. This includes a mix of engagement, referral and enforcement as a final resort. Currently there are a number of individuals being dealt with for offences related to public order, drug and ASB offences.

- Approved a business engagement package as a practical aid to support businesses in how to best manage issues with the street attached. These are being facilitated and run by the Police with the help of the Street Homeless Assertive Outreach Team. More directed work is ongoing to tackle issues occurring at particular premises within the city centre.
- Reviewed and enhanced the 'Exit Offer' for the street attached by improving service alignment and reducing the likelihood of drop-out.
- Extended the extra sleep provision at Gabriel House beyond the winter period to get more people off the street.

The impact of this work is beginning to visibly materialise on the street with reduced numbers of people living on the streets, and a decrease in begging.

As another model of positive collaborative working with businesses, there has been extensive progress made with respect to licensed premises playing a key role in the evening and night time economy. 66 licensed premises have joined the Best Bar None Scheme which is aimed at reducing alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour through the delivery of education, training and the promotion of best practice. This helps makes the city centre safer and broadens its appeal as a destination to visit especially during the evening. The scheme has seen the introduction of Street Marshals, a multi-agency Help Zone and premises working closer together to enhance the safety of the city during the evening and night time economy. The Community Safety Partnership would welcome such a collaborative approach with the businesses involved in the petition; if you would like to pursue this then please contact Mr. R. Norley, Assistant Director Environment, Exeter City Council on 01392 265170.

Yours sincerely



Robert Norley
Assistant Director Environment
Exeter City Council

Yours sincerely



Superintendent Samantha de Reya
Local Policing Area Commander