

Review



Neighbourhood Action Team Review - 2021

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1. Summary

Neighbourhood Action Teams (NATs) are community meetings that are held in each of the 17 electoral wards within North Lincolnshire. They allow people living in that community to influence, prioritise and resolve issues relating to community safety and the environment.

The NATs main functions are:

- Receive information from the community about local issues which, primarily, affect community safety and the built environment.
- Priorities those issues for action
- Work with the local community and partners to resolve the issues
- Ensure the wider community are aware of the priorities and action through effective means

NAT's have been in place in North Lincolnshire since 2007 and all NAT's are Chaired by a ward member.

Currently NAT's are set up to deal with issues relating to Crime and ASB and issues of Environmental Nuisance. This review will agree a future direction and operating procedure.

In September 2020, Safer Neighbourhoods were asked to undertake a review of the Neighbourhood Action Teams (NATs) as outlined in the Scrutiny report.

The review will consist of:

- An initial consultation with Chairs,
- A further consultation with members of the NAT's and Partners.
- A formal proposal to be drawn up to include any recommended changes and timescales
- Development of new operating procedures and terms of Reference
- Piloting of any new arrangements.
- A review period followed by implementation.

2. Consultation Overview

The full review of NAT functions and purpose has now been undertaken including consultation with NAT Chairs, Partners and NAT members, to establish:

- The future role and function.
- Membership and support arrangements.
- Standardisation of the Agenda and purpose across 17 Wards.
- Frequency of meetings.
- Proposals around virtual meetings
- Establish if NAT's should widen the scope beyond Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.

NAT Chairs

10 Chairs were consulted and asked a series of questions (questions shown at Appendix A).

General feedback is that the NAT meetings are working well, they are well administered with the majority stating they get good attendance. One Chair seeks clarity on the expectations of the NATs and how we measure achievements to avoid future meetings becoming stagnant. All 10 Chairs agreed that the Terms of Reference should be unified for all Wards and would like these to be redistributed to all partners. Feedback on meeting times confirmed virtual meetings were working well in the day however, this may need to be reconsidered if meetings return to face-to-face and each NAT would like to be flexible about this and decide the best time for their members.

Positive feedback on attendance from Safer Neighbourhoods and Humberside Police, one NAT Chair would like to see a higher rank officer attend meetings to enable decisions be made and committed to at the meetings. There were mixed views expressed regarding the attendance of Ongo and Council Departments with some Chairs wanting attendance at every meeting and others, happy to invite for specific issues. Attendance at meetings by NAT members was generally reported to be good however, Chairs felt that attendance should be encouraged from Schools, religious groups and further promotion of the NAT should take place to encourage more Neighbourhood Watch Groups.

All Chairs were happy with the process for choosing NAT priorities however, it was recognised that the agenda needs to cover more detailed updates on the priorities and the SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment - problem solving tool) actions.

Statistics provided were acknowledged to be helpful however, more detail and an overview of patterns, positive results and the appropriate level of detail would be beneficial.

All Chairs thought that issues were dealt with at the NAT however, one Chair would like to see an escalation process with Area Action Teams reintroduced. One Chair would like to receive updates on any actions taken in between meetings.

With regards to public sessions, the majority of Chairs did not feel these were appropriate unless there is a specific issue. One Chair regularly holds the public session and would like this publicising better. A public session should remain in the terms of reference to be used if necessary.

NAT Chairs haven't been offered any training in recent years and felt that this wouldn't be beneficial to them. Chairs felt that they had substantial knowledge and experience and that attending another NAT or regular training wasn't required.

When questioned regarding expanding the scope of the NAT from crime, disorder and environmental issues, Chairs felt that this would dilute the purpose of the NAT and discourage attendance by voluntary groups. It was felt that a community contribution section should be added to the agenda with care being taken to not put pressure on volunteers and lose their interest.

All Chairs value the NATs, stating that they are a good communication and intervention tool. The Chairs felt that the feedback they get from the members is that they are welcomed and appreciated.

Partner Agencies

External agencies consulted include Humberside Police and Ongo, as the main social housing provider for North Lincolnshire. Terms of reference currently state essential attendance by Humberside Police whereas Ongo's attendance is optional.

A series of relative questions were asked to management of the external agencies (Appendix B).

Humberside Police

Senior Management at the police felt the NATs were a good platform for defined placed based problem solving and that having stakeholders in one place with a shared commitment and a place for accountability for those involved in the solution was beneficial. Due to senior management changes, revised terms of reference would need to be distributed and agreed but on principle the administration and purpose of the NAT was agreeable with a recognition that meeting times should be arranged to optimise attendance and to appeal to more under represented community groups to attend.

Humberside Police are committed to attending and felt they should be represented by a PC and Sgt where possible. The recognition for further feedback to the members from the police, could not only include crime statistics but also the results of any HumberTalking surveys completed in the area, to provide an overview of police work, community feelings and feed in to assist with selection of NAT priorities.

The scope of the NAT does not need to be widened as fear would be diluting the purpose however, challenges in resolution should be addressed including, licencing issues, community cohesion, support and feedback. It was proposed to encourage consideration of priorities incorporating bigger scale issues that affect the area to tie in with priorities from strategic and tactical meetings, eg TTCCG with the appropriate level of information shared. This would encourage a more focussed approach and where necessary not always focus on the lower tier challenges. This would require consideration of governance and suggestion for a quarterly NAT oversight meeting with the Police Inspector and the Senior Safer Neighbourhoods Officer divided geographically. This would give the opportunity to review competing priorities, approaches and allow for targeted, unified approaches to issues that affect several areas.

To improve the function of the NAT the police suggested a unified SARA/OSARA process that could be easily transferred among partners with clear definition on the agenda who is the problem owner. This may also help promote the benefits of the NAT meetings to the NPT. Safer Neighbourhoods acknowledged promotion of the benefits of NATs and the assistance that can be provided to partners with a priority, which is not always explained and could support cross ward working and possible priority overlaps. Senior Management at Humberside Police agreed and felt NAT training would be beneficial to all new NPT staff.

Ongo

Senior Management from Ongo expressed their commitment to NAT meetings and identified attendance from housing officers and the information they have been providing varies per officer. Housing Officers are soon to be divided into two teams geographically and therefore, although they will no longer have a dedicated patch the two teams will have a priority area and deal with issues on a demand basis.

It was suggested that although commitment could be given to the 4 priority wards and areas with high level social housing a solution would be for all NAT invites to be sent to a spoc box and delegated where appropriate. Ongo could provide a unified update with ASB case numbers, areas of concern, actions taken, tools available including joint site inspections and emerging higher risk concerns including cuckooing and vulnerability. A separate section on the agenda could be added following

police updates and in the absence of an Ongo officer sent to Safer Neighbourhoods in advance to present and circulated with the minutes along with the crime statistics. This could then contribute to allocation of a priority for a proactive multi agency approach.

Ongo would also like to see stronger links with their community team encouraging invites and attendance of resident's groups.

Senior Management at Ongo would like to keep the focus of the NAT meetings to prioritising crime and disorder issues, so the emphasis would be on proactive approaches to emerging issues, although would welcome a community commitment section allowing for projects and volunteering opportunities to be highlighted.

Council Departments

Environmental Health, Highways and Neighbourhood Services were consulted and discussions held around the function of the NAT meetings and links to their direct work and the community.

Environmental Health

Although attendance has been varied over the last few years capacity of work would create realistic expectations if an individual officer was asked to attend all 17 meetings. Consideration given included a designated spoc for each meeting who would receive minutes, updates and potential actions. There is a commitment to allocate an officer to attend the 4 priority wards.

The terms of reference would be required once updated however, function of the NAT and focus on crime, disorder and environmental issues was deemed appropriate.

Environmental Health would like to see the NAT promote communities supporting themselves and partners with environmental issues, similar to the way they do crime and disorder. This would include promotion of what issues to look out for, what details could be gained and shared with the community to encourage more information and evidence based reporting.

Key issues from NAT meetings that support the resolution to a priority can be fed into the spoc from the Safer Neighbourhoods Officer and general issues raised, encouraged to be reported to the council using the contact centre or online reporting.

Highways

Highways were happy with the NAT process, they have attended in the past and feel they should be involved in some form with the meetings. Commitment to being part of the community solutions and problem solving were expressed.

They were willing to commit to all 4 priority ward meetings with the possibility of Neighbourhood Services representative being there on behalf of both departments. Highways will also allocate a spoc for the other meetings with a direct link from the Safer Neighbourhoods officer to management with any issues raised so they can delegate the actions to their team.

Highways stated they thought the scope of the NAT meetings was correct and focussed on crime, disorder and environmental issues. The issues for them raised under environmental issues could be part of the SARA or if not needed referred directly to them. Encouragement should also be made to encourage the members to report issues directly to the council contact centre or online reporting system.

Neighbourhood Services

Concern was expressed regarding capacity to attend all meetings and that attendance from officers has previously been sporadic due to work levels. Moving the meetings to daytime and continuing virtually was recommended to assist with already existing work commitments.

Neighbourhoods services are satisfied the scope of the NAT kept the meetings to an acceptable time and that by inviting key community groups rather than public meetings there remained order in raising issues and focussed on the work they could do to support location based solutions.

Although they did not feel capacity would allow an attendee at all 17 meetings they would be able to supply one member to attend the NATs for the four priority wards, with issues from other NATS being fed from Safer Neighbourhoods directly to management for delegation at weekly team meetings. The dedicated contact would keep consistency and accountability for the actions requested of them either through a priority community issue or as a raised issue with updates provided prior to the NAT. Neighbourhood Services see value in the NAT meetings and are committed to supporting NAT priorities.

Voluntary and Statutory Groups

Email consultation questions were sent to Neighbourhood Watch groups (NHW) and Town and Parish councils. (Appendix B).

Feedback was extremely positive from those who responded with the largest proportion attending every meeting and most regularly. All respondents thought the administration and organisation of the meetings were excellent. In contrast the majority of respondents felt the meetings should be held during the evening when in person however, all were keen for the NATs to be reinstated and were happy that virtual meetings in the daytime would also work well. The majority suggested the importance of face to face meetings when the restrictions are fully lifted.

Every respondent felt they could raise issues at the NAT openly and had a chance to discuss concerns on behalf of their communities. Members would like to have an agenda item that detailed the problem solving process and actions that have taken place in-between meetings.

When questioned on widening the scope of the NAT meetings, concerns were raised regarding "making them a talking shop", would discuss too many varieties of issues to invite all the relevant people and the meetings would just end up taking actions away to update via phone or email. People would lose interest as many topics would not be of interest to their community, police may not attend as meetings would not be crime and disorder focussed and many saw the meeting as the chance to see local police and discuss concerns. They felt there may be pressure to volunteer for more work and if didn't feel they could do this, would avoid attending. However, five suggestions were made for additional agenda items. These included dog fouling, community welfare issues, community work and events, community updates and police priorities for North Lincolnshire.

Members felt the NAT was a valued approach to discussing and resolving community issues.

Conclusion

Feedback from the review has confirmed NATS are valued by NAT chairs, external partners, council departments and members attending. There is a strong commitment throughout to support the NATS and priorities raised with a genuine desire to improve the meetings further.

The review has confirmed the majority consulted, felt widening the scope of the meetings would be detrimental however suggestions to improve the agenda would allow for a more streamlined, informed approach to crime and disorder priorities, that can already and often do, incorporate housing, environmental and highways issues.

Suggestions for improving the NATS have been considered and documented in the recommendations below.

3. Recommendations

- Terms of reference should state that the ownership for the times of all NAT meetings, should remain with the individual chair for maximise attendance.
- Promotion of NAT meetings to NHW, town and parish councils and invited groups to encourage attendance.
- Scoping exercise for each ward to consider community groups not invited and promote the meetings throughout these to encourage a more diverse attendance.
- More detailed information to be added with the crime stats provided by Safer Neighbourhoods analyst.
- Humberside Police to provide HumberTalking updates to compliment the statistics and feed into priority setting.
- Quarterly NAT priority review meetings to be held between Senior Safer Neighbourhoods Officer and NPT Inspector to avoid overlapping priorities, unified approach across wards and feed through and support priorities raised at tactical meetings.
- Expansion of the agenda item “update on NAT priorities” led by Safer Neighbourhoods with clear update on actions taken and SARA progression.
- Agenda item added for ONGO update (in person where possible or with pre-sent report). This will include ASB community issues and problem locations, information required from the community, housing updates and challenges and good news stories in the area. This would need to be completed on an agreed template ensuring unified approach at each meeting.
- Police attendance should be a PC and or Sgt when available on a regular basis.
- Highways, Neighbourhoods Services and Environmental Health to commit to attendance in the four priority wards and provide spoc or agreed pathway for issues to be directed or delegated to, with this contact being responsible for providing updates back to Safer Neighbourhoods prior to the NAT meeting.
- Ongo to receive invites to a spoc box and attendance delegated to appropriate officer. Areas with numbers of high social housing and or should be prioritised for consistent attendance.
- Ongo residents’ groups to be contacted and added to the invite list with the Ongo community team kept up to date with issues via minutes to the spoc box to support proactive approach and community involvement of resolutions.
- Confirm escalation process/meeting issues can be referred to if they require extra resource or intervention.
- Community Contribution section added to the agenda to cover any volunteering opportunities, upcoming projects by NLC or the community.
- Terms of reference to be updated with agreed recommendations and sent to all key members and partners.
- Recommendations should be implemented in a unified approach to assist with the promotion of the meetings and regularity for officers attending across wards.
- Implementation of the new recommendations to be implemented by May 2021 with an evaluation review to take place with NAT Chairs in December 2021.

4. Appendices

Appendix A – NAT Chair Questions

Think NATs working well?	SARAs and Problem Solving	Training and briefing
Happy with administration? Could it be improved?	Do you use the SARA process for dealing with local issues?	Have you been offered or attended any specific NAT Training?
Happy with terms of ref? Time of day?	Do you feel the SARA process is helpful and appropriate for NAT's?	Have you attended any other NAT's as a guest or observer?
The Terms of Reference are set so that all 17 NAT's follow the same process. Is this too restrictive?	Do you feel you get the correct level of information to make SARA's successful?	Would you like to get together with other NAT Chairs on a regular basis to share issues and ideas for improvement?
Do you think the membership for NAT's is correct?	Have you ever had any resistance to either commencing or closing a SARA?	Would you like regular NAT Training on specific subjects?
Do you get the correct officers attending the meetings?	Communication	If so which subjects?
Are you happy with the process for choosing NAT priorities?	Do you think you get enough general information about Crime and ASB in your ward?	If you have anything additional which you think would improve the process
Do you feel you get the appropriate level of information to help set priorities?	The NAT Terms of Reference allows for a public session at NAT's, have you ever had an open session with your NAT? How was this advertised?	Do you value the NAT and if so why?
NAT's specifically deal with Crime ASB and Environmental issues, do you think they could deal with wider issues. If yes what issues would you suggest?		
Do you feel that all issues are dealt with at NAT or do you think there should be an escalation process and what?		

Partner Questions

Think NATs working well?
Happy with terms of ref?
Time of day? Encourage attendance.
Do you think the membership for NAT's is correct and do the correct officers attend?
Are you happy with the process for choosing NAT priorities?
NAT's specifically deal with Crime ASB and Environmental issues, do you think they should deal with wider issues. If yes what issues would you suggest?
Do you feel that all issues are dealt with at NAT or do you think there should be an escalation process and what?
Additional section added to the agenda to report on problem solving. Who responsible for SARA/OSARA?
Communication
NAT Chairs have asked for more info in addition to stats, thoughts on capacity or should Wayne produce?
Training and briefing
Should NAT training be offered to new Officers?
Feel like Team are aware of benefits of having a NAT priority?

Appendix B - NHW/ Town and Parish Council review NATS

1. Do you attend the NATs, never/regular/always when possible?
2. What would be your preferred meeting times day/evening?
3. Do you feel you can raise community issues at a NAT meeting?
4. Do you think the NAT should widen the remit and discuss other issues outside the crime and disorder arena, Or would you like to see the focus of the meetings remain on crime and disorder?
5. Any other comments/concerns/observations

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