

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 September 2016

Progress of Recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Organised Crime



Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with progress of recommendations following the Committee's previous review of Organised Crime.

Background

2. In 2014 Members of the committee agreed to undertake a review activity looking at how the police and partners on the Safe Durham Partnership work together tackle organised crime. The committee's work focused on looking at the effectiveness of partnership working and community engagement and the role community intelligence plays in tackling organised crime. The committee also looked at the risk to the council of fraud and organised crime. Members also considered a case study looking at how partners worked together to tackle organised crime groups operating illegal waste sites in County Durham and what lessons could be learned from this work.
3. The report concluded that there are strong partnership arrangements in place to tackle organised crime and that the work led by Durham Constabulary is considered to be leading work nationally. The committee noted that Government issued guidance at the time of the review on how the police together with its partners should develop profiles on the threat of serious and organised crime in their localities. These local profiles will help build on the good work that has been introduced in Durham.
4. Communities can provide valuable intelligence to the police and partners to help fight serious and organised crime. Education and awareness is a key part of the work of the Safe Durham Partnership. The report concluded that work in helping partner agencies and communities to recognise serious and organised crime and encourage them to report it remains a critical area in fighting the threat and be kept apprised of the work being done in this area.

5. The work of the Police, the Council, Environment Agency and other agencies working together to tackle organised crime groups operating illegal waste sites in County Durham was the focus of a case study. The committee heard how a Joint Memorandum of Understanding had been developed between the council and the Environment Agency for cases where waste processing businesses are being used as a front for criminal activity. Whilst legal action may be being pursued, members recognise that residents may become frustrated with the lack of any visible progress regarding dealing with unsightly illegal waste sites in their neighbourhood. The committee requested to be updated on work being done in partnership in this area and what further action can be done to engage with communities when dealing with illegal sites.
6. Local government can be the target of organised crime groups. The committee looked at the risk of fraud to the council. Public sector organisations can legitimately share data to help disrupt organised crime and protect the public purse. The committee heard that Durham County Council is taking part in one of only a small number of pilots nationally looking at data sharing and procurement contracts. Following conclusion of this exercise the committee requested to hear if there are any lessons learned from this innovative work.
7. The Committee felt that both members and officers of the council could also benefit from further training in being able to recognise organised crime particularly those officers in the front line who work within communities.
8. The Committee's report was presented by Cllr Boyes to Cabinet on 16th September 2015 and included the following recommendations:
 - 1) Cabinet note the work of the Council and partners in contributing to partnership activity to tackle organised crime through the Disruption and Intervention Panel.
 - 2) Relevant organisations on the Safe Durham Partnership comply with all information and actions required to develop and deliver the Local Profiles Document. In addition, the Committee request that a progress report on the Local Profiles document is presented to a future meeting.
 - 3) The Safe Durham Partnership continues work to raise awareness with partner agencies and communities to be alert and be confident to report activity that could be linked to organised crime.
 - 4) Through the Memorandum of Understanding the council work with the Environment Agency to take prompt action when illegal waste sites are identified.
 - 5) Cabinet note the potential risk of organised crime through fraud and that following conclusion of the Home Office project look to seek if learning from this work can be implemented more widely.

- 6) Enhance training and awareness raising in relation to organised crime through:
- an awareness session on Organised Crime for Elected Members
 - Integrating organised crime information within the Council's fraud awareness training, including consideration of developing on-line training information
9. Appendix 2 provides progress on implementation of each of these recommendations and Detective Chief Inspector Dave Ashton, Durham Constabulary will be in attendance at the Committee's meeting to provide further information on the partnership approach to tackling organised crime and respond to Members questions in relation to this topic.

Recommendation

10. Members of the Committee are asked to note information contained within this report and comment accordingly.

Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Review, Organised Crime, Cabinet September 2015

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – information within the report is aimed at reducing crime and disorder, Anti-Social behaviour and environmental crime

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP REPORT – Organised Crime
REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p>1) Cabinet note the work of the Council and partners in contributing to partnership activity to tackle organised crime through the Disruption and Intervention Panel.</p>	<p>On behalf of Cabinet, Councillor Joy Allen, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities has stated: “I welcome the review into Organised Crime undertaken by the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This was an excellent piece of work that demonstrates the positive multi-agency partnership working being undertaken across County Durham. The report highlights the work of the Disruption and Intervention Panel which has supported tackling and disrupting organised crime groups and making our communities safer.”</p>		
<p>2) Relevant organisations on the Safe Durham Partnership comply with all information and actions required to develop and deliver the Local Profiles Document. In addition, the Committee request that a progress report on the Local Profiles document is presented to a future meeting.</p>	<p>DCI Ashton is attending the September Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting to provide an organised crime presentation. This will contain information from the organised crime local profiles document. The document will updated in March 2017 and an update will be provided to both the Safe Durham Partnership and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p>	DCI Ashton	March 2017

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p>3) The Safe Durham Partnership continues work to raise awareness with partner agencies and communities to be alert and be confident to report activity that could be linked to organised crime.</p>	<p>A presentation was provided to the Safe Durham Partnership in July in relation to the Local Profiles Document. A further presentation is to be provided in September in relation to how to recognise the signs of organisation crime. Partners are then to further share this information in their organisation. AAP Co-ordinators were briefed by DCI Ashton in November 2015 in order to share the information with their AAPs.</p> <p>Cyber-crime is one element of organised crime. A Task & Finish Group was set up to develop a more co-ordinated approach under the governance of the Safe Durham Partnership. One large scale event was held for the public in July with around 500 people attending. A further partnership event is to take place on 20th September.</p> <p>Front line workers awareness raising is built into everyday working / core business within Durham Constabulary. Information is also shared at local PACT meetings.</p> <p>Operation Sledgehammer information is provided to partners following operations in the North East.</p>	<p>DCI Ashton</p>	<p>March 2017</p>

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p>4) Through the Memorandum of Understanding the council work with the Environment Agency to take prompt action when illegal waste sites are identified.</p>	<p>The principles behind Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) were informally established several years ago and have therefore been operating in practice for some time. The MOU formally establishes these principles. It is a joint statement of responsibilities, duties and expectations of the signatories in relation to the regulation of waste management sites, permits, planning permissions and environmental crime.</p> <p>In practice the MOU operates at 2 levels:</p> <p>Managers and Senior Officers of all agencies come together at quarterly meetings to share information and exchange on-going developments regarding waste businesses who have a history of complaint or breaches of legislation. These businesses are generally subject to regular monitoring by all agencies. In addition to these businesses, any current cases which are the subject of joint action are discussed for the benefit of all parties. Information sharing plays a key role in the regulation of environmental crime, pollution prevention and protection of the wider community and the environment.</p>	<p>Joanne Waller</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
	<p>2. Where complaints from the public are received by any of the agencies or individual officers become aware of unauthorised or potentially illegal practices, the responsible agency can be notified without delay and where appropriate joint visits arranged promptly so as to ensure any breaches can be tackled without delay by the application of the relevant legislation. It is in these situations that the benefit of the MOU is more keenly realised by engaging the wider resource base available provided by a combination of all agencies to deal with illegal waste practices. In addition there is a more-co-ordinated approach to tackling illegal waste activities in County Durham.</p> <p>Officers within Durham County Council have a better understanding of the role of the Environment Agency in waste regulation and how their own regulatory regimes integrate with those of the other signatories. This has particularly useful in circumstances where multiple issues are reported which require joint inspection and investigation.</p> <p>Since the introduction of the MOU there have been several examples of multi-agency investigations to tackle illegal and unauthorised waste activities and the resultant environmental pollution.</p>		

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p>5) Cabinet note the potential risk of organised crime through fraud and that following conclusion of the Home Office project look to seek if learning from this work can be implemented more widely.</p>	<p>Work now completed. Last update received by Home Office on 13 July 2016. Paper on results to be published on Gov.uk website upon approval by the new Home Secretary. Decision should be made in September 2016.</p> <p>There is always a risk of organised crime infiltrating Council procurement however the actions put into place will further mitigate this risk. Lessons learned from the exercise have now been put into practice as far as possible. Including, training for schools now in School Learning Directory and we have allocated a Council Corporate Fraud Investigator to work with the Police one day a week. Further work around adding a deterrent to the procurement process is being discussed with Cabinet Office Legal advisers. Regular six monthly updates are provided to the Council's Audit Committee.</p>	Paul Bradley	Complete
<p>6) Enhance training and awareness raising in relation to organised crime through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an awareness session on Organised Crime for Elected Members • Integrating organised crime information within the Council's fraud awareness training, including consideration of developing on-line training information 	<p>As detailed above, Elected Members have received information to raise awareness through AAPs and partnership fora. SSC Overview & Scrutiny will be provided with a presentation in September in relation to organised crime and following the development of the 2017 Local Profiles document, subsequent presentations will take place.</p>	DCI Ashton	March 2017

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
	Development of the on line training package is well underway and should be prepared and rolled out by the end of the year.	Paul Bradley	March 2017